

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

TEF panel statement

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| Provider name: | Farnborough College of Technology |
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Overall rating

The TEF panel considered the overall rating to be Bronze.

Aspect ratings

The TEF panel considered the aspect ratings to be as follows:

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| Student experience | Bronze |
| Student outcomes | Bronze |

Rationale for rating decisions

Context

The submissions and the 'size and shape' data dashboard include information about the context of the provider. In summary:

University Centre Farnborough (UCF) is part of Farnborough College of Technology (FCoT), a General Further Education College based in North East Hampshire on the borders of Berkshire and Surrey. The provider submission states that the main campus is in Farnborough with a smaller Construction Campus in Aldershot (p1 provider submission). The provider details that 96% of its higher education students are 'commuter students' and it says that 18% of students achieving full honours degrees in the 4-year time series started with 'A Levels'. The other 82% of students start with Level 3 Diplomas or Access to Higher Education qualifications or in some cases industry experience but no formal Level 3 qualification. 33% of those completing full honours degrees in the 4-year time period started by undertaking a Foundation Degree and then moved on to a 'Top-Up' to achieve their full honours degree (ILR Data 2018-22).

In partnership with employers, FCoT/UCF has developed a Higher Apprenticeship offer and has opted to include Higher Apprenticeships in the TEF.

The TEF 'size and shape' dashboard shows that over the 4 year TEF period there were 1600 full time students (of which 1060 were on a full degree) and there were 830 part time students. In this period 260 students were on higher and degree apprenticeships.

As well as delivering Pearson HNCs and HNDs, the provider works with University of Surrey to offer undergraduate programmes. The provider and student submissions detail that a key focus of the provider is to deliver Accelerated Degrees. The provider notes that the area is an affluent one but that there is low HE participation in Aldershot.

The provider submission (p2) states: In 2021-22 UCF had 278 Professional Higher Education enrolments, 342 Full Time enrolments, 69 Part Time prescribed enrolments and 40 Higher Apprentices. The Professional Higher Education enrolments tend to be validated by Professional Bodies.

The provider submission describes FCoT's 'Mission' as being a 'Technical Community University, facilitating learners' social mobility, fuelling sustainable industries, and empowering lifelong learning communities'. The 'Vision' is to 'Create learners who will be a success for themselves, the economy and society'. This vision is built on 4 pillars:

1. An outstanding, equitable and innovative curriculum for all stakeholders.
2. Integrated use of technology and partnerships.
3. Environmentally friendly and sustainable.
4. Caring and committed staff with an entrepreneurial spirit.

FCoT also has 4 enabling goals, namely, to advance through the richness of diversity, to advance using a modern learning experience, to become a 'beyond outstanding' institution and to be environmentally and socially responsible.

The panel took into account the context detailed in making its judgements. The panel noted that the provider offered detail of other inspections as part of its submission (in line with RA22). However, the panel placed less weight on the Ofsted outcomes presented because it was less representative of the entire student population that falls within the TEF methodology.

Scope of assessment

All the provider's UG courses and students on those courses, as defined at paragraph 69 of Regulatory Advice 22 (RA22), were considered in scope of the assessment.

The panel drew on evidence from the provider submission, the student submission and the TEF indicators and accompanying 'size and shape' data. However, of note, is that the indicators dashboard only has data for full time students in relation to the student experience measures as part time students and apprenticeship data does not meet the threshold reporting values. Data is available for all modes of study for student outcomes measures. The panel were conscious that the data reflected 'Accelerated Degrees'.

The provider submission confirms that higher and degree apprenticeships, as optional programmes, were in scope for the panel's assessment.

Approach to assessment

In reaching the decision on ratings, the panel members applied their expert judgement, within the framework of principles and guidelines set out in Regulatory advice 22 (RA22) and followed the approach to assessment set out at paragraph 231 of RA22 by: 1) identifying any excellent features within each aspect; 2) considering a rating for each aspect; and 3) considering the overall rating (taking account of the provider's context at each step of the assessment). In some cases, the panel could not distinguish the approach taken for higher education students solely, as opposed to the provider's student body as a whole so the panel were careful to ensure that expert judgements were reached based on the experiences of students in scope for the TEF.

The reasoning for the panel's ratings decisions is set out below.

Student experience

Student experience: Aspect rating

The TEF panel weighed up all the evidence in the indicators and the submissions relating to the student experience aspect as a whole and determined the student experience aspect rating to be 'Bronze'.

