



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

Staffordshire University

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at Staffordshire 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:

- course content and delivery effectively encourage students to engage in their learning, and stretch them to develop their knowledge and skills
- very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted
- fostering 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
- effectively engaging with students, leading to improvements to their experiences and outcomes.

There is also one outstanding quality feature:

- embedding outstanding teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are highly effective and tailored to supporting students' learning, progression, and attainment.

Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

- effectively supporting students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- very high rates of continuation and completion for students and courses
- very high rates of successful progression for students and courses
- articulating the educational gains intended for students to achieve, and why these are relevant to 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
- 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

Staffordshire University sets out that it has ‘a strong civic mission’ and seeks to ‘widen access to underrepresented groups, facilitate social mobility and improve quality of life’ for those in its wider communities. It describes itself as a ‘teaching intensive and research inspired university’, with a focus on ‘academic experience which delivers excellence in work integrated learning, digital innovation and entrepreneurial skills and behaviours’.

The provider has campuses in Stoke-on-Trent, Stafford and London. In 2020-21 it had 9,870 full-time and 2,340 part-time undergraduate students, along with 1,800 undergraduate apprenticeship students. Most full-time students (over 80 per cent) study at first degree level, while around 20 per cent of part-time students take a first degree.

Students study a wide range of subjects, with the most popular for full-time students being Computing, followed by Creative Arts and Design, and Nursing and Midwifery. For part-time students the largest subject is Engineering.

The majority (around two thirds) of full-time students are under 21 years, while this is around 10 per cent of part-time students and around a quarter of apprenticeship undergraduates.

The assessment considered information about the provider’s undergraduate courses and students on those courses. This includes undergraduate 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 considered that the student experience is typically very high quality. Across the aspect the panel found:

- most features are very high quality
- one feature is outstanding
- there was not enough evidence to judge one feature as very high quality.

The panel judged there is evidence that the outstanding and very high quality features apply to most of the provider's groups of students, including those from underrepresented groups

The panel applied the criteria and found the 'best fit' rating to be 'Silver'. This is because there is typically very high or outstanding quality for most groups of students, 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 found this feature to be outstanding.

The indicators showed that:

- for full-time students there is strong evidence 'teaching on my course' is outstanding and compelling evidence 'assessment and feedback' is outstanding. However, there is some variation in quality for different subject areas
- for part-time students there is very strong evidence 'teaching on my course' is very high quality
- for apprenticeships there is strong evidence 'teaching on my course' is very high quality and initial evidence that 'assessment and feedback' is very high quality
- there was limited certainty in the data for some indicators.

The panel considered that the indicators provided initial evidence that the provider's performance was very high quality, or outstanding, for most groups and courses. The panel considered the numbers of students in each group, and weighted the evidence accordingly.

The provider and student submissions add further evidence, including:

- an academic strategy that serves as the platform to deliver change and impact for students

- 97 per cent of external examiner reports showed satisfaction with the methods of teaching and learning in 2021-22
- the connected curriculum continuum, part of the academic strategy, is embedded in all courses. It supports academic attainment and the development of work ready graduates
- use of authentic assessments such as live briefs, including an example in Forensic Science
- ambitious plans to develop and embed simulation based education in all courses. This builds on sector recognised work and the provider has received external funding, for example from Health Education England
- support for employability through industry placements and internships through the innovation enterprise zone, which is one of only 20 Research England sponsored enterprise zones
- students highlight assessment and feedback practice as a strength. However, there are also comments that analysis of National Student Survey results identified 'organisation and management' as a priority area for attention.

The panel considered there is evidence of effective and tailored teaching, assessment and feedback practices which apply to the mix of students, including those from underrepresented groups.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel concluded the provider has embedded outstanding teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are highly effective and tailored to supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The provider submission includes evidence that:

- the connected curriculum continuum inspires students to actively engage and commit to their studies. It stretches students through live assessment briefs, active teaching methods, internships, and placement opportunities
- phenomenon-based learning and developing career-focussed employability are some of the novel approaches being applied, with some evidence of improved student satisfaction. However, it is not clear how embedded these approaches are.

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

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

The panel considered there is not enough evidence to judge this feature to be very high quality.

