



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

Bath Spa University

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at Bath Spa University 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:

- teaching, feedback, and assessment practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment
- course content and delivery effectively encourage students to engage in their learning, and stretch students to develop their knowledge and skills
- support for staff professional development is embedded and excellent academic practice is promoted across the provider
- a supportive learning environment in which students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support
- student voice embedded in quality assurance processes and academic governance.

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
- rates of continuation and completion
- well defined educational gains, including why they are relevant to students
- effective support for students to achieve defined 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.

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. The indicators are 'benchmarked' to show how well the provider performs for its particular mix of students and courses.
- a submission made by the provider, setting out its own evidence.
- a submission made by the provider's students, setting out students' views.

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

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

Bath Spa University is a medium-sized university with around 6,500 full-time undergraduate students each year. It has evolved from three faculties in 2019 to seven schools based on two main campuses in Bath. Its stated mission is to 'use creativity and innovation to successfully address today's key issues'.

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 found the student experience to be very high quality for the mix of students and courses, including students from underrepresented groups.

The panel found:

- evidence of very high quality for five features
- not enough evidence of very high quality for two features.

Though the panel did note some inconsistencies in student experience between subject area and between the two campuses, overall, the panel judged there to be evidence of typically very high quality across the aspect as a whole, consistent with a 'Silver' rating.

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

The panel considered teaching, assessment and feedback to be a very high quality feature.

Both 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' indicators give evidence of a very high quality feature.

The provider and student submissions give further evidence of very high quality performance, including:

- significant investments in systems, processes and staff to support student success
- engagement with sector and government bodies such as the Department for Education, and leading the Quality Assurance Agency Collaborative Enhancement Project on post-18 modular learning
- assessments and feedback that effectively supports student learning.

Overall, the panel concluded there to be sufficient evidence that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback, and assessment practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression and attainment.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel considered this a very high quality feature, based on evidence in the provider and student submissions. It also took the view that the provider's strategies for education, employability and digital transformation were relevant when considering this evidence.

Evidence of very high quality includes:

- a highly effective teaching approach that involves inputs from professional practitioners to help students transition between university and the world of work
- professional accreditation of courses to improve student employability
- the student submission states that 91 per cent of students agree with the statement 'My course stretches me to develop my knowledge and skills'.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider's course content and delivery effectively encourages students to engage in their learning and stretches students to develop their knowledge and skills.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

The panel considered that there is not enough evidence to demonstrate that this is a very high quality feature. This is because the evidence submitted by the provider did not expand on how research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement are used 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 provider submission includes evidence of effective approaches that are in place to ensure that staff members have all the necessary resources for professional advancement.

Further evidence of very high quality includes:

- support to achieve fellowship, including for associate lecturers, technical demonstrators and professional services staff, as well as lecturers on full and part-time contracts
- an MA in Professional Practice in Higher Education to support continued professional development for staff
- staff also have the option of undertaking a professional doctorate in education
- the presence of a Digital Learning Development team that provides training and guidance for academic staff
- vice-chancellor's awards delivered in partnership with the students' union.

The panel concluded that very high quality support for staff professional development is embedded and excellent academic practice is promoted across the provider, for example through the support for the transformation of undergraduate curriculum courses.

Learning environment and academic support

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

The indicator provided evidence of very high quality 'academic support' for full-time students, although this varies for some subjects.

The provider and student submissions include the following evidence of a very high quality feature:

- students say they experience a sense of belonging at the provider
- support is highly tailored to the needs of the students and the students feel a part of a community
- 92 per cent of the students agree they could access the academic support they need to complete their studies
- significant investments in systems, processes and staff to support student success such as the creation of a single digital hub where students can direct their queries for speedy resolution.

Overall, the panel concluded that 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 there is not enough evidence that this is a very high quality feature.

This indicator provides initial evidence that 'learning resources' is below the level of very high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses.

The student submission describes some challenges and subsequent significant investments in infrastructure such as a new building, a new digital learning hub, upgrades to computer suites and an improved wi-fi network.

However, not enough information is provided on how these upgrades would benefit the provider's mix of students. Therefore, the panel concluded that there is insufficient evidence 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 initial evidence of very high quality 'student voice' for full-time students.

The provider and student submissions include the following evidence of a very high quality feature:

- 40 per cent of students are actively engaged in an online feedback platform
- regular meetings with students' union leaders, leading to collaboration on the cost-of-living crisis
- creation of new curriculum in consultation with students.

Overall, the panel considered there is sufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature, with some areas with evidence of outstanding quality in the performing arts and computing subject areas. The panel concluded that the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students.

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.

The panel found that student outcomes are typically very high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses.

Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- most features are very high quality
- one feature that is considered to be below the level of very high 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 submission shows deliberate steps taken to address student outcomes across the institution. Evidence of this includes:

- providing opportunities for students to engage with industry professionals through a wide variety of policies, projects and processes
- students have access to academic advisers, and a new student retention and engagement team
- investing in a range of resources and activities to improve student mental health and wellbeing
- personalised support for managing transitions and promoting engagement as part of a holistic, connected and comprehensive student support ecosystem.

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

Continuation and completion rates

The panel examined the evidence in the provider submission and the indicators and considered continuation and completion rates to be very high quality feature.

The indicators provide initial evidence of very high quality continuation and completion rates for full-time students.

The provider submission gives evidence of the steps taken by the institution such as the 're-ignite' programme, launched in 2020-21, for those students returning from a study break. The panel found that this demonstrates how effective policies and processes are embedded in the provider's teaching methods to support students' continuation and completion rates.

Overall, the panel concluded that there are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

Progression rates

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

The indicator provides strong initial evidence of performance below the level of very high quality progression rates for full-time students. The panel noted that the provider submission acknowledges this and has adopted a continuous improvement mindset, focusing on four strategic priority areas: curriculum, skills, work experience and graduate support.

The panel concluded that there is insufficient evidence that there are very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

Intended educational gains

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

The provider submission articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve and the student submission outlines the number of areas of work between the provider and the student union that support the strategic priorities for educational gains.

The evidence includes:

- active and extensive external engagements with industry and industry professionals informing the development of courses
- integrating a wide range of co-curricular activities, digital literacy, funded trips, tailored learning experiences and connecting students with industry
- a range of work experience opportunities, placements and in-house university work opportunities.

The student submission provides further evidence that students feel well supported in the area of employability.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

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

The provider submission includes evidence of a range of initiatives to support students such as:

- the Bath Sparks initiative to support student entrepreneurs, and providing business development support
- the Bath Spa Works internship programme which supports students from underrepresented groups to secure paid internships

- a new leadership and empowerment programme for students of Caribbean, African, Arab and Asian heritage.

The panel concluded that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve educational gains.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel examined the evidence in the provider and student submissions, and considered there to be insufficient evidence to determine the quality of this feature.

The panel, however, noted that the absence of a provider's own developed measure of educational gains will not prevent it being awarded higher ratings.

Overall: Silver

The panel considered the overall 'best fit' rating to be 'Silver', based on the student outcomes and student experience aspect ratings.

The panel weighted student experience and student outcomes equally, and considered all the evidence across all features and across all the provider's student groups, subjects and courses to come to a 'best fit' decision regarding the overall rating for the provider.

The panel found most student experience and student outcomes features to be of a very high quality for all groups of students and courses.