



The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF)

A short guide to the awards

June 2019

Overview

What is the TEF?

The TEF is a national exercise, introduced by the government in England. It assesses excellence in teaching at universities and colleges, and how well they ensure excellent outcomes for their students in terms of graduate-level employment or further study.

There are systems in place to help ensure that all UK colleges and universities meet national quality standards; the TEF looks at what they are doing in addition to these standards. Participating universities and colleges can achieve a rating of gold, silver, or bronze - or provisional if they do not have enough data for a full award.

Why is the TEF important?

Students invest significant amounts of time and money in their higher education. They rightly expect a high quality academic experience. The TEF measures important aspects that matter to students: excellent teaching and a supportive, stimulating academic environment which helps them to fulfil their potential and then go on to a good job or further study or training.

What does the TEF mean for students?

It sharpens the focus on teaching and outcomes that matter to students, by encouraging universities and colleges to deliver the best experience for their students and achieve higher ratings.

How do students use the TEF results?

Students can take TEF awards into account alongside all the other sources of information, advice and guidance on where to apply to study. The results are published on the UCAS, Unistats and Office for Students (OfS) websites. In addition to the gold, silver and bronze ratings, the OfS publishes a summary of the reasons for each award, the data, and the submissions from universities and colleges.

The assessment process

Who can participate in the TEF?

To receive a TEF award, UK universities and colleges must first meet the existing quality standards of their home nation. The TEF assesses excellence in addition to these requirements. Participation in the TEF to date has been voluntary.

How are the TEF awards decided?

The TEF awards are decided by an independent panel of experts. The panel is made up of academics who lead and teach at UK higher education providers; students; and experts on employment and widening participation in higher education.

The assessment uses a combination of data and a detailed statement from each university or college to arrive at the final rating. The data includes how many students continue their course from one year to the next, graduate-level employment outcomes, and students' views about their experience (gathered in the annual National Student Survey). The TEF takes into account the mix of student characteristics, entry qualifications and subjects at each higher education provider. Assessment is based on what a provider has achieved within this context.

What does the TEF measure?

The TEF measures teaching excellence in three key areas:

Teaching quality: the extent to which teaching stimulates and challenges students, and maximises their engagement with their studies.

Learning environment: the effectiveness of resources and activities (such as libraries, laboratories and work experience) which support learning and improve retention, progression and attainment.

Student outcomes and learning gain: the extent to which all students achieve their educational and professional goals, in particular students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

How are different types of provider assessed?

The UK has a diverse higher education system. It includes universities and colleges of varying sizes and locations, with different aims and specialisms, which serve students from a wide range of different backgrounds.

The TEF recognises this diversity. It asks: 'What does excellent teaching look like for these students at this university or college?' The answer will vary depending on the context. The data used in the assessment are benchmarked for each provider to take account of its student mix, entry qualifications and subjects taught. Each provider submits evidence of how it tailors its approach for its students.

What are the award levels?

A university or college taking part in TEF can receive one of the following awards:



Gold for delivering consistently outstanding teaching, learning and outcomes for its students. It is of the highest quality found in the UK.



Silver for delivering high quality teaching, learning and outcomes for its students. It consistently exceeds rigorous national quality requirements for UK higher education.



Bronze for delivering teaching, learning and outcomes for its students that meet rigorous national quality requirements for UK higher education.



Universities or colleges that meet rigorous national quality requirements but which do not yet have sufficient data to be fully assessed can opt in for a provisional award.

The TEF rating applies to a university or college overall, not to a specific subject or course.

How long is an award valid for?

TEF awards are valid until 2021.

Can a university or college with a TEF award increase its tuition fees?

In England, publicly funded universities and colleges with a TEF award may charge up to the higher maximum tuition fee for 2019 entrants. The maximum tuition fee they can charge for a full-time course is currently £9,250 per year. Those without a TEF award can charge a maximum of £9,000 per year.

For universities in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, holding a TEF award has no effect on the tuition fees that they can charge.

What is planned for the TEF in future?

There is an independent review of the TEF currently under way. We expect to publish details about the future TEF exercise following the conclusion of this review.

Results from the future exercise will replace the current TEF awards, and universities and colleges in England (with more than 500 students) that register with the OfS will have to take part. Universities and colleges in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be able to take part voluntarily.

