



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

Bloomsbury Institute Limited

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Bronze

Typically, the experience students have at Bloomsbury Institute Limited and the outcomes it leads to are high quality, and there are some very high quality features.

Student experience: Silver

The student academic experience is typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- teaching, assessment, and feedback practices that effectively support students
- course content and delivery effectively encourage students to engage in their learning
- use of research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students.
- very high quality support for staff professional development
- physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.
- effectively engaging with students, leading to improvements to their experiences and outcomes.

There is also an outstanding quality feature:

- a supportive learning environment, with a wide range of outstanding quality academic support.

Student outcomes: Bronze

Student outcomes are typically high quality with some very high quality features.

Very high quality features include:

- very high rates of successful progression for students and courses
- effectively articulating educational gains intended for students and their importance in creating work ready and life ready graduates.

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

The Bloomsbury Institute Limited sets out its purpose to 'break down the barriers that stop students from reaching their full potential, during their studies and beyond'. It states three key values which are dare to be different; make it happen; and don't be mean.

The provider is relatively small, with a single campus in London where around 970 full-time undergraduate students studied in 2020-21. It has partnered with two organisations – Glyndwr University which validates the degree courses, and Birkbeck College which gives its students access to learning space and library resources.

The vast majority of full-time students study at first degree level. The provider delivers degrees in Accounting, which is its most popular subject, along with Business and Law. A notable 80 per cent of its students are mature, with a relatively high proportion (59 per cent) from the most disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Just over 80 per cent of students live locally, and most enter without A-levels.

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/.

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/.

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.

The panel judged the student experience to be typically very high quality. Across the aspect of student experience the panel found:

- six features are very high quality
- one feature is outstanding.

Throughout the assessment the panel considered the provider's context of having a high proportion of students from underrepresented groups.

The panel applied the criteria and found the 'best fit' rating to be 'Silver'. This is because most features are very high quality for all groups of students and courses, consistent with a rating of 'Silver'.

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 provide compelling evidence that 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' are outstanding for full-time students.

The provider submission showed further evidence, including:

- giving different types of feedback throughout the assessment cycle
- consistent practice with all validated degrees structured into four modules, each with two assessments
- positive feedback from external examiners, although it was not clear how widespread these were across the TEF assessment period
- positive module evaluation data, although there was limited evidence of response rates to internal surveys.

The panel considered the indicators offered initial evidence of outstanding teaching, assessment and feedback. However, it noted limited evidence in the provider submission on the effectiveness and tailoring of teaching, assessment and feedback practices to the mix of students, including students from underrepresented groups. The panel therefore judged this is a very high quality feature, with some evidence of outstanding practice.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel concluded that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, assessment, and feedback practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel judged this feature as very high quality.

The provider and student submissions include evidence of very high quality including:

- ensuring that all elements of the student experience, including course design and content, are strategically aligned
- making efforts to accommodate commuter students and ensure design and scheduling is accessible to everyone
- student involvement in course content and delivery, such as the student led Bloomsbury radio shows
- active student engagement and commitment to learning, with a personal development plan embedded throughout the curriculum helping students to develop employment skills
- student module evaluation results show strong agreement that seminars and workshops support understanding of content
- student feedback highlights effective course content and delivery, offering opportunities for engagement and stretch across all courses.

Looking at all the evidence, the panel considered 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 includes evidence of very high quality including:

- academic staff incorporate their research activities into curriculum design, assessment comprehension, and efforts to widen participation
- appointing a learning technologist with an academic lead for learning technology
- creating a Bloomsbury radio station
- inviting industry guest speakers to speak to students
- a digi-flow community engagement initiative for sharing professional practices.

The panel considered there was evidence of the provider's range of initiatives, investment and adoption of innovations in most of their courses.

