



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

## **Summary TEF 2023 panel statement**

**University of Nottingham**

# Summary of outcomes

## Overall: Silver

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

- course content and delivery encourage students to engage in their learning, and stretch themselves to develop their knowledge and skills
- the provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to a very high quality academic experience
- a supportive learning environment, where students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support
- physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.

There is also an outstanding quality feature:

- outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider.

### Student outcomes: Gold

Student outcomes are typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- outstanding rates of continuation and completion
- outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses
- a clear articulation of the educational gains the provider intends for its students, including how they are high relevant to their future ambitions.

There is also a very high quality feature:

- the provider effectively supports its students to achieve its intended 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

University of Nottingham, the is a large, research-intensive institution in the East Midlands.

Over the four year TEF period, it had 128,650 students overall, of whom 80 per cent are undergraduates, the vast majority of those being full-time and studying a three-year course. An increasing number of undergraduate students (8,150 in the latest year) are on courses with postgraduate provision, while some (3,510) are on a first degree with an integrated foundation programme, and a small number study one- or two-year courses.

The provider has a wide spread of subjects and courses: 34 subjects are included in the TEF indicators.

During the TEF period, the most popular courses were Engineering (12,240 students), Business and Management (7,540) and Medicine and Dentistry (7,240).

The majority of students are under 21, the majority are white although there are significant Asian and black student groups, and there are slightly more female than male students.

The majority of students are from less deprived areas, and most students are from the UK.

The assessment considered information about all higher education courses taught by this provider at undergraduate level, with the exception of students studying overseas as part of transnational education, which the panel recognised was an optional part of the assessment.

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/](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/](https://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 quality of the student experience to be typically very high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses. Across the student experience aspect, the panel found:

- four features that are very high quality, with three of these having some outstanding elements
- one features that is outstanding
- two features that are not considered to be very high quality overall, although in both of these cases the panel found some elements which were very high quality.

The panel considered that there was evidence that some approaches are embedded, effective and tailored to students' needs, but also noted evidence of inconsistency across subject areas in many features, sometimes in subject areas with large student numbers.

Considering the composition of the features holistically, the panel judged there to be evidence that most features of the aspect are typically very high quality for most groups of students.

The panel applied the guidance and considered that 'Silver' would be the best fit. This is because the evidence indicates that most features of the aspect are either outstanding or very high quality with some outstanding elements for most groups of students, including those from under-represented backgrounds.

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

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

The panel felt that there was insufficient evidence to suggest that this was a very high quality feature, although some elements of very high quality were identified.

The overall 'teaching on my course' indicator for full-time students provides compelling initial evidence of very high quality. This is reflected across most student groups, with the exception of students studying a first degree with an integrated foundation year, mature students, and black students, where there is evidence that the quality of the provision is lower.

There is also strong evidence of provision below the level of very high quality for some courses, including Medicine and Dentistry, and Nursing and Midwifery.

The overall 'assessment and feedback' indicator provides compelling evidence of provision below the level of very high quality. This is repeated across the majority of student groups and courses, including two of the provider's largest courses; Business and Management and Medicine and Dentistry. There is however evidence of very high quality for students studying an undergraduate degree with postgraduate components, and non-UK students.

The provider suggests in its submission that the indicators may have been negatively impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. The panel noted however that the 'assessment and feedback' indicators

gave evidence of not very high quality for all four years of the TEF period, although the lowest quality is seen in the fourth year.

In addition, the submission says that the assessment and feedback evidence contrasts with its own internal data, although the panel noted low and declining response rates for one of the surveys cited. It also gives examples of good assessment practice in some subject areas, and in some cases (such as Veterinary Medicine and Surgery, and Engineering), these are higher quality indicators for these subjects.

The provider's submission describes a strategic approach to the management of education and student experience, developed through student co-creation, and says that an inclusive curriculum is one of its priorities. It highlights the provider's use of toolkits for students, noting in particular that its Social Sciences toolkit has been accessed more than 2,000 times. The provider also offers several examples of interventions designed to improve assessment and feedback.

The student submission notes that teaching, learning and education are generally well perceived by students, but notes some variability around inclusion, and encourages the provider to consider how to better embed inclusion. It also says that marking and assessment criteria are generally perceived as fair by students, but that overall satisfaction with assessment and feedback is low on many courses, and has been declining over a number of years, possibly exacerbated by the pandemic.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel considered that there were elements of very high quality in this feature regarding teaching provision, although there was evidence that this was not fully embedded across courses.

