



Office for  
Students



# Teaching Excellence Framework

Guidance on student  
submissions

Reference OfS 2022.61

Enquiries to [TEF@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:TEF@officeforstudents.org.uk)

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# Introduction

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is a national exercise incentivising improvement and excellence in teaching, learning and student outcomes at universities and colleges. The TEF rates universities and colleges for excellence above a set of minimum requirements for quality and standards, which they must satisfy if they are regulated by the Office for Students (OfS).

## **This is a guide to preparing a TEF student submission**

It explains how to create and submit evidence in the form of a student submission. **The TEF panel** will use the student submission alongside other evidence when deciding which TEF rating to award the university or college.

## **This guide is for TEF student contacts**

The TEF student contact is the person who can make a TEF student submission on behalf of the university or college's students. Other people involved in the TEF student submission may also find this guide helpful.

## **Participation in TEF is mandatory for some universities and colleges and optional for others**

Participation in TEF is mandatory for larger universities and colleges in England, and optional for smaller universities and colleges in England. It is also optional for universities and colleges in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## **A TEF student submission is optional**

If your university or college is participating in the TEF it should have nominated a TEF student contact. The TEF student contact should consult with students and decide whether to make a TEF student submission.

If your university or college does not take part in the TEF, you will not be able to make a student submission. Please discuss your university or college's intentions with them before starting work on a submission.

## **There is also guidance for universities and colleges and for the TEF panel**

This is primarily a guide to writing the student submission. If you want to learn more about how the TEF works, or how universities and colleges are assessed, there is more information in '[Guidance on the Teaching Excellence Framework \(TEF\) 2023](#)'. You may also find the 'Students' union guide to the Office for Students' useful in understanding the wider role of the OfS.

**The TEF panel** is a panel of experts in learning and teaching including academic and student members. The panel will carry out the TEF assessments and decide what ratings to award each university and college.

### **Who must participate in the TEF?**

All universities and colleges in England with 500 or more higher education students studying at undergraduate level, and meeting other data and eligibility criteria, must participate in the TEF.

Nothing in this guide can override the '[Guidance on the Teaching Excellence Framework \(TEF\) 2023](#)' or TEF [consultation outcomes document](#). Every effort has been made to make this guide as accurate as possible, but in the event of any difference, the information set out in those documents will apply.

# Enquiries and support for student contacts

The OfS will be running events and support sessions for student contacts during autumn 2022, starting with an online briefing event for all provider and student contacts on 19 October 2022. It will be recorded and available to view after the event.

Following this, we will offer times and dates for a number of online student drop-in sessions. Drop-in sessions will provide an opportunity for student contacts to share ideas and troubleshoot issues with each other, with OfS staff in attendance to answer queries. We will email TEF student contacts with further details and post updates on the TEF webpages.

If you are unable to raise your queries in these groups, you may contact the TEF team at the OfS directly at [tef@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:tef@officeforstudents.org.uk).

Your university or college is also expected to offer support to the TEF student contact. There is more information about this on page 9.

