

# Adoption of the TEF by the OfS

## Issue

1. To consider the adoption of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) under section 25 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA), and the appointment of the chair of the TEF assessment panel.

## Recommendations

2. That the board:
  - a. adopts the TEF as its scheme under s25 of HERA;
  - b. agrees to appoint Professor Chris Husbands as the chair of the TEF assessment panel for a further three years.

## Background

3. To date, the policy development of the TEF has been carried out by DfE and implemented by HEFCE. DfE and HEFCE have used existing powers to operate the scheme, which is currently voluntary. A timeline for the development of the TEF is attached at Annex A. If the OfS formally adopts the TEF, we envisage that its officers will work with DfE on the development of the TEF over the next two years, and that the OfS will be solely responsible for the specification for the full subject-level TEF rollout in 2019/20.
4. DfE commenced section 25 of HERA on 1 January 2018, which gives the OfS the power “to make arrangements to give ratings:
  - a. to English higher education providers regarding the quality of, and the standards applied to, higher education that they provide where they apply for such a rating, and
  - b. to higher education providers in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, in respect of whom the appropriate consent is given, regarding the quality of, and the standards applied to, higher education that they provide where they apply for such a rating” (section 25(1))”.
5. The Regulatory Framework consultation, which closed on 22 December, proposed that the TEF should be an ongoing registration condition for all Approved and Approved (Fee Cap) providers with more than 500 undergraduate higher education students. Smaller providers that meet the eligibility requirements will continue to be able to participate on a voluntary basis. Consultation responses are currently being analysed.

## The adoption of TEF

6. Section 25 of HERA allows the OfS to adopt an existing scheme (TEF) or create a new one. If it adopts the TEF as its scheme, the OfS will take responsibility for the TEF part-way through TEF Year Three. Applications closed on 18 January so the OfS would only be responsible in Year Three for the assessment - rather than

application – element of the process. Since the TEF specification for Year Three made clear that the OfS would, in due course, become responsible for the TEF, there should be a low risk of providers complaining that they had been misinformed about which body has responsibility for TEF.

7. One of the key features of the TEF to date is that decisions about the ratings are made not by HEFCE but by an independent panel (comprising academics, students and those with relevant experience of employment and widening participation) appointed by HEFCE. This panel applies its professional knowledge and expertise to consider the TEF metrics and provider submission in order to reach a judgement and award a rating. The 'lessons learned' exercise in Year Two (2016/17) showed that respondents generally found the process fair and that the judgements reflected teaching excellence. We would recommend that the OfS adopt the same independent panel model as in the HEFCE scheme.

## Appointment of TEF panel chair

8. Because the panel is at the centre of the TEF assessment process, the appointment of the chair of panel will be one of the most significant decisions for the OfS board to take.
9. Professor Chris Husbands, the Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield Hallam University, is the current chair. His performance in the role seems universally regarded as exemplary and he possesses strong credibility in the higher education sector. His two-year term is scheduled to come to an end in summer 2018, after the Year Three round. The OfS has three options:
  - a. Not to reappoint him;
  - b. To reappoint him for one year. That would require a new appointment process for 2019/20, which follows the Independent Review and is the first year of subject-level TEF; or
  - c. Reappoint him for an addition three years. This would give a total term of 5 years and provide continuity between the HEFCE and OfS stewardship of TEF, covering the period of the independent review and transition to the full implementation of the TEF. If the board had concerns about the length of this option, it could approve a break clause whereby either party could terminate the arrangement without penalty following the Independent Review, should this be warranted.
10. We recommend the third option (three years), as this would provide stability and consistency during periods of review and change. We also recommend that the decision is taken quickly so that there is no loss of momentum caused by uncertainty over the chair.

Year	Date	Action
<b>AY 16/17</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2017	Year Two results announced
	9 <sup>th</sup> October 2017	Lessons Learned document and Specification published
<b>AY 17/18</b>	February – April 2018	Subject-level consultation window
	Expected end of February	Response to the Regulatory Framework published
	June 2018	Year Three institutional level results announced
	June 2018	Subject-level pilot results disseminated (to participating providers only)
	July 2018	HEFCE report findings of the first year of subject-level pilots to DfE
<b>AY 18/19</b>	AY 18/19	Independent Review of TEF
	Autumn 2018	Government joint response to pilots, consultation and student research published
		Subject-Level Pilot Specification: Second Year published (taking into account consultation responses)
	Summer 2019	Year Four institutional level results announced
	Summer 2019	Subject-level pilot results disseminated (to participating providers only)
<b>AY 19/20</b>	AY 19/20	First full year of Subject-level TEF (provisional)