



The Teaching Excellence Framework

A short guide to the 2018 awards

Overview

What is the TEF?

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is an exercise introduced by the government in England, to assess higher education providers' levels of excellence in terms of teaching and ensuring students get good outcomes, whether graduate-level employment or further study. Universities and colleges from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland can also take part.

The UK has a world-class higher education sector, with all universities and colleges quality assessed through robust systems. The TEF builds on this by identifying and rewarding excellence in undergraduate teaching and student outcomes, in addition to the high standards of academic quality already required. Universities and colleges are awarded Gold, Silver or Bronze, or a provisional rating (meaning they do not yet have enough data for a full award).

2018 is the second year of TEF awards.

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 the things that students care about: excellent teaching and a supportive, stimulating academic environment which helps them to fulfil their potential and then to secure a good job or progress to 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.
- It provides easily understandable overall ratings for a university or college, to be used alongside other information, advice and guidance.

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 be considered for a TEF rating, higher education providers have first to meet demanding national quality requirements. The TEF measures excellence in addition to meeting these standards.

Participation in the TEF is currently voluntary. In future, participation in TEF by universities and colleges in England will be a condition of registration with the Office for Students.

How were the TEF awards decided?

The TEF awards were decided by an independent panel of experts 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 data combined with a detailed statement from each university or college to arrive at the final rating. The data include 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 should be achieving 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 were 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 submitted evidence of how it tailors its approach for its students.

What are the award levels?

A university or college taking part in TEF received 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.

Currently the TEF rating applies to a university or college overall, not to a specific subject or course. Pilot exercises are under way for TEF assessment at subject level; this is expected to be introduced from 2020.

How long is an award valid for?

An award is valid for up to three years. Providers can reapply in any year.

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 2018 entrants. The maximum tuition fee they can charge for a full-time course is £9,250 per year. Those without a TEF award can charge a maximum of £9,000 per year. The government will announce maximum fees for the academic year 2019-20 in due course.

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

2018 TEF results at a glance

Who participated?

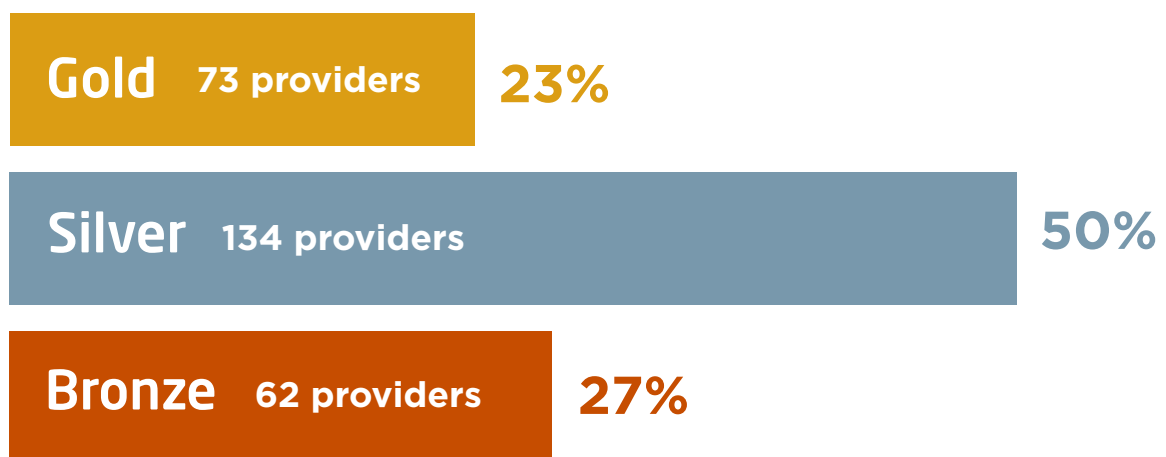
As TEF awards are valid for up to three years, for many of the universities and colleges who received awards in 2017 there was no need to apply again in 2018 – although some did.

The total number of higher education providers across the UK in receipt of a TEF award is now 296.

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



What measures were used?

The TEF Panel judges 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.

