



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

Falmouth University

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at Falmouth 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:

- embedded very high quality 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 learning, and stretches them to develop knowledge and skills
- use of research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement
- very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted
- a supportive learning environment, and 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 one outstanding quality feature:

- embedded engagement with students, leading to continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes of students.

Student outcomes: Silver

Student outcomes are typically very high quality.

Very high quality features include:

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

About the assessment

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is a national scheme run by the Office for Students (OfS) that aims to encourage universities and colleges (providers) to improve and deliver excellent teaching, learning and student outcomes.

The TEF does this by assessing and rating providers for excellence above the high quality baseline that we expect from all providers. It covers undergraduate courses.

Throughout this document, we use the terms ‘outstanding’ and ‘very high quality’, which are defined in terms of the TEF 2023 assessment as follows:

- ‘outstanding’: the quality of the student experience or outcomes are among the very best in the sector, for the mix of students and courses taught by a provider
- ‘very high quality’: the quality of the student experience or outcomes are materially above the relevant high quality minimum requirements, for the mix of students and courses taught by a provider.

The assessment was carried out in 2022-23 by the TEF Panel, a panel of academics and students who are experts in learning and teaching. This document sets out a summary of the panel’s findings and judgements.

The panel reviewed the following evidence:

- numerical indicators produced by the OfS, using national datasets
- a submission made by the provider, setting out its own evidence
- a submission made by the provider’s students, setting out students’ views.

The panel applied its expert judgement to:

- identify particular features of the student experience and student outcomes that are excellent (above the high quality baseline requirements)
- decide a rating for the ‘student experience’ and for ‘student outcomes’
- decide an overall rating for the provider.

Throughout the assessment the panel took account of the context of the provider and judged how well it delivers teaching, learning and student outcomes for its mix of students and courses.

In making its decisions the panel took account of the OfS general duties and the public sector equalities duty.

Summary of panel assessment

Information about this provider

Falmouth University is a small specialist provider in a region that has low participation in higher education. The most popular subject area is Creative Arts and Design with the next largest subject cohort being Performing Arts.

Students either study on campuses in Cornwall, study fully online, or study at partner organisations around the world. Student numbers have grown during the TEF assessment period with 6,500 students in 2020-21, with 4,980 full-time and 20 part-time undergraduate students. In addition to both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, the university also has a small number of offshore Trans-National Education (TNE) students.

The students' union represents student members from both Falmouth University and The University of Exeter, Cornwall campuses. The universities share a campus in Penryn and students share many non-teaching facilities, including commercial services, accommodation, wellbeing support services and academic support services. Falmouth University has a higher-than-average population of students who identify as LGBTQ+: In 2021/22, 29 per cent of students identified as something other than heterosexual.

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 <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: 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 academic experience is very high quality for the provider's mix of students and courses.

The panel found:

- six features are very high quality
- one feature is outstanding
- no features were below the level of very high quality.

The panel found 'Silver' to be a better fit rather than 'Gold' because most features of the aspect are typically very high quality and not typically outstanding quality. The panel judged that the evidence shows that the aspect is very high quality for almost all groups of students and that the overall rating of 'Silver' was the best fit.

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

The panel found that teaching, assessment and feedback is a very high quality feature.

The 'teaching on my course' indicator provides initial evidence of a very high quality feature for most student groups.

The 'assessment and feedback' indicator provides initial evidence of a very high quality feature for full-time students. However, for both indicators, there were variations in performance for minority ethnic groups

Additional evidence in the provider and student submission includes:

- strong evidence of the use of industry-aligned assessment methods that are directly relevant to its groups of students
- significant evidence of clarity between the provider, its staff and students on the teaching and learning approach, including the 'Hitchhikers Guide to Curriculum Design'
- strong evidence that students are largely supportive of the approach to learning and teaching through workshops, practical exercises and tutorials that are either scheduled or sign-up based
- evidence that some activities are tailored to students, as well as personalised timetabled teaching in the final year.

Overall, the panel found that the submission clearly outlines the impact of improvements during the assessment period, including how the impact of the pandemic was managed and experienced by

its students. The evidence shows the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment. Therefore, this led the panel to conclude that this was a very high quality feature.

Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The panel considered this a very high quality feature.

Evidence in the student and provider submission included:

- outstanding curriculum engagement practices that are directly relevant to its mix of students and courses, such as twice-yearly workshops and festivals, enabling students to use facilities beyond their course requirements to stretch and develop students
- provider development and student engagement that connects students' particular choices, including 'Wednesday Open Workshops' to enable students to expand and explore their learning.

There is also some evidence provided by the submissions of delivery that effectively encourages the provider's students to engage in their learning, and that the approaches stretch students to develop their knowledge and skills.

Overall, the panel judged that the course content and delivery effectively encourages the provider's students to engage in their learning and stretches students to develop their knowledge and skills. The panel found that this demonstrates a high quality feature.

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement

The panel considered this a very high quality feature.

The evidence of very high quality in the submission includes:

- substantive evidence of effective and directly relevant engagement with industry and professional stakeholders across its provision
- evidence of the approach of embedding research, particularly through research-informed teaching with students' active participants in cutting-edge research.

The submission provides some very strong evidence that the provider uses engagement with professional practice and/or employers to contribute to an academic experience that is above the relevant high quality minimum requirements for the mix of students and courses taught by a provider. However, the panel noted that there is limited evidence in the submission of how this has been embedded in the provider over the assessment period and how it is tailored to the context of the provider's mix of students. Therefore, the panel found that this demonstrates a very high quality, rather than an outstanding, feature.

Staff professional development and academic practice

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

The evidence of very high quality in the provider and student submission includes:

- holding an annual learning and teaching convention as a primary vehicle for staff development
- very high quality support for staff professional development, promoting excellent academic practice.

The student submission also highlights high levels of positive feedback on teaching and technical staff, where the high levels of industry knowledge are highly valued. It also provides some evidence of the impact on student satisfaction from staff professional development on teaching.

Overall, the panel concluded that the provider ensures very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted. It was not judged to be an outstanding feature as there is little evidence of how effective staff development is at promoting academic practice across all the provider's groups of students.

Therefore, considering the evidence in the round the panel considered the evidence to demonstrate a very high quality feature.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel found that this is a very high quality feature.

The indicators for full-time students provide initial evidence of very high quality 'academic support' for the majority of provider's groups of students.

The provider and student submissions give strong evidence of a very high quality feature, such as:

- the student submission provided 12 different evidence sections related to the support that is provided to students and how students are supported in their study
- an integrated approach for academic support, including the student information dashboard, the Step into Falmouth induction programme, student mentors for every student joining the university and a student peer support at scale.

Overall, it was judged that the provider fosters a supportive learning environment, and that the majority of its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support. Considering the evidence, the panel concluded that this demonstrates a very high quality feature.

Learning resources

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

The overall 'learning resources' indicator provides strong initial evidence of very high quality. Although, there is weaker evidence of very high quality of the provider's Business and Management, English and Architecture courses.

The panel considered evidence in the submissions and judged there to be limited further evidence on the embeddedness and coverage of the practices described, as well as limited evidence about the effectiveness of these practices in supporting very high quality teaching and learning.

Overall however, the panel considered that the submissions and indicators provide enough evidence that the physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support very high quality teaching and learning for nearly all student groups and for all courses. Therefore, this led the panel to conclude this to be a very high quality feature.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel considered this an outstanding feature.

The overall full-time 'student voice' indicator provides strong initial evidence of a very high quality feature for most groups of students.

The submissions supplement this by providing evidence of an outstanding feature:

- the student submission provides some very strong evidence of the effectiveness of student voice and how this leads to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students
- the provider submission describes an embedded continuous improvement cycle, with student feedback integral to this
- the processes of student voice are connected to a process of improvement for student experience through the annual monitoring process.

Overall, the panel concluded that evidence shows that the provider ensures that engagement with its students is embedded, leading to continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes of its students. As the provider delivers this excellence for nearly all student groups and for all courses, the panel found this to be an outstanding 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 features that are very high quality
- the very high quality features apply broadly to nearly all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups, which are a high proportion of the provider's students
- two features where there is not enough evidence of very high quality.

