



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

Bedford College Group

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Bronze

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

Student experience: Requires improvement

Improvement is required to be awarded a TEF rating for this aspect.

There are not enough very high quality features to be awarded a TEF rating. The panel found one very high quality feature:

- very high quality support for staff professional development and the promotion of excellent academic practice.

The panel did not find any features of the student experience that it considered to be clearly below the level of 'very high quality' or that may be of concern.

Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- effective support for students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- very high rates of continuation and completion
- very high rates of progression
- clear articulation of the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students.

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
- student statements, included as part of the provider submission.

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 provider is a general further education provider based on three campuses alongside a 'land based' campus. The provider's mission is to widen participation and promote social mobility.

Across the four-year TEF period, the provider had a total of around 2,200 full-time students and 2,300 part-time students. The provider had a total of 360 apprentices during the period.

The subject mix includes creative arts and design, agriculture, food and related subjects, and performing arts, which are the largest full-time subjects. The largest part-time subjects are business and management, engineering, education and teaching, and allied health. The largest apprenticeship subjects are engineering and business and management.

A large proportion of students study on one-year level 4 and 5 courses. Approximately one-third of full-time students and one-third of apprentices are from the most deprived areas of the country. Around 20 per cent of full-time students are eligible for free school meals. Most full-time students are younger than 21 on entry.

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

Full details about the provider's student demographics used in the TEF 2023 assessment are available at <https://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: Requires improvement

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:

- one very high quality feature
- insufficient evidence of very high quality for six features.

The panel judged that there were minimal very high quality features for this aspect and, when applying the criteria, they accordingly determined that the 'best fit' rating for this aspect is 'Requires improvement'..

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

The panel considered there was insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The indicators provide evidence of provision which is below the level of very high quality for 'teaching on my course' for full-time and part-time students, across different student groups and courses.

For 'assessment and feedback', the indicators give evidence of provision below the level of very high quality for full-time students and part-time students.

There was no indicator evidence available for apprenticeship students.

'The provider evidence includes:

- internal survey data, showing high rates of student satisfaction with the quality of their courses, the teaching received and the assessment and feedback practices
- some positive student comments, for example regarding the timeliness of formative feedback and their positive endorsement of the provider's approach to teaching, assessment and feedback.

The panel considered that the evidence in the submission was not sufficient to address the evidence of below very high quality provision in the indicators, with a lack of compelling narrative around the indicators noted.

Additionally, the panel considered that the submission did not provide enough detailed evidence regarding their teaching, learning and assessment practices or of any impact these may have had.

The panel considered overall therefore, that there was insufficient evidence of very high quality teaching, learning and assessment practices that are effective in supporting students' learning, progression and attainment.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

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

The panel considered the initial evidence provided by 'the teaching on my course' indicators, as described above.

The evidence in the provider submission includes:

- a description of curriculum planning and development as being informed by subject experts working with industry
- an emphasis on work with employers to provide students with work-based learning, for example students working with a local employer to design new branding, which won international awards
- details of the enrichment of courses through trips and visits
- internal survey results, showing some positive feedback from students on the course content and opportunities for placements and skills enhancements.
- student statements endorsing the approach to course content and delivery.

When considering the evidence from the submission, the panel noted that there is limited evidence of the extent to which the approaches described apply to all groups of students and to all courses as most of the examples related to creative arts and design students. Additionally, the panel considered there to be lack of compelling narrative around the impacts of these approaches.

Therefore, the panel judged there was insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

The panel considered there was insufficient evidence of very high quality.

The evidence in the submission was considered by the panel, which includes:

- an emphasis on employer engagement and staff dual professional practice, with links with over 800 employers, to inform teaching and learning that contributes to students' understanding of the relative professions
- anecdotal evidence of student endorsement of employer engagement, through their curriculum, work-based learning and employer based assignments.
- how the provider is a founding member of the Research Colleges Group, with a focus on developing pedagogy and research in colleges.

Noting the specific context of the provider as not being research focussed, the panel placed weight on the evidence of employer engagement for this feature. However, the panel found this evidence did not fully demonstrate the extent to which the approaches described apply to all students and courses, nor how they were tailored to specific student groups or the impacts of these approaches.

Therefore, the panel judged there to be insufficient evidence of a very high quality feature .

Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel considered that this was a very high quality feature.

The provider submission included the following evidence considered by the panel:

- how staff have achieved national recognition for developing curricula and outstanding teaching
- support for staff to achieve Higher Education Academy Fellowship and financial support for staff to achieve teaching qualifications and master's degrees
- bi-annual staff development days, weekly training sessions and a team of Advanced Teaching Practitioners, who lead and support teaching, learning and assessment practices for different subject areas
- funding to support staff to undertake quality improvement work, as well as a coaching and mentoring programme to provide targeted training and support and a dedicated 'Research and Scholarship' lead
- student endorsements of teaching staff incorporating professional practice in the course design.

The panel judged that this evidence demonstrated very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted, which is consistent with a very high quality feature.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel considered there was insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The indicators provide very strong initial evidence that 'academic support' is below the level of very high quality for full-time and part-time students, for the majority of students and courses. There was no reportable indicator evidence for apprentices.