In accordance with the guidance, the TEF panel considered all the evidence available in the submissions and the indicators and weighed up this evidence to identify very high quality features (further detail set out below), noting that the indicators contributed no more than half of the evidence of excellence. The panel then considered the extent to which there are very high quality features across the aspect as a whole, rather than treating the features as a checklist, and considered how far the very high quality features apply across all the provider's student groups and the range of its courses and subjects. To determine the student experience aspect rating, the panel applied the ratings criteria set out at Annex B of RA22.

The TEF panel considered and weighed up the evidence in the provider submission, student submission and indicators to identify very high quality features. It considered the majority of features (four) to have insufficient evidence of very high quality (these are SE2, SE3, SE4 and SE7), and three of the features to be very high quality (these are SE1, SE5 and SE6). The panel's assessment of these is below. The TEF panel did not find any features of the student experience that it considered to be clearly below the level of 'very high quality' or that may be of concern.

The panel judged there to be compelling evidence in the provider and student submissions and the indicators that the very high quality features apply to most of the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups. The panel found the indicator evidence to be supplemented by further evidence in the provider and student submissions and, in accordance with the guidance, the indicators contributed no more than half of the evidence for the student experience aspect. Considering the evidence holistically, the panel considered there to be evidence of typically high quality with some very high quality provision across all groups of students and for all courses and subjects.

The panel applied the ratings criteria set out in Annex B of RA22 and considered the best fit rating to be 'Bronze'. This is because some features of the aspect are very high quality for most groups of students.

The rationale for the panel's assessment of each feature is below.

Student experience: features of excellence

SE1: Teaching, assessment and feedback

The TEF panel examined the evidence in the provider and student submissions and in the indicators. The panel considered this to be a very high quality feature.

The TEF data dashboard has an overall FT indicator of 86.8% for Teaching on My Course which is broadly in line with benchmark (the benchmark is 84.3%) but with comparatively low statistical certainty. The panel reviewed the split indicators and noted the significant improvement in Year 4

of the time series (which is 89.6% satisfaction against a benchmark of 82.8% with 83.6% statistical certainty) and the overall disability indicator of 86.6% satisfaction against a benchmark of 82.9% (with 61.8% certainty and a denominator of 70).

The provider submission states that 'a significant proportion of our Higher Education delivery is not covered by the National Student Survey, these include those on HNCs, HNDs, Top Up Degrees, Professional Part Time and Higher Apprentices'.

The provider submission details an internal survey it undertakes as a consequence, which includes a broader range of students than NSS. The survey shows that 82% (2022 Semester 1) rate the teaching on their course as Good or Excellent up from 77% the previous year. The panel put some weight on the internally presented data because of the structure of the provider's higher education offer and its impact on NSS participation.

The overall FT assessment and feedback indicator is broadly in line with benchmark but with low statistical certainty (77.6% against a benchmark of 76.9% with a denominator of 340).

The student submission, while having some positive comments to make, detailed some of the challenges of recurring staff absence and the impact this had on students' studies. Additionally, students understood that they were on an accelerated degree but across the provider submission and student submission there was an absence of evidence regarding pedagogies and approaches taken into account regarding this.

The panel considered the indicators and the internal data and weighted these. When considering the evidence in the round the panel found that the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting its students' learning, progression.

SE2: Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch

The TEF panel examined the evidence in the provider and student submissions and in the indicators. The panel considered there to be insufficient evidence of very high quality in relation to this feature.

The provider articulates a 'T' shaped approach to curriculum design and development. Additionally, the provider submission references employer meetings which take place at least twice a year, as well as chartered institutes providing accreditation to programmes. Labour market intelligence is used to develop programmes, and favourable comments from external examiners are presented in the evidence.

The student submission provided some evidence in relation to SE2. It does refer to student involvement in revalidation, guest speakers coming into lessons and there being information regarding careers in key sectors. However, it does make reference to issues of teacher recruitment and retention (which the panel did not weight significantly as there was limited evidence of how representative of the whole student body this is).

Overall, the panel found insufficient evidence to detail how 'course content and delivery effectively encourage the provider's students to engage in their learning, and stretch students to develop their knowledge and skills'. Therefore, the panel found insufficient evidence of very high quality in relation to this feature.

SE3: Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement

The TEF panel examined the evidence in the provider and student submissions. The panel considered there to be insufficient evidence of very high quality in relation to this feature.