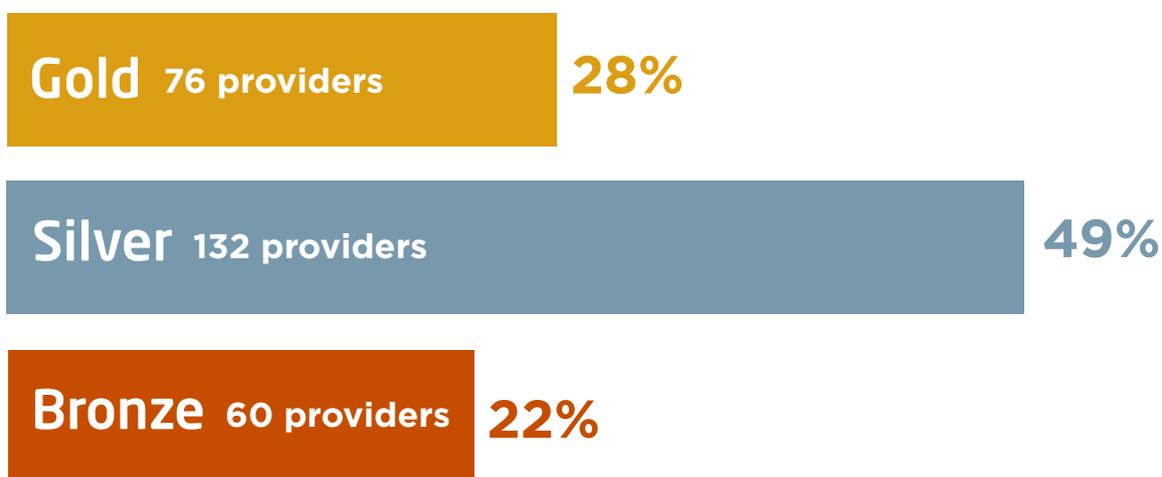
2019 TEF results at a glance

The total number of higher education providers across the UK with a TEF award as at 19 June 2019 is 282.

The results show that high levels of excellence can be found in all types of higher education provider.

You can find the current awards at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-outcomes/>.

The results show excellence across the sector



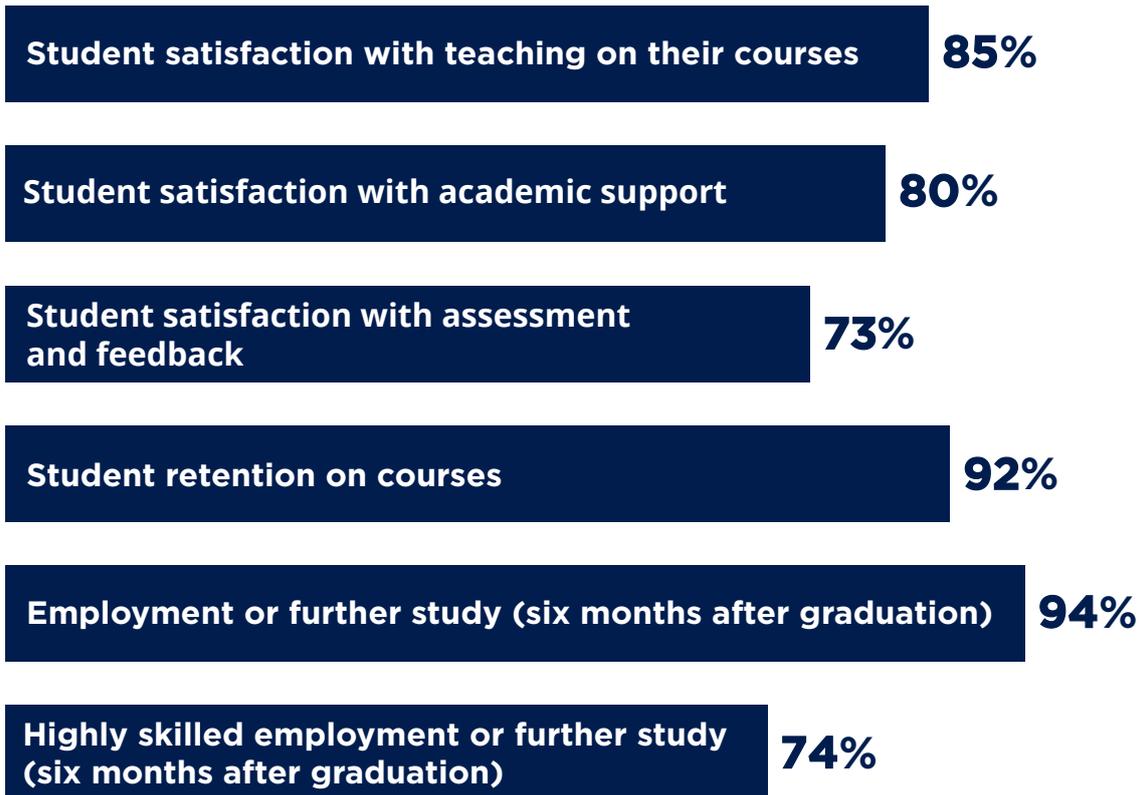
In addition, there are 14 providers with provisional awards.

Note: due to rounding, the proportions shown in the chart do not add up to 100%.

What measures were used?

The TEF Panel judged the ratings based on six main metrics based on national data, supplementary data where available, and a submission of additional evidence supplied by each university or college.

The main metrics are shown below, with this year's sector averages for each measure (based on full-time students only). The data shows high overall levels of student satisfaction with teaching, high student retention rates, and high proportions of graduates going on to highly skilled employment.



For all the TEF results and latest updates visit <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/>