



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

University of Bedfordshire

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Bronze

Typically, the experience students have at the University of Bedfordshire 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:

- assessment and feedback practices that are effective in supporting student learning
- inspiring course content and delivery that actively engages students
- use of research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement contributing to a very high quality academic experience for students
- support for staff professional development
- effective study support for students
- effective use of physical and virtual learning resources to support very high quality teaching and learning.

Student outcomes: Bronze

Student outcomes are typically high quality, and there are some very high quality features.

Very high quality features include:

- successful progression for the provider's students and courses
- clear articulation of the educational gains the provider intends its students to achieve and their relevance
- effective support of students to achieve 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

The University of Bedfordshire is a large provider with around 20,000 students in the academic year 2020-21, with a significant growth in student numbers over the TEF period. It also has a considerable number of students who are studying overseas.

The provider's stated vision is to be 'a vibrant, ambitious academic community, celebrating diversity and the transformative power of education'.

The student profile shows a higher proportion of students from lower socioeconomic groups, mature students, and minority ethnic students than the sector average. Around 35 per cent of students come from the local area.

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

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 found the student experience is typically very high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses. Across the student experience aspect, the panel found:

- most features are very high quality
- one feature where there was not enough evidence of very high quality
- the very high quality features apply to most of the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups, which comprises a high proportion of students for this provider.

The panel considered the contextual information and the split indicators, and noted that there are no patterns of significant variation across groups of students, but there was some variation across subject splits.

The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Silver' because its assessment best fits the description: 'most of the features of the aspect are of 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; and Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel considered these to be very high quality features.

For full-time and part-time students, the 'teaching on my course' indicators provide initial evidence of a very high quality feature, and the 'feedback and assessment' indicators provide initial evidence of performance below the level of very high quality, with some variation across subjects.

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

- teaching that is personalised and tailored to the student body and mix of students
- provision of blended learning in response to positive student feedback, and practices developed throughout the coronavirus pandemic
- an established and embedded curriculum framework based on good practice in higher education
- education for sustainability, which has gained sector recognition.

Indicators for 'assessment and feedback' improved in 2022, but remain below benchmark across most student groups.

The student submission provides compelling additional evidence of effective learning, teaching and assessment and notes that students say the provider enables them to take life-changing steps.

The panel concluded that the evidence shows that the provider has both embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices, and has course content that effectively encourages students to engage in their learning, stretching them to develop their knowledge and skills.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

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

The provider submission gives evidence that this is a very high quality feature, including:

- research staff being actively involved in teaching and in developing learning resources
- opportunities for students to join in with staff research communities, including through conferences and applied research
- an employer advisory board for each faculty to help ensure all courses keep up-to-date with sector developments and changes by working closely with industry experts
- teaching and learning that is linked to industry and professional practice e.g. an interdisciplinary night-time mock crime scene event.

The student submission provided testimonies which praise sector-related curriculum design.

The panel did not consider that the feature was outstanding as the impact for all students was not clear. However, the panel noted that there are some outstanding practices in this feature and concluded that the provider uses research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience for its students.

Staff professional development and academic practice

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

The evidence provided in the submissions includes:

- the university's academy for learning, training and employment delivers staff dialogues on approaches to important topics including equality, diversity and inclusivity; digital learning systems; communities of practice; and sustainability
- a professional teaching scheme supports staff to work towards advanced higher education fellowships, which is built into academic promotion
- an annual learning and teaching excellence conference.

The panel concluded that there is very high quality support for staff professional development.

Learning environment and academic support

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

For part-time students, the 'academic support' indicators provide initial evidence of very high quality, although for full-time students, the 'academic support' indicators provide initial evidence of below very high quality.

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

- flexibility of the academic support provision, including online provision, which is particularly important for mature students, part-time students and those with work and caring responsibilities
- a dedicated personal academic tutor for all students to provides tailored support aligned to individual student needs.

The panel noted recent improvements to the personal academic tutor system to streamline and support tutor referrals to specialist support teams and improve data capture, although it is too early to assess impact of these.

The provider notes the lower than expected uptake in personal academic tutoring. However, the student submission provides evidence of the perceived value of the personal academic tutor scheme.

The panel considered the evidence across the indicators and submissions holistically, and judged that there is sufficient evidence for this to be considered a very high quality feature. The provider fosters a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support.

Learning resources

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

The panel noted that the overall indicator for 'learning resources' provides initial evidence of very high quality for most student groups. However there is some variation where for some students groups, there is evidence that the provider's performance is below the level of very high quality.

The provider and student submissions provide further evidence of this being a very high quality feature, including:

- investment in campuses and tailored learning environments
- four libraries and/or learning resource centres
- significant attention to digital accessibility, including loans of equipment, to ensure all students can access digital learning
- physical and digital resources that are available to the student body and embedded over a number of years.

The panel considered the indicators and the submission evidence and concluded that this is a very high quality feature, as physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel considered there to be insufficient evidence of a very high quality feature.

The indicator for 'student voice' provides initial evidence of performance below the level of very high quality for full-time students, but of very high quality for part-time students.

The provider submission describes how it has moved to a research-informed, 'students as partners' model, with student experience leaders, student voice principles and a framework to provide a context for student engagement. There are examples of improvements to the student experience that have been informed by student engagement.