Page 15 of the provider submission gives evidence of the approach the provider takes to promote research, innovation, and professional practices. These include a 'Research and Scholarly Activity fund' of £10,000 managed by the Research and Scholarly Activity Committee and takes bids for research funds from members of staff. The submission, however, gives little detail on the projects funded or what their impact has been. There are three staff development days each year with various training options – including specific training for Higher Education staff. Again, the panel found little evidence of the impact of this. There is a fund available for short courses and so appropriate courses are funded if agreed by line managers and within budget. The impact of this on staff working in HE and on higher education students is not explored within the evidence. The provider part funds postgraduate study for members of staff - including MAs and PhDs. Staff can also apply to attend conferences, and other developmental activities. However, the provider does not give evidence of the impact of this.

Furthermore, the panel could not find evidence in the student submission, beyond references to careers talks, to provide further information in relation to this feature.

The panel could not find sufficient evidence of how the activities listed contribute to a very high quality student experience, and therefore, when referring to Annex A of RA22 the panel found insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

SE4: Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel reviewed the evidence available, and while it was evident that there are activities taking place, upon reviewing Annex A of RA22 the evidence articulated did not detail very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice being promoted. Therefore, the panel found insufficient evidence that this feature is of very high quality.

Page 7 of the provider submission, for example states:

- That there are lesson observations.
- The College's 'TLA the FCOT Way' ensures all lecturers have a common understanding of the components of a sound lecture.
- Good use is made of learners' and apprentices' starting points. Although there was little detail in the submissions about how this is done.
- Reference is made to undertaking training on digital platforms.
- Teachers engage in self-assessment activity.
- There is engagement in schemes such as 'Taking Teaching Further'. However, it was unclear of the numbers of the teachers mentioned, how many were working on higher education programmes.
- Teachers undertake some work in industry, but the panel could not find evidence of how this impacted students and their academic experiences.

When the panel used their expert judgement in looking at the evidence in the round the panel could not find evidence of how practices are promoted, or how the activities stretch beyond normal

practices in the sector. Therefore, the panel concluded that there is insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

SE5: Learning environment and academic support

The TEF panel examined the evidence in the provider and student submissions and in the indicators. The panel found evidence of very high quality in relation to this feature. The panel found that 'the provider fosters a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a readily available range of very high quality academic support' (Annex A RA22).

The full-time indicator is above benchmark (at 81.7% against a benchmark of 78.9%) however, there is some statistical uncertainty in the data). The panel found greater statistical certainty (77.9%) when reviewing the split indicators for disability where satisfaction is 82.4% against a benchmark of 76.5% and the panel put weight on this. Other splits (such as IMD) do not have such large difference to benchmarks. The panel judged the indicators as a whole to provide evidence of very high quality.

The panel found that evidence confirmed that the HE progress coach is having significant impact on the retention of students and is an effective investment. The provider submission details interventions focused on resolving attendance issues, signposting to support services and, through exam boards, students have their experiences discussed holistically. Additionally, peer mentors, student support, and small class sizes are providing effective and well-signposted support for students. The student submission provided the panel with little further evidence for this feature however, there were some complimentary comments about the nurturing approach teachers have.

The panel reviewed this evidence holistically and concluded that this feature is of very high quality.

SE6: Learning Resources

The TEF panel examined the evidence in the provider and student submissions and in the indicators. The panel considered this to be a very high quality feature.

The overall full time learning resources indicator is 72.8% and the benchmark is 78.3%. There is strong statistical evidence that this indicator is materially below benchmark. This provides initial evidence of insufficient evidence of very high quality.). However, in the most recent year, the panel noted that, in the time series the gap has closed to 1.1 percentage points (but with broader statistical uncertainty). The panel placed considered this to show improvement. The provider submission detailed an internal survey showing a 13 percentage point improvement in responses to questions regarding learning resources.

The provider submission details substantial capital investments made since 2018. It is unclear in the way the evidence is presented as to whether or not these are wholly investments in higher education provision. However, the panel weighed the list of investments made as being significant given the size and context of the provider. The investments, however, are not showing in the student satisfaction indicator, and the panel found limited evidence on how strategic the investments had been and their impact.

The student submission details a 'HE only' building and describes some issues with non-HE students 'infiltrating' it. However, the panel concluded that the improving data, the student acknowledgement of HE spaces and the investments meant that the descriptor for very high quality in Annex A of RA22 was met through the evidence.

SE7: Student engagement in improvement

The TEF panel examined the evidence in the provider and student submissions and in the indicators. The panel considered there to be insufficient evidence of very high quality in relation to this feature.