Overall, the panel found 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. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

Staff professional development and academic practice

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

Evidence of very high quality and outstanding quality in the provider submission includes:

- 85 per cent of staff hold a fellowship or senior fellowship of the Higher Education Academy
- staff are granted an annual personal continuous professional allowance of £500, although evidence of its impact is lacking
- a research strategy and staff development plan, including research forum and seminar series
- support from the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, which oversees a teaching and learning forum, teaching and peer observation schemes, and an annual teaching and learning conference
- receiving the Independent Higher Education's transformative staff development award, which the panel considered to be outstanding
- establishing the outstanding digi-flow community and digi-flow teams site to share best practice in learning technology.

Whilst there were elements of outstanding quality, the panel did not consider that this feature was outstanding overall as it was not clear how embedded the support is, and it did not find sufficient evidence of the impact of the approach for staff or students. Therefore, the panel concluded there is very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel considered this is an outstanding quality feature.

The indicator provides compelling evidence that 'academic support' is outstanding.

Evidence in the provider and student submissions include further evidence of an outstanding feature, including:

- a survey showing 35 per cent engagement in a peer assisted learning scheme, along with high uptake of disability and wellbeing advice and support
- a dedicated academic lead who works with teaching staff to design extra support and target students.
- personalised learning support through one to one meetings with the academic lead to develop skills and confidence, along with extra feedback on written assignments
- developing IT skills through a range of student training sessions
- a strong partnership between the academic division and the centre for student engagement, wellbeing and success.

The panel considered the characteristics of the provider's students and high numbers of those from underrepresented groups when considering this evidence. It noted both submissions include evidence on the effectiveness of support, which apply to the mix of students, and courses.

Looking at all the evidence together, the panel judged 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 this to be a very high quality feature.

The indicator provides compelling evidence that 'learning resources' are very high quality.

The panel considered further evidence of very high quality in the provider submission including:

- a positive partnership with Birkbeck College, offering students access to classes and library facilities
- availability of a student laptop loan scheme
- integrating digital workbooks with core modules in the foundation year
- attaining £250,000 from an OfS competition for a digital employability hub to enhance learning and graduate industry skills
- details of how the provider's new building is fostering a sense of belonging among students.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel found that physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

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

The indicator provides compelling evidence that 'student voice' is outstanding.

The provider submission includes evidence of very high quality, including:

- a relationship agreement between the student guild and the student staff liaison manager to facilitate communication. However, it is not clear how this agreement is monitored
- a student-staff consultative forum for sharing and discussion on new strategies, although its effectiveness is not fully detailed
- student representation in decision making meetings, including the board of directors.

The panel noted evidence of the effectiveness of the student voice, which applies to the mix of courses and students, including students from underrepresented groups. However, it considered there to be not enough evidence of how embedded the student voice is in order to rate the feature as outstanding.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel concluded the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

Student outcomes: Bronze

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.

Across the student outcomes aspect the panel found:

- two features are very high quality
- there was not enough evidence to judge three features to be very high quality.

The panel found the two very high quality features apply to all the provider's groups of students. This includes those from underrepresented groups, which make up a high proportion of the provider's students.

The panel carefully considered whether this feature should be judged as 'Requires Improvement'. It found that the continuation and completion feature in particular is clearly below the level of very high quality. However, on balance the panel concluded it is not a serious concern or sufficiently widespread given the progress being made by the provider, and the agreed mitigations and targets in place.

The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Bronze'. This is because some features are very high quality for most groups of students and courses, consistent with a rating of 'Bronze'.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

The panel found there was not enough evidence to consider this feature to be very high quality.

The provider submission showed evidence, including:

- a range of initiatives to support foundation year students, including a starter course to help transition to degree level study; an additional module to develop academic English and study skills; and introducing a personal academic tutoring pilot
- staff training with external experts through the widening participation forum
- teaching initiatives to support student success in different circumstances, such as video content available at any time, and improved timetable systems.