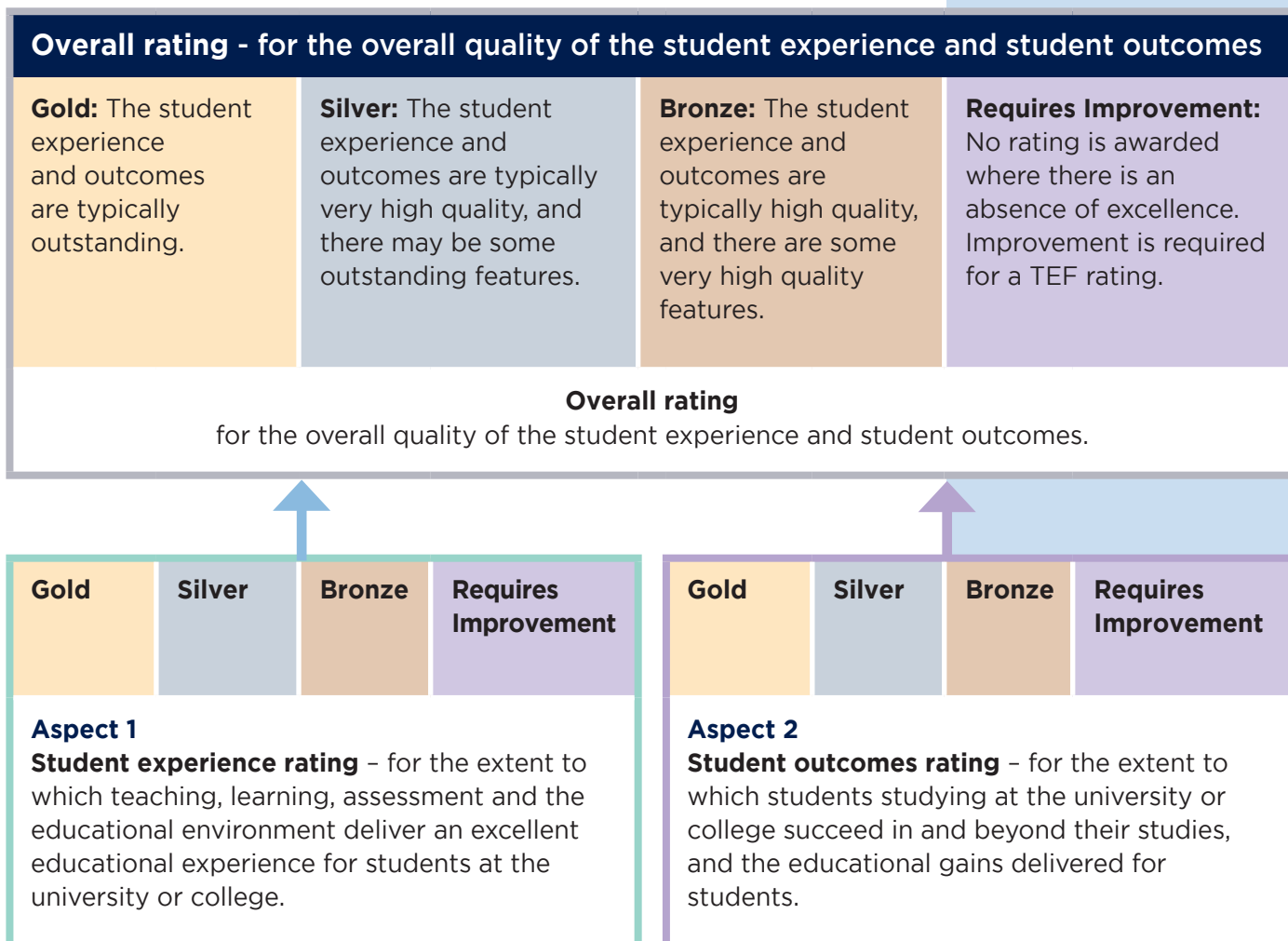
# The TEF

## How does it work?

The TEF is a national scheme run by the OfS to incentivise improvement and excellence in teaching, learning and student outcomes at universities and colleges.

The TEF rates universities and colleges for excellence **above** a set of high quality minimum requirements that they need to meet. The TEF incentivises a university or college to improve and to deliver excellence above these minimum requirements, for its mix of students and courses.

Each university or college taking part will get an **overall rating** for the quality of its undergraduate courses, and a rating for each of the two '**aspects**' that are assessed:



More detail about what the aspects include and how to address them in your submission is covered later in this guide.

# The TEF timeline

Timing	Launch of the exercise
30 September 2022	The OfS informs each university and college whether its participation in the TEF is mandatory or voluntary.  <b>TEF indicators</b> for each university and college are published.
7 October 2022	Guidance on TEF student submissions is published.  Guidance on the TEF for universities and colleges and for the TEF panel is published.

Timing	Submissions	
7 October 2022 to 24 January 2023	Participating universities and colleges prepare submissions.	Optional: Students prepare submissions.

Timing	Assessment
February to June 2023	The TEF panel carries out the assessments and reaches provisional decisions about the ratings.
July to August 2023	Universities and colleges receive the panel's provisional ratings and the reasons for these.  Opportunity for universities and colleges to make representations before the final ratings are decided.

Timing	Outcomes
September 2023	TEF ratings and submissions are published (for universities or colleges that do not make representations) by the OfS, including on the Discover Uni website, and by UCAS on its website.  Universities and colleges can promote their ratings in accordance with guidelines.  Ratings last four years, subject to a university or college remaining eligible.

**TEF indicators** are numerical measures of the student experience and student outcomes that a university or college delivers for its students. The OfS produces these indicators using national statistics. The indicators are described on pages 17 and 18 of this guide. The TEF panel will base its assessments on the evidence in the submissions, and the TEF indicators for each university or college.

# The TEF student submission

## What is the TEF student submission?

The TEF student submission is an opportunity to provide insights about students' views to help inform the TEF panel's assessment.

The student submission is a new feature for TEF 2023, which we believe will strengthen opportunities for students to influence improvement in learning, teaching and student outcomes.

For each university or college taking part in the TEF, the TEF student contact can make a single submission on behalf of that university or college's students. The student submission is optional, although we encourage students to make a submission if possible.

## Why is the student submission important?

The student submission supplements the provider submission and TEF indicators by providing additional insights to the TEF panel. It provides students' perspectives on what it is like to be a student at that university or college and what they gain from their experience, in a way that is:

- more direct than evidence in the provider submission
- independent from the provider submission
- more current than the TEF indicators, which are based on retrospective data.

## Will the student submission be published?

When we publish the TEF ratings from September 2023, we would normally expect to publish a copy of the student submission on the OfS website, alongside the provider submission and TEF indicators. You can read more about publication of submissions on page 32 of this guide.

## Should I complete a student submission, and what are the other options?

We recommend that students produce an independent submission if possible. However, we recognise that some student contacts might be worried about the time or effort required. If you have concerns, you could consider these options:

- Write a short submission – there is no minimum length. Even a short submission with some information about students' views could help the TEF panel.
- Consider alternative formats to a written submission – if you find it easier you could create a submission in a non-written format such as a video or a podcast (see page 14 for further information).
- Use existing information – if there is existing information about students' views, you could use this to produce a submission. You do not necessarily need to gather new information.