The overall FT 'student voice' indicator is materially below benchmark with strong statistical certainty. The provider's overall indicator is 67.8% against a benchmark of 73.3%. The panel reviewed the split indicators and noted that while over time the indicator has moved closer to the benchmark in all 4 years it has been below benchmark.

The panel then reviewed the student submission. The student submission details that students feel that their voices are heard and there is praise for the work that the vice principal does in engaging students. The provider submission details a mechanism to gather student feedback in formal and informal ways. This includes reps attending course meetings, and a minuted Student Voice Committee.

The panel reviewed the provider submission which details student engagement measures (see pages 18 and 19 of the submission for example). The panel found evidence of student voice being embedded into formal processes and meetings, and that there are mechanisms for informal feedback. However, the panel found the evidence presented to reflect standard practice and not be compelling evidence of very high quality.

The panel reviewed evidence for how effective the mechanisms are in improving the student feedback. The panel could not find specific examples of how feedback had led to improvement detailed or that there is a clear strategic approach (as detailed in Annex A of RA22).

Therefore, the panel found insufficient evidence of very high quality in relation to this feature.

Student outcomes

Student outcomes: aspect rating

The TEF panel weighed up all the evidence in the indicators and the submissions relating to the student outcomes aspect as a whole and determined the student outcomes aspect rating to be 'Bronze'.

As above, in accordance with the guidance, the TEF panel considered all the evidence available in the submissions and the indicators and weighed up this evidence to identify very high quality and outstanding quality features (further detail below). The panel then considered the extent to which there are very high quality and outstanding quality features across the aspect as a whole, rather than treating the features as a checklist, and considered how far the outstanding and very high quality features apply across all the provider's student groups and the range of its courses and subjects. To determine the student outcomes aspect rating, the panel applied the ratings criteria set out at Annex B of RA22.

The TEF panel considered and weighed up the evidence in the provider submission, student submission and indicators to identify very high quality features. It considered the majority of features to have insufficient evidence of very high quality (S01, S04, S05, and S06). The panel's

assessment of these features is below. Considering the features holistically, the panel judged that 'Some features of the aspect are very high quality for most groups of students'.

The panel judged there to be evidence in the provider and student submissions and the indicators that the very high quality features apply to some of the provider's groups of students. The panel weighed up the evidence in the submissions and the indicator evidence. The guidance sets out that the outcome indicators provide more direct measures of some of the student outcomes features (SO2 and SO3) and these student outcomes features could be identified without necessarily requiring further evidence in the submission. However, the panel noted that, where these indicators are below benchmark, this should not be determinative that the associated feature is 'not very high quality'. In this case, the panel considered the evidence in the provider submission to be important to the panel's assessment of the indicator evidence and features. Considering the evidence holistically and the provider context, the panel considered there to be insufficient evidence of very high quality provision across most groups of students and for all courses and subjects.

The panel applied the ratings criteria set out in Annex B of RA22 and considered the best fit rating to be 'Bronze' as 'some features of the aspect are very high quality for most students'. The panel did not have any concerns regarding student outcomes that would have meant a 'requires improvement' judgement needed to be considered.

The rationale for the panel's assessment of each feature is below.

Student outcomes: features of excellence

SO1: Approaches to supporting student success

The TEF panel examined the evidence in the provider and student submissions and in the indicators. The panel considered there is insufficient evidence that this is a very high quality feature.

The provider submission details a range of initiatives to support student success. This ranges from a careers bulletin, to a careers week and careers advice and guidance. There are over 20 career talks for the current academic year and there is engagement with members of the alumni community. The provider details a range of trips and visits and this approach is embedded to all courses. However, the panel found little evidence in relation to how effective this was in both the provider submission and the student submission. Furthermore, the panel could not find evidence of impact of this work lasting beyond students' studies.

Therefore, when reviewing the descriptors in RA22, the panel did not judge there to be evidence of very high quality for this feature.

SO2: Continuation and completion rates

The TEF panel examined the evidence in the provider and student submissions and in the indicators. The panel found evidence of very high quality for part time students and insufficient evidence of very high quality for full time students. Balancing the full time and part time indicators and the apprenticeship indicators, the panel judged that there is sufficient evidence of very high quality continuation and completion rates.

Part time continuation and completion rates are both significantly materially above benchmark, while full time continuation and completion are both materially below benchmark.

The full time continuation indicator is 80.1% against a benchmark of 85.7% with strong statistical certainty, and a denominator of 720.

Part time continuation is 79.3% against a benchmark of 70.8% with high statistical certainty. The denominator is 300.

