



Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

Summary TEF 2023 panel statement

Contemporary Dance Trust Limited

Summary of outcomes

Overall: Silver

Typically, the experience students have at the Contemporary Dance Trust Limited and the outcomes it leads to are very high quality.

Student experience: Gold

The student academic experience is typically outstanding.

Outstanding quality features include:

- course content and delivery inspire students to actively engage in and commit to their learning, and stretch them to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential
- a supportive learning environment and access to a range of outstanding quality academic support
- tailored physical and virtual learning resources are used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning
- embedded engagement with students, leading to continuous improvements to the experiences and outcomes of students.

There are also three very high quality features:

- embedding very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that support students' learning, progression, and attainment
- using research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement
- very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted.

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
- effectively supporting students to achieve educational gains
- evaluates the gains made by its students

There are also two outstanding quality features:

- outstanding rates of successful progression for students and courses
- a clear articulation of the educational gains the provider intends its students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to students and their future ambitions.

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

Contemporary Dance Trust Limited (CDT) is a small and specialist institution located in central London delivering highly specialised and intensive dance training.

The provider had around 170 full-time undergraduate students in 2020-21 and the submission notes there are 203 students in 2022-23. There are no part-time students. The single undergraduate course in contemporary dance is validated by University of the Arts London.

The provider trades as 'The Place' in relation to its overall functions, and 'London Contemporary Dance School' (LCDS or 'the School') in relation to its higher education (HE) functions. The Place is a renowned professional producing dance venue and Arts Council England funded National Portfolio Organisation. It shares The Place's vision of 'a world with more dance' and its mission to 'power imagination through dance'.

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: Gold

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 is typically outstanding, with the provider embedding effective approaches to support its students. Across the student experience aspect, the panel found:

- four outstanding features
- three very high quality features.

The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Gold'. This is because most features are outstanding for all groups of students and courses.

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

Teaching, assessment, and feedback

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

The indicators provide initial evidence of:

- outstanding quality for 'teaching on my course'
- very high quality for 'assessment and feedback'.

The provider and student submissions show evidence of a very high quality feature, for example:

- expert teachers delivering a diverse range of dance practices and teaching methods, honing students' skills as investigative, critically reflective, and independent lifelong learners
- adopting University of the Arts London assessment criteria and feedback process, ensuring that learning outcomes, activities, and assessments are aligned
- continuously driving for improvement to maintain high standards of teaching, feedback, and assessment
- positive feedback from students on the exceptional learning environment created by the supportive teachers and staff, fostering inspiration, creativity, and curiosity
- unique opportunities for students to engage and network within a creative community at The Place, enhancing their learning experience
- the teaching staff, consisting of current or former dance professionals, is supplemented by guest teaching when necessary.

The panel considered there to be some practices, such as the University of the Arts London assessment methodology and a new learning and teaching strategy that could be considered outstanding when successfully rolled out to all student groups.

The panel noted that the student submission commends the overall quality of teaching at The Place, although it notes some difficulty in engaging with contract based or guest lecturers due to their frequent rotation.

Overall, the panel found 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 to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider and student submissions include evidence of:

- integrating with The Place provides a diverse theatre programme, supports the development of professional artists, and creates a professional setting and context for the course
- student surveys showing 80 per cent of students find the course content interesting and motivating
- second year students gaining transferable skills such as editing, lighting, recording, management, and production
- student feedback on how engaging with employers and current professional practices provides inspiration and guidance
- giving students the opportunities to participate in professional, external facing work
- offering intensive teaching, with a substantial amount of contact during term time.

The panel noted a tension between the student submission's comments on the preparedness of dancers for industry work and the provider's commitment to dancers' physical health and fitness through their approach.

Overall the panel found 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 this to be a very high quality feature.

The provider submission includes evidence of:

- The Place collaborating with around 150 visiting artists annually and commissioning student performances, helping to challenge and inspire students, and expand their skill set
- students regularly giving high profile performances at renowned London venues, both in-person and through digital channels
- active collaboration with international artists and venues

- investing in research on 'periodisation', a concept derived from sports science to enhance performance. This aims to ensure students' physical and mental workload is effectively balanced over time.

Overall the panel found 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 this to be a very high quality feature.