If you choose not to produce an independent student submission:

- The TEF panel will still complete the assessment, using the university or college's submission and TEF indicators alone.
- Your university or college should give you an opportunity to contribute to its submission instead. This may still help the TEF panel better understand what it is like to be a student at your university or college.
- If your university or college participates in the TEF and you have not made a submission, the OfS will get in touch with you to ask whether you were given this opportunity.
- There is no penalty for the university or college if its student contact chooses not to make a student submission, or not to contribute to the university or college's submission. But the TEF panel may have less information about student perspectives to base their assessment on.
- If you aren't able to create a student submission this time, consider how you might improve things for future students (the TEF process takes place every four years).

### Action points

- ✓ Decide whether you will complete an independent TEF student submission.
- ✓ If you decide not to, you may want to contribute to your university or college's submission.



# Role of the TEF student contact

## What is the TEF student contact?

This is the person who can make a TEF student submission on behalf of the university or college's students, and will usually be the person coordinating the content of the TEF student submission.

The deadline for providing the submission to the OfS is 24 January 2023. We will get in touch with the TEF student contact about how to do this.

Universities and colleges were asked in July 2022 to nominate a person with a relevant role in representing students, such as an elected sabbatical officer, to be the TEF student contact.

The role of the student contact should have been explained to the nominee and consent should have been given for their details to be shared with the OfS.

### Alternative student contact

We also asked universities and colleges to nominate someone who can support the TEF student contact. They do not have to be a student representative, but if not then they should ideally hold a role supporting student representatives, such as a member of staff at the students' union.

The alternative student contact provides continuity if the TEF student contact needs to change. We will therefore copy the alternative student contact into all student communications so that someone can reply if the TEF student contact is unavailable.

The alternative contact is not responsible for the content of the student submission and should not be the person who submits it to the OfS. If the student submission is not submitted by the main student contact, we may need to get in touch to ask why.

### What if things change?

It's fine to update the main or alternative student contact at any time during the process. We ask that you let the OfS know of any changes by email to [TEF@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:TEF@officeforstudents.org.uk).

#### Action points

- ✓ Find out if your university or college has nominated an alternative student contact.
- ✓ Update us if either the TEF student contact or alternative student contact need to change.
- ✓ Add the TEF submission due date to your calendar.

# Working with your university or college

## Support from and collaboration with your university or college

We expect universities and colleges to consider a range of ways in which they can offer support to their student contacts. We also encourage collaboration between those working on the student submission and the university or college submission. Specific arrangements should be discussed and agreed between students and their university or college, and might include, for example:

- ensuring TEF student contacts know who their university or college's TEF contact is, how to get in touch, and who is involved in the university or college's submission
- making sure student contacts have access to any data that the university or college has that would be useful for their submission
- sharing any training on or analysis of the TEF indicators that is being made available to people writing the university or college's submission
- regular contact between the university or college contact and student contact to offer support and resolve queries
- mutual sharing of drafts, where this has been agreed by both parties
- coordination of content on areas such as definition of educational gains or which students are being covered within the provider submission (see page 11)
- help identifying the different courses or students which should or could be covered by the student submission.

It will be for the university or college and students to agree what arrangements are appropriate and whether this includes financial compensation. It is not the OfS's role to incentivise student involvement through financial compensation.

### **Maintaining independence**

When discussing how you would like to work with your university or college and what support could be offered, you should also agree boundaries to maintain the independence of the student submission.

Independence means that the university or college does not try to influence the content of the student submission, and the TEF student contact has the final say over its content.

The TEF panel will want to have confidence about the independence of the student submission. The first section of the student submission should explain briefly how you collaborated with your university or college, any support that was offered, and how independence was maintained. We ask that you confirm that the university or college did not unduly influence the content of the submission (see page 21).

Some examples of what could be considered as undue influence are:

- pressuring students to create or not create a submission – that should be the choice of the student contact, in consultation with students
- pressuring students into including, excluding or changing any content in the submission
- making access to resources or support conditional on the student submission being created or evidence being gathered in a particular way
- pressuring students to share their submission with the university or college.

### **Do students have to share the submission with their university or college?**

You do not have to share your submission with your university or college ahead of its publication if you do not want to. However, your university or college will be given a copy of your submission by the OfS when we communicate the panel's provisional TEF rating decision. This is so universities and colleges have access to all of the evidence that a provisional decision is based on.

### **Will the university or college be able to respond to what students have said in the student submission?**

The university or college will be able to make representations to the TEF panel as described on page 28. If the university or college makes representations to the TEF panel, it could comment on or provide its own information about the content of the student submission

If you have any concerns about how much you should collaborate with your university or college, or you think they are trying to inappropriately influence your submission, we would encourage you to make use of the support for student contacts offered by the OfS (see page 3).

See pages 26-27 for more details about what happens after you have submitted, and reasons why the OfS might need to get in touch with you for more information.

# Which courses should be included?

**Broadly speaking, all of your university or college's undergraduate courses, and the students on those courses, are included within its TEF assessment.**

This includes:

- courses at Levels 4 and 5 (such as Higher National Certificates, Higher National Diplomas and foundation degrees), first degrees, and undergraduate courses with postgraduate components (such as courses with integrated Masters degrees, and medical and dental degrees)
- UK and international students on these courses.

When you are writing your submission, you should have these students in mind as being the most relevant. Postgraduate students and courses are not included in TEF assessments.

## **Some courses are optional for the university or college to include**

For example, apprenticeships, courses delivered to students outside the UK, and courses that are only validated by your university or college are optional. Your university or college will decide whether it wants to include these optional courses in its submission.