The provider submission includes evidence, such as:

- how links with industry and the innovation enterprise zone support employability development
- that 15 per cent of courses are accredited or recognised by external bodies
- how a 2019 national undergraduate employability award for a partnership has enabled 28 joint projects in forensic science, although the number of students involved is not clear
- that final-year law students provide supervised legal advice to the general public through the university's legal clinic. However, whether this module is core or optional, or the number of students involved is not clear
- how analysis of validation panel reports found evidence of strong partnership ties to industry and community
- that Research Education Framework 2021 results show that 87 per cent of research impact was very considerable or outstanding and 68 per cent was internationally excellent or world-leading. However, it is not clear how this research contributes directly to academic experience or how students can access research expertise, resource and support.

The panel considered that, while evidence was shared in the provider submission, it was less clear how efforts translated into learning experience. There was also a lack of evidence regarding the provider's approach to integrating research, innovation, scholarship, professional experience or employer engagement was systematic across the provider.

Looking at the evidence overall, the panel concluded that there is insufficient evidence to show the provider's use of research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement contributes to a very high quality academic experience for its students.

Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The provider submission includes evidence of very high quality, such as:

- two organisational units to support internal communities of practice, with bursaries and professional development support available for staff to pursue learning and teaching scholarship
- annual 'celebrating staff success' awards that recognise teaching excellence
- 66 per cent of staff hold fellowships, including three national teaching fellows, five principal fellows and 105 senior fellows
- two career pathways offer staff the opportunity to evidence their learning and teaching impact as part of the promotion exercise. However the panel noted that there is no detail of how many staff are on these pathways.

Overall, the panel found that there is very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted.

Learning environment and academic support

The indicator shows that:

- for full-time students, there is compelling evidence that 'academic support' is outstanding, although the panel found evidence of performance below the level of very high quality for some subject groups
- for part-time students there is limited certainty in the data, although the panel found evidence of performance below the level of very high quality for some groups of students
- for apprenticeship students, there is some initial evidence that 'academic support' is above benchmark, though not materially so

The panel considered the indicators to give evidence of a mixture of very high and outstanding quality for most groups of students, and weighted the evidence according to the size of the different groups.

The provider and student submissions outlined further evidence, including:

- personalised academic support offered in three different ways: academic mentors who use learning analytics; group and one-to-one academic skills sessions; and peer mentoring
- library and academic skills support with multiple touch points at each level of study
- an academic mentoring programme is under development with input from students
- students highlight a task and finish group which was established following student feedback to improve the learning support statement process
- financial support is available for students where needed.

The panel considered the variable evidence in the indicators alongside evidence in the submissions, and found that the provider demonstrates a very high quality supportive learning environment, that is easily available to students through a three pronged approach.

Looking at all the evidence, 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 found this feature is very high quality.

The indicator shows that:

- there is compelling evidence that 'learning resources' are very high quality for full-time students. However, there was some variation in quality for different subject areas

- for part-time students there is compelling evidence that 'learning resources' are below the level of very high quality
- for apprenticeship students there is limited certainty in the data, although the panel found evidence of performance below the level of very high quality for some student groups

Overall the panel considered the evidence in the indicators to give initial evidence of very high quality for most students and groups.

The provider and student submissions added evidence, including:

- investment in a new £43 million catalyst building to support implementation of the academic strategy; a £5.6 million simulation facilities for the centre for health innovation; and a £4.4 million day nursery and school for early years education students
- the digital on demand library transformation has increased access to digital learning resources
- significant investment during coronavirus to address digital poverty including 4G broadband, laptops and laptop loans for the dependents of students
- students highlight that an action plan was developed and funding given to improve issues in the catalyst building after they were reported.

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

Student engagement in improvement

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The indicator shows:

- for full-time students there is compelling evidence that 'student voice' is outstanding. However, there is some variation for different subject areas
- for part-time students there is strong evidence that 'student voice' is very high quality
- for apprenticeship students there is very strong evidence that 'student voice' is outstanding.

The evidence in the provider and student submissions includes:

- how students contribute to university discourse and decision making, including in the development of digital teaching methods, timetabling policy and the student futures manifesto, among others
- there are 257 trained course representatives
- regular student surveys are used, including module evaluation surveys

- students are represented on key committees, including the board of governors and quality enhancement committee, among others. The student submission comments that student voice is present and valued at every level of boards and committees
- students highlight their involvement in a review of academic regulations.

