



# **Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023**

## **Summary TEF 2023 panel statement**

**DCG**

## Summary of outcomes

### Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at DCG and the outcomes it leads to are very high quality.

#### Student experience: Silver

The student academic experience is typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- effective personalised support for students to gain a qualification, relevant skills and experience, and begin their professional journey
- effective teaching and learning relevant to the provider's mix of students and their needs
- effectively engaging with employers and other regional stakeholders to shape the curriculum
- support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice
- engagement with students to enact positive changes.

There is also one outstanding quality feature:

- a highly effective learning environment and academic support tailored to each student, recognising their diverse needs.

#### Student outcomes: Gold

Student outcomes are typically outstanding quality.

Outstanding quality features include:

- outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's mix of students, due to tailored and detailed support
- outstanding rates of successful progression, and highly effective collaboration with local employers to develop courses and offer placements
- a clear articulation of the educational gains intended for students, and why these are highly relevant to their future ambitions.

There are also some very high quality features including:

- a commitment to offer a high level of support to students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- effectively supporting students to achieve its defined educational gains.

## About the assessment

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is a national scheme run by the Office for Students (OfS) that aims to encourage universities and colleges (providers) to improve and deliver excellent teaching, learning and student outcomes.

The TEF does this by assessing and rating providers for excellence above the high quality baseline that we expect from all providers. It covers undergraduate courses.

Throughout this document, we use the terms 'outstanding' and 'very high quality', which are defined in terms of the TEF 2023 assessment as follows:

- 'outstanding': the quality of the student experience or outcomes are among the very best in the sector, for the mix of students and courses taught by a provider
- 'very high quality': the quality of the student experience or outcomes are materially above the relevant high quality minimum requirements, for the mix of students and courses taught by a provider.

The assessment was carried out in 2022-23 by the TEF Panel, a panel of academics and students who are experts in learning and teaching. This document sets out a summary of the panel's findings and judgements.

The panel reviewed the following evidence:

- numerical indicators produced by the OfS, using national datasets
- a submission made by the provider, setting out its own evidence
- a submission made by the provider's students, setting out students' views.

The panel applied its expert judgement to:

- identify particular features of the student experience and student outcomes that are excellent (above the high quality baseline requirements)
- decide a rating for the 'student experience' and for 'student outcomes'
- decide an overall rating for the provider.

Throughout the assessment the panel took account of the context of the provider and judged how well it delivers teaching, learning and student outcomes for its mix of students and courses.

In making its decisions the panel took account of the OfS general duties and the public sector equalities duty.

# Summary of panel assessment

## Information about this provider

DCG is a further education college providing higher education at two of its four campuses across Derby. It sets out its mission to 'predict and serve the needs of its business and civic communities by preparing students for the next phase of their lives including: advancement to further study; success in the world of work, business start-up and career development; social progression and positive citizenship; and independent living'.

Its strategic priorities are to 'deliver education excellence', 'champion social mobility' and 'enable economic prosperity'. It offers T-levels, technical qualifications, academic, vocational and access programmes. It had around 220 full-time and 170 part-time undergraduate students in 2020-21.

Almost all (98.6 per cent) of higher education courses are one and two year courses. 15 per cent of full-time and 11.6 per cent of part-time students have a disability. The majority of students are over the age of 21.65 per cent of students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and over 50 per cent are local to the area prior to studying at the college.

The assessment considered information about the provider's undergraduate courses and students on those courses.

Full details about the provider's student demographics used in the TEF 2023 assessment are available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/data-used-in-tef-2023/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/data-used-in-tef-2023/).

More information about this provider can be found on the OfS Register at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-register/the-ofs-register/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-register/the-ofs-register/).

## **Student experience: Silver**

Throughout this section, we refer to indicators. These indicators are based on students' responses to the National Student Survey. The indicators are 'benchmarked' to show how well the provider performs for its particular mix of students and courses.

Across the student experience aspect, the panel found:

- most features are very high quality
- there is one feature that is outstanding quality
- there was not enough evidence to rate one feature as very high quality.

The panel took into careful consideration how far the provider understood its mature student populations, and that half of its student are part-time, working individuals. The panel found the provider has considered its mix of students and courses when designing courses and providing support. However, although there were systematic approaches to teaching and learning across the provider, it was less clear how far those were college-wide strategies and higher education specific.

Considering the evidence holistically, the panel considered there is evidence of typically very high quality. The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Silver'. This is because most features of the aspect are very high quality for all groups of students.

The panel's assessment of the student experience features is set out below.

### **Teaching, assessment, and feedback**

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The indicators showed:

- for full-time students there was some initial evidence of outstanding quality 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback', although the data did not provide certainty
- for part-time students there was some initial evidence that 'teaching on my course' is below the level of very high quality but that 'assessment and feedback' is outstanding quality, although the data did not provide certainty.