You should therefore check with your university or college which of these courses it is including or excluding.

- Optional courses that the university or college excludes from its submission will not be assessed, so you should not cover them in the student submission.
- Optional courses that the university or college includes will be assessed, so you can cover them in the student submission, but you do not need to. We recognise that it may be difficult to gather evidence from students on these types of courses, so you will need to decide for yourself whether or not to cover them in your submission.

## **Some students are always included in the assessment, but are optional for the student submission**

Your university or college may have students who it registers, but are taught by another university or college, through a 'sub-contractual' arrangement. These students are included in the TEF indicators and are always included in the assessment.

However, we recognise it may not be practical for you to gather evidence from these students because they are taught by other universities and colleges. Including these students in the student submission is optional.

Full details and definitions of which courses should be included, and which are optional, are in the '[Guidance on the Teaching Excellence Framework \(TEF\) 2023](#)'. Your university or college should also support you in understanding which of these might be relevant to your submission.

### **Action points**

- ✓ Find out whether your university or college plans to cover optional courses in its submission.
- ✓ Ask your university or college for information about which types of courses should be included, and which are optional to include, in the student submission.
- ✓ Decide which types of optional courses you want to cover. Make this clear to the TEF panel in the first section of your submission.

## What time period should be covered?

The TEF assessment covers the student experience and student outcomes from the four most recent years. Evidence in the student submission can relate to any cohorts of students studying from the 2018-19 academic year onwards.

We recognise it may be difficult to gather evidence relating to previous student cohorts, and we expect that the student submission will focus on students who are currently studying at your university or college. Evidence from the last four years can be included, but there is no expectation that you provide historical evidence.

# Submission format

**Written submissions must be submitted in PDF format and there is a 10 page limit.** As they must be accessible to screen reading technology, scanned PDFs are not acceptable.

**Any type of content can be included in the PDF document.** It can include, for example, text, diagrams, images, graphs and tables, as long as these are within the page limit for submissions.

**No appendices** or any additional information may be included if not incorporated within the page limit.

**References and hyperlinks are not needed.** All the information you want the panel to consider should be included within the PDF document. In the first section of your submission you should describe how you have gathered your evidence, so the panel can understand where the evidence has come from and how representative it is. If you include references or hyperlinks to further sources of information, the TEF panel will not access them.

## Does it have to be a written submission?

Unlike the university or college submission, students can create all or part of their submission in a non-written format. Examples of a non-written submission could be:

- podcasts
- videos
- presentation slides with an audio commentary.

If using a non-written format, it should be equivalent in length to a written submission. For example, we consider that a 10-page student submission will take a panel member approximately 30 minutes to read, so a submission in a non-written format should not normally exceed this both in terms of volume of content and time taken to consider that content.

We encourage students taking this approach to use the prompts in the template we have provided. Whatever format you choose to create your submission in, it should cover the content outlined in this guidance.

Where possible, audio or video submissions should be accompanied by a written transcript, which should be submitted as a PDF.

Submissions can be part written, part non-written, for example a short video submitted alongside a written submission. In that case, the written submission document should include a transcription of the alternative content (the video or audio), and should still be within the 10-page limit.

### Action points

- ✓ Consider what the best format would be for your submission – written, or another format such as a video.

# Submission content

## The student submission should cover:

1. Your approach to evidence-gathering.
2. Evidence about the student experience.
3. Evidence about student outcomes.

A recommended **template** is available alongside this guidance, using these headings.

It is up to you whether you use this template; however we suggest that this structure will make it easier for the panel to assess your submission. If you choose to structure your submission in a different way, you could still use the suggested headings to provide a structure for your submission.

The template is also formatted in a way that will be easily readable (with Arial font 11 point, 1.2 line spacing and 2cm page margins). We recommend that you use this formatting. If you use different formatting, please ensure that the content remains easy to read.

The following pages provide more detail about what could be included under each of these headings.

## What is assessed in the TEF?

The TEF assesses excellence in two aspects:

- The **student experience** aspect: how far teaching, learning, assessment and the educational environment at the university or college deliver an excellent educational experience for students.
- The **student outcome** aspect: how far the university or college's students succeed in and beyond their studies, and the educational gains delivered for students.

### Your submission should cover:

The student educational experience and the outcomes of the educational experience. The educational experience includes educational activities that extend beyond the curriculum or the direct delivery of a course – for example, academic support or activities that support career development and employability.

### Your submission may cover:

Other activities that are not directly educational but contribute to the quality of the educational experience or outcomes. Examples of this could be activities that foster a sense of belonging and community, or support for students' wellbeing. If you include these activities, please explain how they contribute to the quality of students' educational experience or outcomes.

### Your submission shouldn't cover:

The wider student experience, for example, experiences that are primarily social, or outcomes or gains that students achieve as a result of social experiences.

# Section 1

## ‘Approach to evidence-gathering’

### What to cover in this section

This first section should outline how you have gathered the information within your submission.

For the TEF panel to clearly understand where the evidence has come from, and how representative your submission is, **section 1 should cover:**

- Your role in representing students and how it fits in with wider student representation structures (e.g. the students’ union) at your university or college.
- Who else has been involved in creating the submission (for example, have other students contributed, or commented on drafts?).
- If you have used pre-existing evidence sources, explain what they are and how that information was collected (for example, through course representatives, surveys or research).
- Explain any extra evidence-gathering that was conducted for the student submission (for example, surveying or focus groups).
- For both pre-existing and extra evidence-gathering, give details about the range of students and courses that they cover.