However, it judged that there was insufficient evidence in the submissions and indicators to judge that assessment and feedback were of very high quality.

As such, it concluded that it was not enough evidence of the provider embedding 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 that this was a very high quality feature, with some elements of outstanding quality.

The provider submission describes its approaches to developing course content and delivery and to student engagement in learning and stretch.

The provider is moving away from traditional approaches to curriculum deliver and assessment, and noted that some students currently feel over-assessed, but recognises that this is a long-term process. This move is being supported by a curriculum transformation programme to address course content and delivery, supplementing a framework for curriculum design centred on student co-creation. This framework was developed in 2018 and is currently being rolled out.

That programme is complemented by a curriculum management and e-assessment project, which provides digital tools for assessment and build on knowledge gained from provision during the coronavirus pandemic actions.

The panel also noted that the careers service is involved, ensuring that curricula include employability and professional competencies that are part of intended educational gains.

The student submission also gives examples of student engagement in curriculum design and delivery, and the student submission notes that students who were involved this felt that they were regularly stretched. These students also reflected that small group teaching modes would be welcomed.

Considering the evidence in the round, the TEF panel considered there was sufficient evidence to demonstrate a very high quality feature, with some outstanding elements.

The panel concluded that course content and delivery inspire the provider's students to actively engage in and commit to their learning, and stretch students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential.

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

The panel considered that this was a very high quality feature, with some elements of outstanding quality.

The provider submission includes evidence of a high level of research involvement by academic staff, and of the provider finding opportunities to develop students' understanding of research methodologies and engage directly in independent research through curricular and extra-curricular activities. It also highlights collaboration with industry and public sector through knowledge exchange, allowing it to bring employers into curriculum design and delivery, and to offer entrepreneurial education.

The submission also describes a social entrepreneurship competition, the Ingenuity Programme, which is open to all students (although the panel noted that it is unclear what the current take-up and coverage are) as well as alumni and 30 partnership organisations. This competition provides students with expert input, to support them to develop ideas for market ready products. In 2022, £89,000 of seed funding was awarded, and £750,000 worth of social impact delivered. A related programme helps students to start their own businesses and enterprises.

The provider submission details that several of its schools are integrating research and employer engagement into the curriculum in innovative ways. A group has been set up to share good practice from these initiatives, to support the ongoing curriculum transformation programme.

The panel considered that there was not clear evidence of activities relating to this feature being systematically embedded across the provider in order to rate it outstanding, though the panel did find that there were some outstanding elements of this feature, notably with regard to knowledge exchange and entrepreneurship.

The panel concluded overall 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 considered that this was an outstanding feature.

The provider submission outlined the provider's development framework, which includes a recognition scheme and postgraduate qualifications, through which line managers support teaching staff to develop reflective practice and to share it with others. This is supported by a range of continuing professional development events and short courses, and a teaching and curriculum leadership career pathway.

The panel also noted that:

- all new teaching staff must achieve qualification or recognition within two years of appointment, and that staff are allocated time to undertake qualifications
- the provider exceeded its target of 75 per cent of academic staff to hold a teaching qualification recognised by the Higher Education Statistics Agency by 2020. Its target is now 100 per cent by 2025
- there is a programme of digital learning directors across faculties, and a clear development scheme for technicians.

The panel considered that the evidence shows an embedded and strategic development of staff professional development and academic practice.

Overall, the panel concluded that there was sufficient evidence to demonstrate that outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider.

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

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

The indicator provides compelling initial evidence of very high quality 'academic support' across almost all student groups.

However, there is variability across subjects which the panel found not to be addressed by the provider in its submission.

The provider submission describes:

- a student support strategy built around a comprehensive framework of support through personal tutoring. The structure includes a network that is headed by a university senior tutor who leads 131 schools-based senior tutors, who in turn lead personal tutors, all of whom undertake annual training
- a student engagement dashboard launched in 2021 to help personal tutors to offer better support, which is now also used in areas such as attendance and engagement
- a programme of transition and induction which starts before students arrive, including a survey which is used to design tailored induction programmes
- a range of support mechanisms such as webinars and facilitated online study sessions, which are responsive to individual learning needs and provide tailored support to students from underrepresented backgrounds
- a British Council-accredited centre providing support for students with English as an additional language. It had 4,165 registrations in 2021-22.