The panel found that it was unclear from the written evidence how positive change is made in an embedded and systemic way. The panel found evidence of good practice, but not enough evidence of how this led to continuous improvement in order to assess this feature as outstanding.

The panel considered the evidence in the round and concluded the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to their experiences and outcomes. This is consistent with 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.

The panel found student outcomes are typically very high quality. Across the aspect the panel found:

- most features are very high quality
- there is not enough evidence to judge two features to be very high quality.

The panel found evidence that the very high quality features apply to all the provider's groups of students, including those from underrepresented groups.

The panel applied the criteria using its expert judgement and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Silver'. This is because most features of the aspect are very high quality for all groups of students, consistent with a rating of 'Silver'.

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

Approaches to supporting student success

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The submissions showed evidence, including:

- connected curriculum continuum supports academic attainment and the development of work ready graduates
- continuous course monitoring provides ongoing enhancement
- there is induction and transition support, which includes a spiral induction to help students through their first term and a quiet induction for students with diverse needs

- an attendance and engagement monitoring dashboard provides learner analytics and allows staff to support students at risk of disengaging from their studies
- over 75 per cent of graduates who came from Staffordshire found employment within the local area
- an employability services team delivers events and activities to support graduate outcomes, including an annual event which attracts over 130 employers. At the 2022 event, 51 per cent of employers made a job offer to a student
- careers and employability support is extended beyond graduation. The graduate projects office supports unemployed graduates or those unable to progress successfully to the graduate level labour market
- a business start-up programme supports 40 students and graduates annually to set up their own business
- students highlight support for welcome and induction activities.

Overall, looking at all the evidence provided, the panel concluded that the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies. This is consistent with a very high quality feature.

Continuation and completion rates

The panel considered this feature to be very high quality.

The indicators showed that:

- for full-time students there is compelling evidence that both 'continuation' and 'completion' are very high quality
- for part-time students there is compelling evidence that both 'continuation' and 'completion' are outstanding
- for apprenticeship students there is compelling evidence that 'continuation' is very high quality and very strong evidence 'completion' is outstanding.

The panel considered there is some variation in quality for the 'continuation' and 'completion' indicators when looking at different subjects and student groups. However, it noted that any performance below very high quality is for relatively small subject areas and groups.

In weighing up the indicator evidence, the panel concluded that there are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

Progression rates

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The indicators showed that:

- for full-time and part-time students there is compelling evidence that 'progression' is very high quality
- for apprenticeship students there is strong evidence that 'progression' is outstanding.

The panel examined the 'progression' indicators for different subjects and student groups and found some variation in quality. However, it noted that those falling below very high quality are for relatively small subject areas and groups.

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

Intended educational gains

The panel found this feature to be very high quality.

The panel noted the provider aims for students to achieve individual educational gains for learners that are the transformative outcomes of higher education participation: independence and self efficacy, higher level knowledge and skills, graduate level work readiness, and collaborative and responsive problem solving.

The provider also outlines that its academic experience delivers excellence in digital innovation, entrepreneurial skills and behaviours and extensive, tailored subject specific and transferable work integrated learning curricula for all students.

The panel noted the provider also considers collective educational gains and how these transform opportunities in its region and its communities.

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

Approaches to supporting educational gains

The panel considered there is not enough evidence to judge this feature as very high quality.

The panel noted the approach outlined is fluid and expected to evolve in line with policy developments. It considered helpful examples of two educational gains with measures to evaluate both, which provided some assurance of a well considered approach. However, the panel found evidence does not cover all of the educational gains identified by the provider.

Overall, the panel concluded that there is insufficient evidence that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve the educational gains. Therefore it could not rate this as a very high quality feature.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered there is insufficient evidence to judge this feature as very high quality.

The panel noted evaluation approaches for the two educational gains of subject specific knowledge and skills and career readiness. Therefore it considered there is evidence of planned approaches to evaluate two of the educational gains made by students.

Considering the evidence in the round, the panel concluded that there was insufficient evidence of very high quality overall, whereby the provider evaluates the gains made by its students.

Overall: Silver

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

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

The panel found the provider understands the needs of their students and the impact their students could and do have on the local area and surrounding region. The panel considered the provider is effectively supporting its mix of students.

The panel judged 'Silver' as the best fit, as student experience and student outcomes are both rated 'Silver', meaning there is typically very high quality for all groups of students.