Additionally, the panel noted the following evidence in the provider submission:

- monitoring of student attendance, engagement and progress to identify 'at risk' students and to implement interventions, and also support offered via the provider counselling and support services
- support through a personal tutor and study skills tutor system, as well as a dedicated Research and Scholarship lead providing on-to-one support for students' research skills
- student statements praising the provider's approach to academic support and internal survey data showing that 83 per cent of students received sufficient support.

When considering the evidence from the indicators and submission, the panel took note of the provider's context and the number of students who face barriers to successful engagement in their learning, as well as their respective support needs.

However, the panel did not find that the evidence in the submission sufficiently explained and accounted for the performance suggested by the indicators. Additionally, they judged that the evidence in the submission did not provide sufficient detail for how the provider fosters a supportive learning environment, or the range and scope of the approaches.

Therefore, the panel considered that there was insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

Learning resources

The panel considered there was insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The indicators provide evidence that 'learning resources' are below the level of very high quality for full-time and part-time students, which is reflected across different student groups and courses.

Additional evidence was considered in the provider submission, including:

- a description of existing resources and investment in new resources, including a new Zoological Education Centre and an Advanced Engineering and Construction Centre
- internal survey results showing 83 per cent or more of students agreed that the resources had enhanced their learning and skills development
- student endorsement of the provider's learning resources, including digital and physical resources.

The panel did not consider the evidence in the submission to fully evidence how they use the physical and virtual learning resources effectively to support very high quality teaching for its students. Additionally, they did not consider the evidence to clearly show how these resources are tailored to different student groups, nor the impact of these resources on the student's learning experience.

The panel judged therefore that there was limited evidence of how the physical and virtual learning resources are used to effectively support very high quality teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel considered there was insufficient evidence of very high quality provision.

The indicators provide compelling initial evidence that 'student voice' is below the level of very high quality for both full-time and part-time students, which applies to all student groups and courses (where there is data). There was no indicator evidence for apprentices.

The provider submission evidence includes:

- student feedback mechanisms through a student representative system, with a lead student representative sitting on the provider's higher education steering group
- internal surveys conducted during the academic year, covering different aspects of the student experience, although methodologies and response rates were not included, and it

was not clear to the panel the extent to which surveys relate directly to the students' experiences

- positive student statements on the mechanisms used to include the student voice.

When considering the evidence, the panel judged there to be insufficient evidence of how the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements in their experience and outcomes, as well as insufficient evidence of the impact of the measures described.

The panel judged therefore, that there was insufficient evidence of a very high quality feature.

Student outcomes: Silver

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:

- four very high quality features
- one feature where there was insufficient evidence of very high quality
- one feature where there was insufficient evidence to reach a judgement on its quality.

The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Silver'. This is because its assessment best fits the description: 'all features of the aspect are very high quality for most groups of students'. The panel considered that there is evidence of typically very high quality student outcomes.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

The panel considered that this was a very high quality feature.

The provider evidence includes:

- curriculum structures and progression routes which enable underrepresented groups to access and succeed in higher education
- extensive engagement with employers and with sector clients
- transition bridging programmes for students
- tailoring of support interventions.

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

Continuation and completion rates

The panel considered that this was a very high quality feature.

The indicators provide evidence that:

- continuation is very high quality for full-time students, outstanding for part-time students, but below the level of very high quality for apprentices
- completion is very high quality for full-time students and apprentices, and outstanding for part-time students.

The provider evidence includes:

- approaches to supporting students, including attendance and progress monitoring
- the introduction of top-up programmes to provide a clear pathway for students
- a curriculum delivery review for part-time and blended programmes.

The panel considered that there are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

Progression rates

The panel considered that this was a very high quality feature.

The indicators provide evidence that:

- progression is very high quality for full-time students
- progression is very high quality for part-time students, although there is less certainty in the data
- there is no indicator evidence for apprentices.

The provider evidence includes:

- alignment of the curriculum with local skills needs and progression opportunities
- introduction of clear pathways for progression
- endorsement from an employer
- student endorsement of their progression.

The panel considered that there are very high rates of progression for the provider's students and courses.

Intended educational gains

The panel considered that this was a very high quality feature.

The provider evidence includes:

- an articulation that its educational gains involve adding value to students who enrol on the provider's higher education programmes from different starting points
- its educational gains are to provide professional skills and vocational experience to benefit students, employers and the local community.

The panel considered that the provider articulates the educational gains that it intends its students to achieve and why these are relevant to its students.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

The panel considered there was insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The provider evidence, found throughout the submission, includes extensive engagement with employers to inform curriculum development and delivery. The panel also took into account evidence relating to the 'learning environment and academic support' feature when judging this feature.

However, the panel found limited evidence in the submission relating directly to how the provider supports its students to achieve its intended educational gains.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered there was insufficient evidence to reach a judgement on the quality of this feature.

The panel did not identify any evidence relating directly to this feature, other than references to internal surveys and endorsements from students, staff and employers.

Overall: Bronze

The panel judged that the provider requires improvement for the award of a TEF rating for the student experience aspect. The panel judged that the best fit rating for the student outcomes aspect was 'Silver'.

The panel judged that the best fit overall rating is 'Bronze'. It found that there are some very high quality features, and that there are no features that may be of concern that may prevent the award of an overall rating of 'Bronze'.