The panel considered the characteristics of the provider's students and the high numbers from underrepresented groups when looking at the evidence. It found that, while there are many initiatives underway, there is limited evidence of their impact or how widespread they are.

Considering the feature as a whole, the panel concluded that there was not enough evidence to show the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies. Therefore, the panel could not judge this as a very high quality feature.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel considered there to be insufficient evidence that this feature is very high quality.

The indicators showed compelling evidence that 'continuation' and 'completion' are both clearly below the level of very high quality.

The panel noted that the provider submission acknowledges that a significant number of students fail to continue and complete their course, and report they have identified and are implementing measures to improve this. The panel considered the provider has agreed targets with the OfS to improve the continuation rates to support students, and these are being monitored.

On balance, the panel found sufficient evidence that the provider is developing its approaches. While expressing some concern that this feature is clearly below very high quality, the panel concluded it is not a serious concern or sufficiently widespread given the progress being made, and the agreed mitigations and targets in place.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel judged there is insufficient evidence that there are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

Progression rates

The panel considered this is a very high quality feature.

The indicator provides strong initial evidence that 'progression' is very high quality.

The panel considered the characteristics of the provider's students, and the high numbers from underrepresented groups, when considering this evidence. It found the indicators showed at least very high quality broadly across student groups and subjects.

Overall the panel concluded that there are very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and its courses, consistent with a very high quality feature.

Intended educational gains

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The panel considered that the provider articulates educational gains and their importance in creating work-ready and life-ready graduates. It noted that integrating employability opportunities with each programme is designed to meet all students' needs. The provider's strategic programme articulates to students how it will support them to understand and pursue their goals. It also describes how it will support students and graduates to be work-ready for graduate employment, self-employment and new venture creation.

The panel also considered that the provider notes educational gain is about what students as well as educators define as gain, and how this is relevant to them and their ambitions. The panel noted an employability programme and a person centred approach, as well as employability being embedded within the curriculum and links with graduate recruiters.

Overall, the panel found that the provider articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students, consistent with a very high quality feature.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

The panel found there was not enough evidence to consider this feature to be very high quality.

Examples of approaches to supporting educational gains from the provider submission include:

- a person centred approach to developing students' educational gains. This includes empowering students' self belief and wellbeing with a clear understanding and a map for personal and professional goals
- links with graduate recruiters
- educational gains that reflect the labour market
- personal development planning that is an effective initiative for educational gains
- KPMG executive mentors providing support for students in developing a range of transferable skills.

The panel noted that the provider submission gives examples of additional initiatives that will provide evidence to demonstrate student educational gains in future.

The panel considered that there was some evidence of very high quality. However, when considering the evidence in the round, it concluded there is limited evidence that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve these gains. Therefore the panel did not judge this as a very high quality feature.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

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

The panel noted the provider submission contains limited information about the detailed evaluation of educational gain. It does provide some examples of relevant smaller projects such as the use of mixed method evaluations of the gains made by their students.

The panel considered that the provider's evaluation of educational gains is a developing picture, through internal surveys, looking at how students develop their organisational skills, and the evaluation of the Bloomsbury law clinic.

The panel considered that there was insufficient evidence the provider evaluates the gains made by its students, and to judge this feature as very high quality.

However, the feature has been treated as neutral when considering the student outcomes aspect rating overall. This is in line with the guidance that a provider will not be prevented from being awarded higher ratings based solely on a lack of developed educational gain measures.

Overall: Bronze

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

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

The panel considered most student experience features to be at least very high quality for all groups of students. However, it found that there is insufficient evidence that the student outcomes features are typically of very high quality.

In judging 'Bronze' to be the best fit, the panel considered that there is not enough evidence that the student experience and student outcomes are typically of very high quality, consistent with a 'Bronze' rating. The overall rating of 'Bronze' is also consistent with the consideration given by the panel as to whether student outcomes should have a rating of 'Requires Improvement', linked to below very high quality rating for continuation and completion.