As mentioned in the ‘Working with your university or college’ and ‘Which courses should be included’ sections, you should **also include in this section:**

- What ‘optional’ courses you decide to include in your submission (described on page 11).
- How you worked with your university or college on the TEF and any support you received (for example, in any of the ways suggested on page 9).
- How you maintained the independence of the student submission.
- Please confirm that the university or college did not unduly influence the content of the submission.

### Gathering evidence

Consider how best to gather evidence in a way that is suited to your own situation. You could talk to current student representatives and you may be able to make use of evidence that already exists. This might include:

- **Feedback gathered by student representatives across your university or college**

Feedback collected from students, for example by course representatives, may be collated and reported at school or faculty level. It may be recorded in annual reports or fed into

This section is important for the TEF panel to be able to understand where the evidence in the submission has come from, how rigorous it is and how far it represents the experience of undergraduate students.

### References to sources of evidence

Unlike university and college submissions, we do not expect student submissions to include references to the sources of evidence you have used. Instead, the panel will gauge the strength of the evidence in the student submission by considering your description in this section about how the evidence was gathered and the extent to which it is representative.



regular meetings of a student council or committee. This kind of feedback could be a useful source of evidence for the TEF student submission.

- **Surveys, research or reports relating to student perspectives**

Your students' union may undertake surveys or research on specific themes or produce reports relating to campaigns, or annual reports which contain feedback gathered from students. These could be another useful pre-existing source to draw on.

If there aren't many student representatives, or existing information is limited, consider what the best options would be for gathering evidence. Additional information gathering could be targeted to fill any gaps that you identify. Some suggestions on how you could do this are listed below.

### **Suggestions for additional evidence-gathering**

- **Focus groups** – Gather a group or groups of students to share views on the student experience and student outcomes. This will allow you to bounce ideas off one another and gain detailed feedback. You will be able to confirm or challenge each other's perceptions and think about what you want to write about in your submission. If you have one, you could ask your students' union to help you arrange focus groups with a mix of students.
- **Surveys** – Although surveys will allow you to reach more students, you may get less detailed feedback. But surveys do allow for anonymous feedback, which may encourage more students to get involved and to be honest with their responses. You could send out an online survey as well as holding some focus groups. A range of free online survey tools are available.
- **Drop-in sessions** – You could share a draft student submission with other students and run drop-in sessions to talk about this. These drop-in sessions could be held virtually, or you could book a room on campus and hold them face-to-face. As with surveys and focus groups, it is important to have a clear goal for these sessions, and clearly advertise what they are for.
- **Informal conversations** – You may wish to have more informal conversations with other students as a way of making it easier for students to contribute views and allowing frank feedback that they might find it difficult to share in a wider forum.
- **Coordinate new feedback from other student representatives** – Where your system of representation is less formal and feedback is not routinely captured in documents, you could gather information directly from other representatives.

## How to get students involved

- **Canvass students directly** – You could approach your students' union if you have one. They may be able to help by contacting other students or alumni who want to take part. If you do not have a students' union and you are struggling to get in touch with other students, you could ask the person responsible for your university or college's TEF submission (the TEF contact) to put you in touch with other students.
- **Lecture 'shoutouts'** – This could be a good way of getting a wide range of students involved in contributing. You could ask lecturers to briefly explain what the TEF is, why the student submission is important, and how students can get in touch with you if they want to be involved.
- **Social media 'shoutouts'** – As with lecture 'shoutouts', using social media 'shoutouts' could be a good way to get the word out about this project. It is likely that there will be many social media pages connected to your university or college and students' union. You could get in touch with the person responsible for social media to ask if they would be willing to advertise the opportunity for students to get involved.

## Using the TEF indicators

When gathering evidence you do not have to, but may wish to consider your university or college's TEF indicators.

There are five TEF indicators related to the **student experience**, based on **NSS** responses. They show how far students responded positively to the following five groups of questions:

**1 The teaching on my course**

**2 Academic support**

**3 Assessment and feedback**

**4 Learning resources**

**5 Student voice**

**The National Student Survey (NSS)** is an annual survey of final year undergraduate students at universities and colleges in the UK. The survey gathers students' opinions on the quality of their courses. [Further information about the NSS is available.](#)

There are three TEF indicators related to **student outcomes**:

**1 Continuation** – the proportion of students continuing on their course or gaining a qualification after one year (two years for part-time students).

**2 Completion** – the proportion of students completing their course.

**3 Progression** – the proportion of students progressing to managerial or professional employment, or further study.

It's not the job of the student submission to analyse what the TEF indicators show, but you could make use of the TEF indicators in various ways such as:

- To help shape evidence-gathering activities, for example by identifying potential themes, groups of students or courses where further evidence in the student submission may be useful.
- To reflect on any elements of the student experience or student outcomes where the TEF indicators support or contradict views you have gathered.
- To consider how you could supplement the TEF indicators with additional evidence of your own, for example by providing:
  - more up-to-date evidence, based on current students' perspectives
  - views of students who are not included in the TEF indicators.

There is guidance on interpreting the TEF indicators within our 'Guidance on the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023'.