The student submission describes commitment to the voice of students, particularly among senior levels of the university. However, it notes that there is inconsistency at course level.

A new student voice programme launched by the university and student union has had some early impact, for example, 67 per cent of courses had a student representative in 2022, compared with 39 per cent in 2020.

The panel noted that the provider is addressing student voice and engagement proactively. However, it concluded that there is insufficient evidence overall to judge that this is 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.

The panel found that student outcomes are typically high quality, with some very high quality features, for the provider's mix of students and courses. Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- three features to be of very high quality
- two features that did not reach the level of very high quality
- one feature where there was insufficient evidence to reach a judgement, which was considered neutrally
- the very high quality features apply to most groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups, although there is some variation in outcomes across subject areas.

The guidance sets out that the outcome indicators provide more direct measures of some of the student outcome features, notably continuation and completion, and progression. However, the

panel did consider the evidence in the provider and student submission alongside the indicators, including contextual information.

In making its assessment, the panel considered that the provider did not adequately account for differences found in the split indicators, or set out how it plans to address areas of poorer performance.

The panel applied the aspect ratings criteria and considered across the aspect as a whole the best fit rating to be 'Bronze'. This is because the provision is typically high quality, there are some very high quality features, and there are no features that are of concern. The panel found that most features of the aspect are very high quality for some students.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

The panel concluded that this was not a very high quality feature.

The provider submission identifies priorities for improvement to student outcomes, and gives relevant contextual information, for example the provider describes the increase in student numbers as having an impact on continuation, which they are now seeking to address.

The submissions give information of support being provided for students to succeed including:

- success intervention team and success coaches
- enhanced individual learning plans for students at risk
- policies and practices to support fails, resits and retakes.

The provider submission identifies particular challenges in the area of business and management, which has seen considerable growth over the assessment period, and noted several initiatives underway to address areas for improvement.

The panel noted and appreciated the initiatives underway to support improved student success, however many are relatively recent, and the impact is not yet evidenced.

The panel did not consider that this to be a very high quality feature, as there was not sufficient evidence that the provider effectively supports all of its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel found that there is not sufficient evidence to consider this a very high quality feature.

The 'continuation' indicator for full-time students gives initial evidence of performance below the level of very high quality, and that this applies broadly across the provider's student groups. For part-time students, the indicators give evidence of outstanding quality, and that this applies broadly across the provider's student groups.

The panel found that the 'completion' indicator for full-time students gives limited evidence of very high quality provision, as there is limited certainty in the data. This applies broadly across the

provider's student groups, with evidence that provision is very high quality for some groups, and below the level of very high quality for other groups. For part-time students, the panel found evidence of outstanding quality 'completion'.

The panel noted the positive indicators for part-time students, and also considered the steps the provider is taking to address full-time completion and especially continuation. The panel gave proportionately greater weight to evidence found in the full-time indicators, applying the guidance.

Taking the evidence in the round, the panel considered that there is not sufficient evidence that this could be considered a very high quality feature for most or all students. It concluded that there are not very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

Progression rates

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

The full-time and part-time indicators for 'progression' provide evidence of very high quality. However there is variation across student groups – such as outstanding rates for Asian students – and subjects, where six subjects are outstanding rates.

Taking the indicator data into account, the panel concluded that this feature is of very high quality, and that, overall, there are very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

Intended educational gains; and Approaches to supporting educational gains

The panel considered these to be very high quality features.

The provider submission articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, in the context of their student body, and why these are relevant to its students. They are articulated in terms of social mobility; through career readiness and enhancement, with a focus on student confidence and competencies; and where there is clear recognition of students' low qualification starting points.

The panel considered the evidence of how educational gains are supported and found that provider has embedded support through the curriculum framework, a university curriculum change programme, and employability roles across in schools. The panel noted a clear focus on entrepreneurialism, evidenced by a range of schemes and being consistently in the top ten for graduate start-ups.

The panel noted that the provider articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students, and that it effectively supports its students to achieve these gains. Accordingly, the panel concluded both to be very high quality features.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel consider there was not enough evidence to rate this feature.

The provider submission describes how educational gains will be evaluated but does not elaborate on the approach or process for undertaking this effectively. Therefore the panel considered that

there was not enough evidence to come to a quality judgement on this feature, but that this was not a limiting factor in reaching a judgement for the aspect rating overall.

Overall: Bronze

Applying the guidance and the panel members' expert judgement, the panel considered the overall best fit rating to be 'Bronze'. The panel weighted the two aspects equally and considered the student experience rating to be 'Silver' and the student outcomes rating to be 'Bronze'.

Having considered all the evidence across all features, and across all the provider's student groups, subjects and courses, the panel recommend the 'best fit' for the overall rating is 'Bronze'. This is because the student experience and student outcomes are typically high quality, and there are some very high quality features.

The panel did not consider that a 'Silver' rating was the best fit, as while there are some features that are of very high quality for most groups of students, there was some variation and the very high quality features mainly apply to most, rather than all, groups of students. There was also some significant variation evidenced through the split indicators, which the panel felt was not sufficiently addressed. Across all the available evidence, there is not enough evidence that both the student experience and student outcomes are typically of very high quality.