The provider submission includes evidence of:

- a peer exchange and development scheme that encourages observation, reflection, and feedback among staff members, although the panel noted this was a new scheme with limited impact in the TEF assessment period
- offering 'continuing professional development' (CPD) sessions that address immediate challenges, as well as advancements in dance and higher education teaching methods.
- external experts facilitating sessions on topics such as internationalisation, student well-being, and periodisation
- being on track to have half of its permanent teaching staff become Advance Higher Education Fellows by 2025
- commissioning a six-month management training program facilitated by a leading external expert.

Overall, the panel considered the evidence of support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice to demonstrate a very high quality feature.

Learning environment and academic support

The panel considered this an outstanding quality feature.

The indicator shows initial evidence that 'academic support' is outstanding.

The provider submission shows evidence of:

- a focus on providing physical support through innovative sports science research called periodisation, showing a significant impact on reducing injuries
- support offered to the high percentage of students with disabilities
- feedback from students on the outstanding quality of support for people with disabilities or poor mental health. This includes:

- physical and psychological support, guidance from the student well-being team, and financial aid
- assigning personal tutors to provide guidance
- a learning support coordinator to help with study skills, time management, planning, seeking formal diagnoses and applying for Disability Allowance.

The panel considered the tailoring of support to address the topics of injury and stress which are relevant to the provider's mix of courses and students as a tailored approach in the context of the provider. Overall the provider offers a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a wide and readily available range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs.

Learning resources

The panel considered this an outstanding quality feature.

The indicator shows initial evidence that 'learning resources' are very high quality.

The provider and student submissions provide additional evidence, for example:

- allocating around ten hours of 'fixed student rehearsal space' to students per year, totalling 2,500 hours
- ensuring the dance studios and lecture rooms meet professional sector standards set by One Dance UK and Equity
- an audio visual room available for students to hire and access industry-standard camera and video equipment, along with editing software
- equipping the 'body conditioning room' with a wide variety of specialist gym equipment specifically designed to support dancers' physical health
- providing a dedicated 'costume room' to design and manufacture new costumes for student performances
- offering a comprehensive dance-specialist library for students to access relevant resources.

Additionally the provider has invested in a virtual learning environment to facilitate both real-time learning and learning at the students' own pace. Students are also provided with a Dance Umbrella festival digital pass, granting them free access to its online content. The very high quality of both the physical and virtual learning resources is supported by external markers of esteem and assessment, as well as feedback from the student submission.

The panel carefully examined evidence from the indicators and the provider and student submissions. Overall, the panel found physical and virtual learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning.

Student engagement in improvement

The panel considered this an outstanding quality feature.

The indicator shows compelling initial evidence that 'student voice' is outstanding.

The provider and student submissions add evidence of an outstanding feature, for example:

- compelling evidence of numerous opportunities for students to engage in dialogue and provide feedback to individual staff members and the institution as a whole
- student feedback having influenced the development of subsequent student cohorts
- commissioning an external review specifically focused on student communications. The review report states that communication practices at the provider are more effective than the sector average, and notes prompt and positive response to student concerns
- data showing that 11 per cent of undergraduate students have served as representatives, with attendance rates at the 'student voice committee' notably high at 70 per cent
- year group meetings integrated into the timetable, providing students with regular opportunities to provide continuous feedback
- positive student comments on the facilitation of student voice and engagement activities.

The panel considered there is compelling evidence of planned, strategic and embedded student representation on a range of committees and boards. Additionally, the provider has established a course committee and regular year group meetings. University of the Arts London monitoring has also cited the provider as an example of good practice.

Overall, the panel found the provider embeds engagement with its students, leading to continuous improvement 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:

- four features are very high quality
- two features are outstanding.

The panel applied the criteria and considered that the rating with the best fit is 'Silver'. This is because most features are very 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 provider submission describes its approaches to supporting students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies. This includes:

- responsiveness to monitoring and review processes e.g. by strengthening mental health support through psychological tools and mindfulness and wellbeing sessions
- supporting physical health including specialist treatments and personalised strength and conditioning plans for each student
- supporting students through the cost-of-living crisis and providing a free hot meal each week to help them successfully progress, even if they are not directly using the provider's wellbeing service
- inviting lecturers and guest faculty who are leading industry professionals as part of the curriculum to expose students to common working practices and professional attitudes
- positive student feedback on the personal tutor system supported by an academic development unit with a dedicated contact for students
- engagement with career readiness, experiential learning, and one to one academic support when requested was also described positively by students
- students in their final year are given an opportunity to attend a mock audition and create a showreel.