The provider and student submissions show evidence of a very high quality feature including:

- strategic priorities focused on educational excellence, social mobility and economic success
- committees focused on teaching, learning and scholarship; widening participation; and academic quality and standards feed into the provider's academic board
- using a variety of teaching methods such as independent learning, group work, reflective practice, critical thinking and peer evaluation

- offering a 'peer and buddy' system to assessments, with feedback given within three weeks
- using guest speakers and external visits in all areas, with students encouraged to draw on their own professional experience.

The panel noted that the provider's teaching approach offers personalised approaches to support students from diverse backgrounds to gain a qualification, gain relevant skills and experience, and begin their own professional journey. However, it did not find examples of how this impacted the learning experience of students.

Overall, the panel found that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, assessment, and feedback practices which support students' learning, progression, and attainment reach across the provision.

### **Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch**

The panel rated this feature very high quality.

The panel looked at the provider and student submissions and found:

- examples of stretch and challenge in the curriculum are highlighted by students, along with comments that they appreciate the small class sizes
- that external industry specialists are involved in facilitating, co-designing, and reviewing the higher education curriculum
- that students develop both hard and soft skills by taking part in delivering sessions, work experiences, and hearing industry guest speakers
- that the needs of part-time students who are usually already employed and want to upskill are catered to, creating a collaborative learning environment
- case studies that show students applying their learning in real world situations.

The panel judged that the provider understood its mix of students and the needs of those students through its delivery of teaching and learning. Therefore, it concluded that course content and delivery effectively encourage the provider's students to engage in their learning, and stretch students to develop their knowledge and skills.

### **Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement**

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The provider submission gives evidence of how it engages with employers and other regional stakeholders to shape the curriculum, including:

- encouraging staff development to enhance their knowledge, such as professional construction staff going on placements to gain up to date expertise

- showcasing staff's active engagement in their fields such as the Animal Science teacher involved in published conservation research
- facilitating direct communication between industry and curriculum teams through employment and skills boards. This further supports staff development being integrated into the curriculum.

The panel noted that it could not see from the provider or student submissions how these actions have impacted teaching and learning experiences, so could not consider a rating of outstanding.

Therefore the panel found this to be very high quality, rather than an outstanding feature, concluding that the provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students.

### **Staff professional development and academic practice**

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The provider submission outlines evidence of a very high quality feature, including:

- that some staff are considered 'dual professionals,' with a practitioner background and ongoing links with employers to maintain up to date knowledge
- a well-developed teaching observation process involves staff from partner higher education providers, which identifies and shares excellent academic practices
- a teaching and learning enhancement programme that uses evidence from various sources, including student feedback and teaching observations
- the provider links staff development to high student attendance, highlighting a 91 per cent attendance rate.

The panel noted that while there are a number of very positive measures in place to support staff development, it was unclear how embedded these practices were. Considering the evidence in the round, the panel found there is very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted.

### **Learning environment and academic support**

The panel found this feature to be outstanding quality.

The indicator shows:

- probable evidence of outstanding quality 'academic support' for full-time students
- initial evidence of outstanding 'academic support' for part-time students, although the data did not provide certainty.

The provider and student submissions show further evidence of outstanding quality, including:

- an academic support coach offers personalised support to students through tutorials, workshops, and inductions. The coaches also monitor students' educational gains
- launching a buddy system during coronavirus, although specific details and the number of students supported were not given
- a 360 Hub serves as a point of contact for students who need to access support information
- making bursary and hardship funds available to assist students in need
- person-centred support plans are offered to students with disabilities, leading to a smaller gap in these students continuing to the next year of study and completing their course.

The panel found that the provider offers a learning environment and academic support that is tailored to each student and recognises the diverse needs of its students, and has an embedded approach. Overall, therefore, the panel concluded that the provider ensures a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a wide and readily available range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs.

## **Learning resources**

The panel found there was insufficient evidence to judge this as a very high quality feature.

The indicator shows:

- initial evidence that 'learning resources' are very high quality for full-time students, but the data did not provide certainty
- initial evidence that 'learning resources' are below the level of very high quality for part-time students.

The provider and student submissions added some further evidence, for example:

- a 360 hub available for virtual support
- upgrading higher education spaces and investing in facilities and equipment e.g. simulation technologies, augmented and virtual reality, and an animal care unit among others
- approximately £500,000 has been invested since 2019 to update facilities
- providing offsite software access in response to student feedback
- a specialised team is available to support digital learning.

The panel considered that while the listed resources and investments are commendable, they are not significantly above the standard expected for a higher education provider. For these reasons, the panel found there was not enough evidence that physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.

## **Student engagement in improvement**

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The indicator shows initial evidence that 'student voice' is outstanding for full-time and part-time students, but the data was not statistically convincing.

The provider and student submissions add evidence of a very high quality feature including:

- holding leadership and stakeholder meetings with students
- anonymous suggestion boxes at each campus, although it is unclear how well they are utilised or the actions taken in response
- each course having a student representative, but their role in providing feedback is not clearly specified.

The panel noted that provider's submission focused on reviewing the most recent National Student Survey data rather than specific details of their student voice processes, and found it challenging to assess the impact of positive changes on student experience.