Full time Completion rates are 79% against a benchmark of 82.7% with statistical certainty. The denominator is 650. The provider submission provides limited mitigation for the full-time variances against benchmark.

Completion for part time students is 86.5% against a benchmark of 79.6% with strong statistical certainty and a denominator of 870. The reasons for the differences between full time and part time are not explored in the provider submission.

Apprenticeships has the lowest denominator (100 for continuation and 50 for completion). Continuation is materially above benchmark at 85.6% against a benchmark of 81%. Completion is also materially above benchmark at 74% against a benchmark of 71.7%.

The provider submission details the appointment of a progress coach in 2021. The student submission indicates that the role is still be established. Therefore, the panel found limited evidence of impact yet for this initiative.

The panel judged that, balancing the full time and part time indicators and the apprenticeship indicators, there is sufficient evidence of very high quality continuation and completion rates.

SO3: Progression rates

The TEF panel examined the evidence in the provider and student submissions and in the indicators. The panel considered this to be a very high quality feature.

Full time overall progression rates are 70.4% against a benchmark of 67.6%, however, there is a range of statistical certainty. The denominator is 240. The denominators are too low for reporting for part time and apprenticeship provision. There is no additional context or information relating specifically to part time and apprenticeship progression in the provider submission.

However, the provider submission details how progression to higher levels of study is built into programmes and how this is considered as part of self-assessment activity. However, the submission provides little evidence of the impact of this.

The submission details initiatives such as an annual careers week. Furthermore, the submission states that every month all HE Students receive a Careers Bulletin with advice, guidance and opportunities. Final year students attend a meeting with a careers advisor and are offered the opportunity to attend workshops on job applications, preparing for job interviews and preparing for self-employment.

In applying their expert judgement to the evidence available, the panel concluded that there were very high rates of progression for students. When applying this to Annex A of RA22 the panel determined the feature is very high quality.

SO4: Intended educational gains

The TEF panel examined the evidence in the provider and student submissions. The panel considered there is insufficient evidence that this is a very high quality feature.

The panel found limited evidence of the provider articulating its educational gains. The context of the pedagogies relating to accelerated degrees were not widely explored, although the structure of the curriculum was given. There is some analysis given in the provider and student submissions regarding the performance of students on their degrees. However, the panel did not weight these as they could not determine how they related to specific gains. The panel reviewed the entirety of the submissions to look for an articulation of educational gains the provider intends its students to achieve, and why these are relevant to its students, but were unable to find this and therefore found insufficient evidence of very high quality for this feature.

SO5: Approaches to supporting educational gains

The TEF panel examined the evidence in the provider and student submissions. The panel considered there is insufficient evidence that this is a very high quality feature.

As a consequence of SO4 the panel found could not determine that the provider supports the gains. Therefore, the panel found insufficient evidence of very high quality in relation to how gains were evaluated. The panel noted that often the submission repeated metrics that were already available to the panel without providing additional evaluation.

SO6: Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The TEF panel examined the evidence in the provider and student submissions. The panel considered that there was insufficient evidence to conclude that this feature is of very high quality.

The panel applied the guidance in RA22 page 78, Annex A, which states that the panel “will assess the evidence related to all the student outcomes features and make a holistic judgement about the student outcomes rating, so a provider will not be prevented from being awarded higher TEF ratings solely based on an absence of developed educational gain measures” in its overall assessment of the student outcomes aspect.

Overall rating

Applying the guidance and the panel members’ expert judgment, the panel considered the overall ‘best fit’ rating to be ‘Bronze’. The panel noted the guidance set out in Regulatory advice 22 (RA22) that the overall rating should not be higher than the highest aspect rating and should be no more than one rating higher than the lowest aspect rating. The panel considered the student experience aspect rating to be ‘Bronze’ and the student outcomes aspect rating to be ‘Bronze’. The panel 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 this decision, the panel considered the contextual factors throughout its assessment of all of the evidence based on the size and shape information available.

The panel found some student experience and student outcomes features to be of very high quality for most groups of students and courses. They judged that the student experience and students outcomes are typically high quality, and there are some very high quality features.

General duties and public sector equality duty

The panel initially considered the OfS's approach to the consideration of the general duties and PSED set out in the 'OfS Consultation on the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF): Analysis of consultation responses and decisions' document.

The panel had regard to all the evidence and considered the general duties and PSED. Based on the panel's assessment of the evidence, the panel considered it appropriate to place the same weight on the general duties and PSED as set out in the TEF consultation decisions document.