

# Terms of reference

## TEF metrics peer review group

### Background

1. The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) was introduced by the Government in 2016, with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and subsequently the Office for Students (OfS) carrying out three years of provider level assessment on behalf of the Department for Education. In parallel with the 2018 and 2019 provider level exercises, the OfS conducted two years of subject pilots, testing approaches to making awards at subject level.
2. The Higher Education and Research Act (HERA) 2017 set out the OfS's powers to deliver a ratings scheme. It also set out the need for an independent review of the TEF by 2019, with a requirement for the reviewer to report on '...the sources of statistical information used in [TEF]; [and] whether that process, and those sources of statistical information, are fit for use for the purpose of determining ratings under the scheme.'
3. Following the independent review of TEF, the OfS anticipates the need to consider the recommendations of the review and develop new approaches to the metrics data used in TEF, ahead of the next phase of TEF. The new approaches developed by the OfS will be brought to the group for peer review, comment and challenge.

### Purpose and terms

4. The two core purposes of the group are as follows:
  - a. To undertake expert peer review of the OfS's proposed statistical methods for the future TEF metrics.
  - b. To comment on the presentation and clarity of the new TEF metrics from a metrics user perspective.
5. Therefore, the group is likely to consist of two types of members (although they may overlap): those with expertise on the statistical elements of the metrics, and those who represent key metrics user groups.<sup>1</sup>
6. The specific terms of reference for this group are to review and discuss the OfS's proposals on:
  - a. the statistical robustness of the proposed metrics.

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<sup>1</sup> The 'key metrics users' for the purposes of this group are higher education providers and TEF panel members.

- b. method of indicating performance (benchmarking, absolute and relative performance).
  - c. methods of combining metrics to indicate overall performance.
  - d. testing the usability of the package of metrics.
  - e. methods of communicating metrics.
7. The following areas will not be within the remit of this group:
- a. Which metrics should be used.<sup>2</sup>
  - b. How metrics should be weighted.
  - c. How metrics should be used in the assessment process.
  - d. Quality assurance of metrics.
8. Points 7a, b, and c will be decided as a policy matter by the OfS with oversight from the TEF governance board. The OfS Data, Analysis and Foresight team will work on point 4d in consultation with the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) best practice team.

## Membership

9. The provisional membership of the group is as follows:
- Amanda Chetwynd, Lancaster University
  - Jon Forster, University of Warwick
  - Mark Gittoes, Office for Students
  - Aashish Khadia, University of Leicester
  - Duncan Lawson, Coventry University
  - Emma McCoy, Imperial College London
  - Victoria Obudulu, Department for Education
  - James Perkins, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama
  - Robin Webber-Jones, The Sheffield College.
10. Further members may be invited to join the group in due course.

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<sup>2</sup> i.e. which main data sources should be used as the core metrics, such as the National Student Survey (NSS) or Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO).

11. Mark Gittoes, Head of Profession (Statistics) at the Office for Students, will chair the first meeting. Future meetings will be chaired by a member of the new overarching TEF governance board.

## **Authority and reporting**

12. The remit of the group is purely advisory. Information will flow in both directions between this group and the TEF governance board. The group may form shared views and provide advice, but ultimately decisions on statistical methods will be taken by the OfS.
13. Members of the group should ensure materials and discussions shared in the group remain confidential as per the terms set out in members' appointment letters, and members should not comment on the content of discussions in public.

## **Meeting arrangements**

14. Meetings will be held approximately monthly at the OfS's London office. The first meeting will take place on **1 October 2019** and subsequent meeting dates will be circulated. The group is expected to be in operation for around two years.
15. OfS staff will provide secretariat support for the group. Papers will be prepared by the OfS and sent to members one week in advance of meeting.