However, the panel considered there was evidence of very high quality engagement with students to enact positive changes. Overall the panel concluded that the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students.

## **Student outcomes: Gold**

Throughout this section, we refer to indicators. The indicators for continuation, completion and progression rates are based on national data about higher education students. The indicators are 'benchmarked' to show how well the provider performs for its particular mix of students and courses.

The panel found that student outcomes are typically outstanding quality for all groups of students.

Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- most features are outstanding
- two features are very high quality
- there was not enough evidence to rate one feature as very high quality.

The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Gold'. This is because the student outcomes are typically outstanding quality.

The panel's assessment of the student outcomes features is set out below.

## **Approaches to supporting student success**

The panel considered this to be a very high quality feature.

The provider and student submissions describe approaches to supporting students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies. This includes:

- student attendance is monitored to enable early intervention and creating personalised support plans when needed
- academic coaches provide support throughout a student's higher education journey, including progression
- there is a comprehensive approach to student support including academic, welfare support and peer support
- person-centred support plans are developed to assist disabled students or those having difficulties continuing and completing their studies
- an inclusion specialist provides ongoing support to students throughout their academic journey, particularly during the transition to in person teaching following coronavirus.

When considering this feature the panel looked at the evidence from the submissions along with the continuation, completion and progression indicators outlined below. The panel judged there is evident commitment from the provider to offer a high level of support to students, through a tailored approach. However, it did not demonstrate the reach of the support and how embedded it is.

Overall the panel found that the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

## **Continuation and completion rates**

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The indicators show:

- for full-time students, there is initial evidence that 'continuation' and 'completion' are outstanding quality
- for part-time students there is initial evidence that 'continuation' is outstanding – although not for all courses – and that 'completion' is also outstanding quality.

The panel noted that further data in the provider submission supports that all their programmes exceed requirements for this feature. The panel carefully considered the indicators, particularly in relation to the provider's mix of students. It noted that such high rates of continuation and completion for mature students, local to the area, and on one and two year courses, is testament to the provider's tailored and detailed support. Therefore, the panel concluded that there are outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

## **Progression rates**

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The indicator provides initial evidence that 'progression' for full-time students is outstanding, and for part-time students is very high quality.

The provider's submission presents further evidence of outstanding quality, including internal data suggesting 71 per cent of students progress to employment or higher level education.

The panel noted that the high rates of progression for the provider's high numbers of mature, local students were a reflection of the provider's commitment to collaborating with local employers to develop courses and offer placements.

Overall, the panel found there are outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

## **Intended educational gains**

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission describes its approach to articulating the educational gains it wants students to achieve. This includes:

- the provider's definition of educational gains aligning with their strategic priorities, including progression to further study and university life, success in the world of work, social progression and positive citizenship, and independent living
- educational gains intending to support students from diverse backgrounds in gaining academic qualifications, relevant skills, and experience to start their professional journey
- the gains also speaking to the provider's civic agenda and support for social mobility and economic development.

The panel noted that it is less clear how these gains were specific to higher education, as they seemed more focused on further education. However, overall the panel concluded that this is outstanding as the provider clearly articulates the range of educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to its students and their future ambitions.

## **Approaches to supporting educational gains**

The panel considered this to be a very high quality feature.

The provider demonstrates its commitment to supporting students' educational gains which includes:

- acknowledging the importance of developing both soft and hard skills for students
- designing courses to develop soft skills through 'flipped learning' and by involving students actively in the learning process. This approach is based on feedback from industry, which recognises the importance of these skills

The panel noted support for educational gains is somewhat effective through academic coaches, but there is not enough evidence linking this support directly to their educational gains.

Considering this evidence, the panel found that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve these gains, which led the panel to conclude that this is a very high quality feature overall.

### **Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains**

The panel found there is insufficient evidence to provide a rating for this feature. In accordance with the assessment guidance this will not negatively affect the overall aspect rating.

### **Overall: Silver**

Based on the guidance and the expert judgement of panel members, the panel found the 'best fit' rating to be 'Silver'.

The panel considered the student experience aspect to be 'Silver'; and the student outcomes aspect to be 'Gold', and gave equal weight to both. It carefully examined the evidence across all features, student groups, subjects, and courses.

The panel noted the outstanding continuation, completion and progression data in the indicators, reflecting the level of tailored support and style of industry-relevant learning delivered by the provider. This was supported by the 'dual professional' attributes of their teaching staff.

There were some areas of the student experience that the panel considered were lacking a clear strategy to embed higher education learning at the provider, rather than being an extension of the further education teaching and learning. This played a significant role in the panel's overall rating, given that it should underpin the whole experience at the provider.

In judging 'Silver' rather than 'Gold' to be the best fit, the panel noted that there was only one outstanding feature in the 'Silver' aspect of student experience and more would be required to award a 'Gold' rating. Overall the panel found that, taken together, student experience and student outcomes are typically very high quality, with some outstanding elements, consistent with a rating of 'Silver'.