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

Continuation and completion rates

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

The indicators show initial evidence that continuation is very high quality and that completion may be below very high quality.

The provider submission included evidence of continuation and completion rates, including:

- effectively addressing the physical demands of a dance degree and the potential impact of injuries on students' ability to continue and complete their studies. This includes compelling evidence of help from the physical support team

- addressing negative gender stereotypes to help address challenges around male access and participation. Regular contact with male teachers, artists, and former students are designed to provide positive role models.

The panel carefully considered evidence from the indicators and the provider submission. It noted that the provider was implementing various actions and activities to ensure students, particularly those from underrepresented groups and those facing challenging financial circumstances, stay on track with their studies. Overall the panel found there are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

Progression rates

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The indicator shows initial evidence that 'progression' is outstanding.

The provider submission gives compelling evidence of planned and strategic activities to ensure high rates of progression, including:

- outreach projects supported by the creative learning team, which contribute to engaging with the wider community
- employing students as teaching assistants on The Place's recreational dance programs for various age groups, including primary school performances
- Q&A opportunities where students perform and explain the value of a dance education to hundreds of primary school children.

The student submission references data from the 2018-2019 Graduate Outcome Survey showing that 24 per cent of graduates were developing creative, artistic, or professional portfolios, another 24 per cent were employed in paid positions, and 14 per cent were self-employed or freelancing.

Overall the panel found there are outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

Intended educational gains

The panel considered this to be an outstanding quality feature.

The provider submission describes its approach to supporting the educational gains it wants students to achieve. This includes:

- equipping its students with technical capabilities and performance skills underpinned by physical and mental wellness and awareness
- an ethos and vision which focus on unlocking potential, taking risks, equality, activism, and entrepreneurship
- that graduates succeed in sustainable dance careers because they develop a broader range of skills beyond dancing and creating, such as communication, project management, collaboration, and teaching.

Overall the panel found the provider clearly articulates the range of 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 this a very high quality feature.

The provider demonstrates its commitment to supporting students' educational gains in various ways. This includes:

- allocating 'higher education innovation funding' resources to enhance student employability, primarily through partnerships with schools for dance teaching and workshops
- redesigning the programme so students achieve educational gains through the curriculum itself, rather than relying solely on extra and co-curricular activities
- a 'creative attributes framework for enterprise and employability', which articulates the importance of imagination, resourcefulness, adaptability, communication, ethics, enterprise, and digital skills in developing a sustainable artistic practice
- tailoring educational gains to the unique needs and starting points of students
- introducing enrichment projects following the Student Support Team's analysis of wellbeing dips.

The student submission affirms that academic development includes acquiring skills and knowledge in contemporary dance, as well as critical thinking, problem-solving, academic writing, referencing, and research. Overall the panel found the provider effectively supports its students to achieve educational gains.

Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel considered this a very high quality feature.

The provider submission highlights how it measures and evaluates educational gains. This includes:

- analysing data from the Graduate Outcomes Survey and through conversations with guest teachers and visiting artists
- plans to enhance the evaluation process by developing a questionnaire for structured feedback discussions
- starting in the academic year 2023-24, personal and professional development plans will be introduced to further support students' educational gains
- positive feedback from external sources such as professionals in the dance industry

Overall the panel found the provider evaluates the gains made by its students.

Overall: Silver

Based on the guidance and the expert judgement of panel members, the provider's overall rating is 'Silver'.

The panel considered the student experience aspect rating to be 'Gold' and the student outcomes aspect rating to be 'Silver'. It carefully examined the evidence across all features, student groups, subjects, and courses.

The panel found compelling evidence that the outstanding and very high quality features apply to all groups of students, including students with disabilities, who are a significant minority of the provider's students. The panel considered this context throughout its assessment.

It found most student experience features to be outstanding, and most student outcomes features to be very high quality. Overall, the panel concluded there was compelling evidence to show that the provider's approaches are embedded and effective.