The panel found that there was enough evidence that most features are very high quality, for nearly all groups of students and courses. The panel therefore considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Silver.' This is because most features are high quality 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 this to be a very high quality feature.

The evidence from the provider and student submissions included evidence on:

- the deliberate steps taken to tailor its approach to meet the needs of creative industry practice, providing opportunities for students to engage with industry professionals
- the use of specialist studios and access to academic staff with relevant experience
- deliberate steps taken to address student outcomes across the institution, providing opportunities for students to engage with the local region through a wide variety of policies, projects and processes
- projects and their positive impacts and effectiveness, such as: the triple intervention initiative; the 'steadyding the pace' model (spreading the occurrence of teaching and assessment); universal academic enhancement weeks; and a focus on resit / fail students with step-by-step targeted support, feedback, and coaching

The panel noted that the provider and student submissions provide some evidence of the effectiveness of its policies on different student groups, particularly from underrepresented backgrounds. However, it was judged that the submissions do provide sufficient evidence that the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

Overall, the panel found the provider effectively supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies, which demonstrates a very high quality feature.

Continuation and completion rates

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

The indicator provides some initial evidence that 'continuation' is very high quality for full-time students, with some variation across courses and groups of students. In addition, the 'completion' indicator provides some initial evidence of very high quality for full-time students.

The submissions were judged to provide limited evidence on rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses. However, the panel noted that the indicators evidence provide more direct measures of student outcomes, and that the quality of the feature can be identified without requiring further evidence in the submission.

Overall therefore, the panel found there are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses. Therefore, this led the panel to conclude that this shows a very high quality feature.

Progression rates

The panel considered there to be not enough evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The 'progression' indicator for full time students shows evidence of both very high quality and not very high quality, however the panel was not able to reach a judgement due to insufficient certainty in the data.

The panel therefore looked to the evidence outlined in the provider and student submissions, which includes information regarding portfolio careers in the creative industries and the incidence of these in relation to the overall economy. However, the submissions do not provide evidence to demonstrate very high rates of other types of positive outcomes for its students.

Therefore, the panel considered that there is not enough evidence to suggest a very high quality feature.

Intended educational gains

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

The provider and student submission evidence includes evidence of:

- how educational gains are embedded within departmental operational plans, developed within the curriculum, and contextualised within programme outcomes
- how work between the provider and the students' union supports the strategic priority areas for educational gains, but with a heavy focus on work readiness and personal development.

The panel found the submissions offer good evidence that the provider articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve and why these are relevant to its students. However, the range of these educational gains, and why these are highly relevant to its students and their future ambitions is not developed, so the panel did not find enough evidence to indicate an outstanding feature.

Overall, the panel found the provider articulates the educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students. This demonstrates a very high quality feature.

Approaches to supporting educational gains

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

It considered the evidence outlined in the provider and student submissions, including:

- strong evidence of how it effectively supports its students, in particular its support for student entrepreneurship, for example, the REAL model and work readiness online courses
- information on academic development, personal development and work readiness
- evidence of work between the provider and the students' union that supports strategic priority areas for educational gains, with a heavy focus on work readiness.

Overall, the panel considered there was enough evidence that the provider effectively supports its students to achieve these gains, and concluded therefore that this was a very high quality feature.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered there to be not enough evidence of very high quality for this feature.

The submission provided information regarding how the provider articulates the education gains its students should achieve and how it supports students to achieve these. However, it does not provide evidence of how it evaluates the success of students in achieving the gains, outside of the assessment of the core curriculum.

As such, the panel judged overall that there is not enough evidence of high quality for how the provider evaluates and demonstrates its educational gains.

Overall: Silver

The panel rated the student experience aspect 'Silver' and the student outcomes aspect 'Silver'.

The panel found most student experience features to be of very high quality for most groups of students and courses, and most student outcomes features to be of very high quality for nearly all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups and courses. The panel also found there to be some outstanding quality student experience and outcomes features. For this reason, the panel judged an overall rating of 'Silver'.