### The TEF indicator dashboards

TEF indicator dashboards will be used by the TEF panel, alongside the provider and student submissions, to assess your university or college.

You can [access the TEF indicators dashboards for all universities and colleges in England](#).

#### Action points

- ✓ Make use of any existing evidence that's available.
- ✓ Work out what additional evidence-gathering you want to carry out.
- ✓ Consider how the TEF indicators could be used to inform your work.
- ✓ Use section 1 of the template to provide the information listed on page 15.

# Sections 2 and 3

## ‘Student experience’ and ‘Student outcomes’

### TEF and the OfS’s minimum quality requirements

The TEF rates universities and colleges for excellence above a set of minimum requirements for the quality of universities and colleges’ courses. These requirements are set out in ‘conditions of registration’ that any university or college registered with the OfS must meet. Further information is in our [student guide to quality and standards](#).

The TEF panel will look for evidence of **excellence above** these minimum requirements, in order to award a TEF rating.

### Features of excellence

When assessing each aspect of the TEF (student experience and student outcomes) the TEF panel will look for specific things. We call these ‘features of excellence’.

Sections 2 and 3 of the student submission should provide information that is relevant to these features, but note that:

- You do not need to cover all of the features – they are not a checklist so you should cover what is most relevant to your context.
- You can include other things that relate to students’ educational experience or outcomes, but don’t exactly align with the features. The panel will consider any evidence it considers relevant to the quality of students’ educational experience or outcomes.

### What to cover in section 2

The **student experience** aspect focuses on the extent to which teaching, learning, assessment and the educational environment deliver an excellent educational experience for the students at your university or college.

You should use **section 2** to give students’ perspectives that relate to any or all of the student experience ‘features’ set out below.

## Student experience features

### Academic experience and assessment

- SE1** How well teaching, feedback and assessment practices support students' learning, progression, and attainment
- SE2** How well course content and delivery engages students in their learning, and stretches students to develop their knowledge and skills
- SE3** How far research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement contribute to the student academic experience

### Resources, support and student engagement

- SE4** How well the university or college supports staff professional development and academic practice
- SE5** How supportive the learning environment is, and how far students can access the academic support they need
- SE6** How well physical and virtual learning resources support teaching and learning
- SE7** How well the university or college engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students

## What to cover in section 3

The **student outcomes** aspect focuses on the extent to which students studying at your university or college succeed in and beyond their studies, and the educational gains delivered.

You should use **section 3** to give students' perspectives that relate to any or all of the student outcomes 'features' set out below.

You could include evidence from **past** students about their outcomes and what they gained from their education, if this is available. However, we recognise it would be more practical to provide evidence about how your university or college supports its **current** students to achieve positive outcomes and educational gains.

The **features presented** on pages 20 and 21 are summarised from the full definitions, which are available in Annex A of the '[Guidance on the Teaching Excellence Framework \(TEF\) 2023](#)'. Nothing in this guide can override the TEF guidance or the TEF consultation outcomes document.

## Student outcomes features

### Positive outcomes

- SO1** How well the university or college supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies
- SO2** How good students' rates of continuation and completion are
- SO3** How good students' rates of progression to skilled employment, further study or other positive outcomes are

### Educational gains

- SO4** What educational gains the university or college intends its students to achieve, and how relevant these are to its students
- SO5** How well the university or college supports its students to achieve these gains
- SO6** How far the university or college evaluates and demonstrates the gains made by its students

Features **SO2** and **SO3** relate to continuation, completion and progression, and will be assessed by the TEF panel using the relevant TEF indicators as well as any information provided in the provider and student submissions.

The progression indicator shows the number of students who progress to managerial or professional employment, or further study after their course finishes. We recognise that the university or college submission or the student submission could demonstrate other types of positive outcomes for students.

### Educational gains

By assessing educational gains, the TEF seeks to recognise a wide range of ways that students benefit from their education beyond measures of continuation, completion and progression.

Educational gains might include but are not limited to:

- **Academic development:** such as gains relating to the development of subject knowledge as well as academic skills such as critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, academic writing, and research and referencing skills.
- **Personal development:** such as gains relating to the development of student resilience, motivation and confidence as well as soft skills such as communication, presentation, time management, and networking and interpersonal skills.
- **Work readiness:** such as gains relating to the development of employability skills such as teamworking, commercial awareness, leadership and influencing.

Each university or college should define for itself what educational gains it seeks to deliver for its students. You may wish to discuss with your university or college how it is intending to define educational gains.

You can then use your student submission to provide students' perspectives on how relevant these gains are to them, any further information about what they seek to gain from their studies, and how well the university or college supports its students to achieve educational gains.

## Supplementing the provider submission

If your university or college has shared drafts of its submission with you, you may also wish to supplement what it says about the student experience or student outcomes with evidence of your own. This could include adding evidence you have gathered from students, relating to any key themes the university or college submission covers.

The key purpose of the student submission is to provide evidence of student perspectives relating to the student experience and student outcomes, and this should be your priority when creating your submission.

Commenting on the TEF indicators or the university or college's submission may add additional useful context but should not be prioritised over this key purpose.

## The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

You may want to reflect on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic within the student submission. You could, for example, set out student perspectives on how well your university or college responded to the pandemic and the effects this had on the student academic experience or outcomes.