The student submission describes a degree of inconsistency in personal tutor support, and that while students felt that staff were contactable, guidance on progress was less consistent. A student survey in 2021 suggested that relatively few students knew who to ask about workload.



The panel concluded that, despite the inconsistency across courses, there was sufficient evidence that the provider fosters a supportive learning environment, and that its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support.

## **Learning resources**

The panel considered that this was a very high quality feature, with some elements of outstanding provision.

The overall 'learning resources' indicator for full-time students provides compelling initial evidence of very high quality for almost all student groups, as well as across all four years of the TEF period, with an improvement in the final year. However, there is inconsistency across subjects, with Medicine showing evidence of not very high quality, while Veterinary Science shows evidence of outstanding quality.

The provider submission describes a clear strategy for learning resources, and investment in this area. The strategy includes a digital project, which started in 2018, through which more than £5 million has been invested to improve digital infrastructure and to develop digital literacy.

The submission details significant investments across 22 major teaching and learning developments, including a new accessible teaching building, and specialist facilities like those for the Veterinary School.

Significant investment has also been made into library facilities. The provider has eight libraries with significant print holdings, e-resources, and archives. IT support is designed as a staff and student partnership to be responsive to student needs, and includes a network of student IT tutors who provide peer-to-peer support.

The provider submission says that resources are rated highly by students, and this is reflected in the student submission, although the students were less positive about access to specialist equipment, and that Wi-Fi was not reliable in all areas of campus. It was also suggested that students sometimes felt that they should take on the costs of buying themselves software for modules.

The panel considered from the evidence that this was a very high quality feature for most students including those from underrepresented backgrounds, with some elements of outstanding provision, but with some inconsistency across courses. The panel therefore concluded that physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning.

## **Student engagement in improvement**

The panel felt that there was insufficient evidence to suggest that this was a very high quality feature, although some elements of very high quality were identified.

The 'student voice' indicator provided compelling initial evidence of not very high quality both overall, as well as across most student groups and many courses. There was a decline across the TEF period with evidence of very high quality in year 1, but quality dropping in each of the three following years.

The provider suggests in its submission that its internal data are more positive than these indicators, but the panel noted that response rates were low.

The provider sets out its vision of working in partnership with students, and described a network of student representatives, student focus groups, student ambassadors, and a new student engagement associates scheme.

The provider submission reflects that while many opportunities for feedback are given to students, students are not always confident that feedback is acted on and valued. The provider suggests that there may be a lack of clarity about the relevance of learning activity and that where clarity has been worked on, indicators improve, such as in the example of the Veterinary School, for which there is compelling evidence in the indicators of outstanding quality.

The student submission corroborates this sense that feedback has not been valued or action not taken in response to this, especially in the context of course improvements. It also noted distinct differences between courses. However, the student submission was also positive towards some of the student engagement programmes.

Considering the evidence in the round, the considered that while there were elements of very high quality in this feature, there was insufficient evidence overall that student engagement in improvement was fully embedded across courses and student groups, including those from under-represented groups.

The panel concluded that there was not enough evidence 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 the quality of the student outcomes to be typically outstanding quality for the provider's mix of students and courses. Across the student outcomes aspect, the panel found:

- four features are outstanding
- one feature is very high quality
- one feature for which there is insufficient evidence to judge quality
- compelling evidence that the very high quality and outstanding features apply to all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups.

The panel applied guidance and considered the best fit rating to be 'Gold', because most features are outstanding for all groups of students and courses.

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

## **Approaches to supporting student success**

The panel considered that this was an outstanding feature.

The provider submission evidences an overarching strategy for student outcomes and educational gains, and argues that its continuation, completion and progression data shows that it is successfully providing tailored and inclusive services.

The provider states that its mission is to prepare students to collaborate in learning, scholarship, and discovery across all realms of knowledge, solving problems and improving lives, and these aims are framed as education gains for its students. Since 2018, all degree courses are required to embed professional competencies in the curriculum: professional communication, coordinating with others, digital capabilities, and reflection. Since 2019, students have had access to an online personalised learning system that helps them to focus on their individual career skills.

The panel noted that progression outcomes and educational gains are supported by a wide range of placements and internships, including a new policy allowing undergraduates on programmes without a placement year to choose to take one.