Also, consider how the pandemic could have had different effects on different cohorts of students. For example, students in their third or fourth year of study would have been heavily affected, while the effect on first year students would have been mainly before they started their courses. Your submission should aim to be clear about which cohorts are represented, and how any differences in perspectives relate to the impact of the pandemic.

Your university or college is expected to cover the last four years in its submission, which includes the period of the coronavirus pandemic. You might want to discuss this with them to understand each other's views about how well the university or college responded to the pandemic, the impact on different student cohorts, and your planned approaches to the topic within your submissions.

### Action points

- ✓ Use sections 2 and 3 of the template to give students' perspectives that relate to any or all of the student experience and student outcomes 'features'.
- ✓ Consider how this information supplements the TEF indicators and the university or college's submission.
- ✓ Consider discussing with your university or college how it is intending to define educational gains.
- ✓ Reflect on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic within the student submission.



# Presenting evidence

Wherever possible, you should gather evidence directly from students. This evidence can be qualitative, quantitative, or both. It should be factual and verifiable, rather than based on assertions that could not be verified.

If it is unclear to the TEF panel whether your submission reflects the views of a wide range of students or just a small selection, they may not be able to place much weight on it.

Whether evidence is quantitative or qualitative, you should aim to include information about:

- when and how the evidence was collected
- the range of students who took part or responded (for example, students on different types of courses and from different backgrounds), to indicate how representative the evidence is.

## Example 1

Submission content examples (fictional)	Comments on suitability
“Our students are very positive about the level of support they get when arriving at the university and adjusting to higher education.”	On its own, this is likely to be considered an assertion. It does not appear to be supported by any evidence and there is no way of verifying it.
“Our students’ union’s annual survey of first year students from 2021 shows that 78% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘I was supported well in my transition into university’.”	This provides some evidence and indicates how and when it was collected. However, it doesn’t provide details of who was surveyed or who responded.
“Our students’ union’s 2021 annual survey was sent to all 1,850 first year undergraduate students who attend lectures on campus and 54% responded. The highest response was from students on social science courses (64%) and disabled students (61%) and the lowest was from part-time (39%) and medical students (42%). Overall 78% of students who responded agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘I was supported well in my transition into university’.”	This statement also provides some information about who was surveyed and who responded, providing more information to allow the panel to gauge the strength of the evidence.

You should have described your general approach to evidence-gathering in section 1, and could also include details there about your commonly used sources of evidence. If details aren’t given in section 1, you may need to add more information in section 2 or 3 about how you gathered specific evidence.



## Example 2

Submission content examples (fictional)	Comments on suitability
<p>“Focus group feedback showed that in terms of learning resources, students were very positive about 24/7 access to library facilities, and the recent upgrades to equipment in the main computer suites. Their top priorities for improvement were: more accessible IT support and more spacious library and study spaces.”</p>	<p>This qualitative example gives some information about students’ views. However, it doesn’t provide information about the focus groups or who participated.</p>
<p>“The students’ union conducted focus groups during spring 2021, to gather views about learning resources. There were 4 groups of 10-12 undergraduate students, from all faculties. There were a mix of students from different backgrounds, on a range of courses, mostly in their second and third years. Students from the faculty of Science and females were slightly over-represented while those from the faculty of Arts and Humanities were under-represented.</p> <p>The findings were written up into a report and presented to the student council. The main findings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consistently very positive views about 24/7 access to library facilities.</li><li>• Students in three faculties were positive about recent upgrades to equipment in their computer suites, with some regarding it as ‘state of the art’.</li><li>• The main priority for improvement is IT support, with frequent difficulties in accessing one-to-one support when needed.</li><li>• Students from two faculties felt library and study spaces are too crowded on weekdays and should be more spacious.”</li></ul>	<p>This provides more information about students’ views and the focus groups. It provides more information to allow the panel to understand the issues and gauge the strength of the evidence.</p>

## Using quotes

Where quotes are used within your submission, they should normally illustrate points that are supported by wider evidence. Quotes from individual students will not normally be considered as strong evidence on their own, as the TEF panel may not be able to judge the extent to which the quote applies to a range of students or courses.

Views of student representatives might be more compelling than a quote from an individual student, if you make it clear how far they reflect views of the wider student body. For example, you could explain their role as a representative and which students they represent.

### Action points

- ✓ Check that the evidence you plan to include is factual and verifiable.
- ✓ Check if you need to add any more information in sections 2 and 3 about how you gathered specific evidence (in addition to what you've described in section 1).

# Submission uploading and next steps

## **Student contacts must upload the student submission**

Only the main student contact should upload the submission. The alternative contact should not normally upload the submission, and the OfS may ask for an explanation where this is the case.

Submissions should be uploaded to our submissions portal by the deadline of **24 January 2023**. Login details and instructions for using the portal will be sent to student contacts.

## **What happens after the submission has been uploaded?**

The TEF panel will assess your submission, alongside your university or college's submission and the TEF indicators. Student perspectives may differ from their university or college's. If this is the case, it would be an area for the TEF panel to consider, weighing up the available evidence.

In exceptional cases, the TEF panel may ask the OfS to get in touch with you if they think that there may be inaccuracies in the student submission. An example could be if information appears to contradict the provider submission or the TEF indicators. We will only get in touch if the information concerned is likely to have an impact on the university or college's TEF rating. If we get in touch, we may ask you to explain what evidence the relevant information is based on. We may share this explanation with the TEF panel, to weigh up when making their judgement about the university or college's TEF rating.

## **Will the submission be published?**

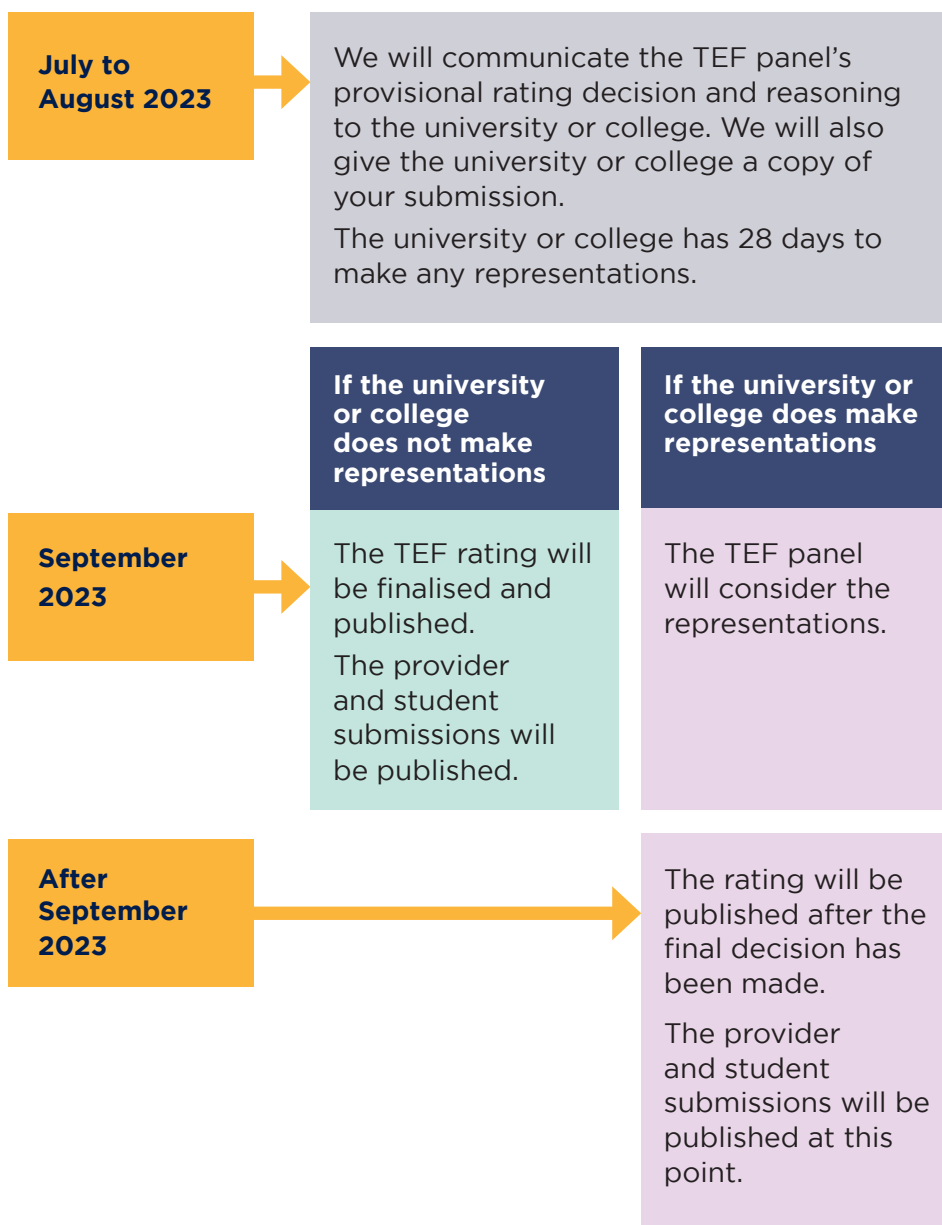
We will normally publish the student submission when we publish the TEF ratings, from September 2023:

- TEF ratings will be published by the OfS, including on the Discover Uni website, and by UCAS on its website.
- Submissions will be published on the OfS website.

There may be circumstances where, for a variety of reasons, the OfS considers it appropriate to not publish a student submission, wholly or in part.

You should be aware of the possibility that further information may be requested from you after you submit. In the rare cases where this happens, any requests should be responded to promptly to avoid delaying the assessment process.

## Timeline for publication



**Representations** are a form of appeals. The university or college can make representations if it considers the panel judgements do not appropriately reflect the evidence the panel had available to it. The panel will consider any representations and decide if the provisional rating decision remains appropriate, or should be amended, prior to deciding the final TEF rating.

### Including sensitive information

You should expect that your submission will be published and ensure that any content you include in it has been selected accordingly.

You should consider data protection issues and should not include personally identifying information that is not already in the public domain, or where an individual has not given consent. For example, you should not normally include names of individual students or staff, or details about them which would allow someone to identify them.

You should also avoid making statements that could be considered defamatory, taking particular care to ensure statements are factually true, rather than assumptions or opinions presented as facts, and consider the potential for statements to cause financial or reputational harm.

### Action points

- ✓ Ensure that the content of your submission is suitable for publication.
- ✓ Upload the submission by 24 January 2023.
- ✓ Be aware that we may, by exception, get in touch to ask about some information in your submission.



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