The provider's data demonstrate that participation in a placement or internship boosts graduate outcomes across student groups, with benefits for students with a reported disability particularly evident. The provider notes that indicators show there are no differential outcomes for students beginning their undergraduate journey with additional challenges or disadvantage, as is seen in the 'Continuation and completion rates' and 'Progression rates' features below.

Considering all the evidence for this feature, the panel concluded that the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies, which is consistent with an outstanding feature.

## **Continuation and completion rates**

The panel considered that this was an outstanding feature.

The indicator provides compelling initial evidence of outstanding 'continuation' for both full-time and part-time students. This is reflected across all full-time student groups, including those from underrepresented groups, and for the majority of part-time student groups, and is also the case for the majority of courses.

The overall 'completion' indicator for full-time students gives evidence of very high quality performance, with numerous split indicators giving evidence of outstanding quality, including for many underrepresented groups. For part-time students, the indicator gives clear evidence of outstanding quality.

The student submission suggests that more tailored support may be needed, particularly around guidance and workload, in order for some students to continue and complete.

The panel also considered measures, described in the 'Learning environment and academic support' feature, which support continuation and completion for all groups of students.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel concluded that there are outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

## **Progression rates**

The panel found this to be an outstanding feature.

The 'progression' indicator provided compelling initial evidence of very high quality for full-time students, and initial evidence of very high quality, but with less certainty in the data, for part-time students. This is also true of the majority of student groups, although for some student groups there is evidence of outstanding quality.

The provider submission gives evidence of how these students, including those from underrepresented groups, are supported to progress. This includes targeted financial support, mentoring with external role models including alumni, events, and specific support and services for mature, care experienced and estranged students.

The provider submission details further data analysis undertaken by the provider, looking graduate outcomes data and rankings, and making comparisons based on student starting points, in order to demonstrate added value.

The student submission is positive towards the structures, mechanisms and processes put in place to promote employment and further study, although it does identify a need for more support for those on non-vocational courses.

The panel noted that there are no differential outcomes for underrepresented groups beginning their undergraduate journey with additional challenges or disadvantage.

Overall, the panel considered from the evidence that there are outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

## **Intended educational gains**

The panel considered that this was an outstanding feature.

The panel considered that the ethos underpinning educational gains, set out in the 'Approaches to supporting student success' feature, demonstrates a strategic approach in which employment and further study outcomes are considered hand-in-hand with educational gains.

The panel also noted that the provider submission indicates that educational gains include proactive citizenship, value added employment, civic engagement, global engagement and inclusive outlook. These are reviewed in order to ensure that they are aligned to workforce needs.

The submission states that international campuses in China and Malaysia provide considerable opportunities for students to develop as global citizens thanks to initiatives such as collaborative teaching and overseas placements. During the TEF period, nearly 3,000 UK campus students chose to take an overseas placement, including 436 students with a declared disability.

Based on the evidence, the panel considered that the provider clearly articulates the range 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 that this was a very high quality feature.

The panel found that the provider articulates effectively how skills and competencies including professional competencies are enabled through curriculum, teaching and learning experiences.

Co- and extra-curricular activities also contribute to the of educational gains, with the student submission saying that the Nottingham Advantage Award is highly regarded. This scheme offers a wide choice of optional modules, ensuring that opportunities are available to all and not constrained by necessary choices such as part-time work. Since 2018-19, 3,604 students have completed 5,881 modules through this scheme.

The panel considered from the evidence that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve its intended educational gains, in line with a very high quality feature.

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

The panel considered that there was insufficient evidence in the provider submission to suggest that this was yet a very high quality feature.

The provider describes that currently, evaluation support for students from underrepresented backgrounds is through continuation, completion, and progression outcomes. The panel noted that a line between specific support through the curriculum and how this is evaluated is not yet clearly drawn.

The panel concluded that there was not sufficient evidence that the provider evaluates the gains made by its students.

## **Overall: Silver**

The panel considered the student experience aspect rating to be 'Silver' and the student outcomes aspect rating to be 'Gold'.

It weighted these two aspects 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.

In reaching its decision, the panel considered there to be evidence that the outstanding and very high quality features typically apply to all the provider's groups of students.

When determining whether the overall rating should be 'Silver' or 'Gold', the panel noted that the majority of student experience features were of very high quality, with two features that were not considered to be very high quality. There was also evidence of inconsistency of provision across subject areas, across the features.

Applying the guidance and the panel members' expert judgment, the panel considered the overall best fit rating to be 'Silver', as the features were typically a combination of very high and outstanding quality.