

Office for
Students



Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework

Year Four procedural guidance

Reference OfS 2018.45

Enquiries to tef@officeforstudents.org.uk

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This guidance sets out:

- the timetable and procedures for higher education providers and for panel members and assessors taking part in TEF Year Four
- how and when provider-level TEF awards will be replaced by subject-level TEF awards
- the implications for existing Year Two and Three awards.

It updates, supplements and should be read alongside the 'Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework Specification' (October 2017) published by the Department for Education.

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About this guide

1. The Department for Education in England (DfE) introduced the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) in 2016 to recognise and reward excellent teaching in UK higher education providers.
2. The Office for Students (OfS) was established by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA)¹ and became fully operational in April 2018. The TEF is the scheme that the OfS has adopted under HERA section 25(1) as a sector-level intervention to promote excellence in teaching and outcomes².
3. The Office for Students is responsible for implementing provider-level TEF according to the DfE's TEF specification.
4. The DfE published the current 'Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework specification'³ (hereafter referred to as the 'TEF specification') in October 2017. It sets out the assessment framework and specifies the criteria, evidence and process for provider-level TEF in Year Three (the academic year 2017-18) and in future years, until a new specification is published.
5. This procedural guidance updates, supplements and should be read alongside the TEF specification. The TEF specification remains valid for TEF Year Four (the academic year 2018-19) but it is revised by some technical updates which are detailed in this document. Where the guidance revises the TEF specification it is indicated by the following convention:

A **yellow box** indicates a requirement in the TEF specification that was applicable to TEF Year Three but has been superseded by this procedural guidance document for TEF Year Four. A full list of changes is provided at Annex A.

6. This document supersedes the 'TEF Year Three procedural guidance'⁴. It provides guidance on the timescales and operational procedures for those participating in TEF Year Four and describes the transition from provider-level TEF to the implementation of subject-level TEF, which is relevant to all UK higher education providers holding a TEF Year Two or Year Three award as well as those applying for a Year Four award.

¹ See www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/29/section/25/enacted.

² See 'Securing student success: Regulatory framework for higher education in England' (OfS 2018.01), available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/securing-student-success-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/.

³ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-excellence-and-student-outcomes-framework-specification>.

⁴ Available for download at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/assessment-timeline/resources-for-universities-and-colleges/.

7. This guide is in three parts:

Part 1: Transition from provider-level to subject-level TEF. This part of the guidance is relevant to providers applying for a TEF Year Four award and providers holding a TEF Year Two or Year Three award.

Part 2: Procedural guidance for providers. This part of the guidance applies to all providers, including providers holding a TEF Year Two or Year Three award, providers applying for a Year Four award and providers that do not intend participating in TEF.

Part 3: Procedural guidance for TEF Year Four panel members and assessors.

8. Additional technical and supporting documentation about TEF Year Four is available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-year-four/technical-guidance-for-participants/. Separate guidance is available for providers and panel members participating in the second TEF subject pilot in 2018-19. There are significant differences in approach between the TEF subject-level pilot and TEF Year Four. TEF Year Four documentation does not provide the information required to participate in the subject pilot, or vice versa.

Enquiries and further information

9. For enquiries about participation in provider-level TEF or the development of subject-level TEF, contact TEF@officeforstudents.org.uk.

10. For enquiries about TEF metrics and the TEF extranet, contact TEFmetrics@officeforstudents.org.uk.

11. For enquiries about TEF policy, contact the DfE, tef.queries@education.gov.uk.

Further information

12. For further information, see:

- the OfS's TEF webpages: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-year-four/
- the DfE's TEF webpages: www.gov.uk/government/collections/teaching-excellence-framework.

13. Any updates, clarifications or FAQs will be published on the websites listed in paragraph 12. TEF contacts (see paragraphs 14 to 18) will be informed when new information is published.

TEF contacts

14. Each higher education provider has been asked to nominate a main TEF contact.

15. Enquiries from members of staff or students at a provider should be sent, where possible, via the TEF contacts. We anticipate publishing the list of contacts online in January 2019.

16. The role of the TEF contacts is:

- to act as the primary contacts for correspondence with the TEF team, regarding the provider's participation in the TEF
- as far as is practicable, to channel queries from other members of staff or students at the provider to the TEF team
- to respond to clarification and verification queries from OfS officers during the assessment stage
- to liaise with student representatives at the provider, as appropriate, regarding the TEF application.

17. Providers have also been invited to nominate an alternative TEF contact, who will be copied into all correspondence from the TEF team to the main TEF contact, and may also respond on behalf of the main TEF contact.

18. Important correspondence regarding the TEF will be sent to the accountable officer in addition to the TEF contacts.

Briefing events and webinars

19. Briefing events for providers considering participating in TEF Year Four are being held on 19 November 2018 (in Manchester) and 21 November 2018 (in London). All main TEF contacts from providers that are potentially eligible to apply for a TEF assessment have been sent further information about the events and invited to register one staff member and one student representative.

20. Online TEF training resources will be available in the autumn. Further information on training content and instructions for accessing the resources will be emailed to TEF contacts.

TEF updates

21. For news and updates on the TEF from the OfS, we are launching a JiscMail list, TEFNEWS. To subscribe to this list, visit <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/TEFNEWS>. Subscribers will be kept informed of any updates and news relating to TEF, including publications, consultations, events and opportunities to apply to be a panel member.

Part 1: Transition to subject-level TEF

This part of the guidance is relevant to providers applying for a TEF Year Four award and providers holding a TEF Year Two or Year Three award.

22. The TEF was introduced in 2016 by the DfE to:

- better inform students' choices about what and where to study
- raise esteem for teaching
- recognise and reward better teaching
- better meet the needs of employers, business, industry and the professions.

23. To date, TEF has operated at 'provider level', which means that it has assessed the general performance across a university or college, producing a single rating for the whole provider. Participation in provider-level TEF has been voluntary. Over 330 universities and colleges across the UK have taken part so far, receiving a rating of Gold, Silver, Bronze, or a Provisional award. The awards are based on holistic assessment against common criteria using a set of metrics and a 15-page provider submission.

24. The DfE has committed to introducing TEF at subject level, to provide more useful information to prospective students about the subject they are looking to study. We know that most students choose their subject first, and then choose between universities and colleges offering that subject. We are piloting TEF at subject level to develop a robust process that can provide information for applicants at both subject level and provider level⁵. Alongside the pilot we will test applicants' reactions to such information and how to present it in the most useful way.

25. Subject-level TEF will further drive enhancement of teaching and learning by identifying and incentivising excellence within subjects as well as at each provider. The outcomes will provide more granular information about how the institution performs as a whole, and across its subjects, including where excellence lies but also where it can make improvements.

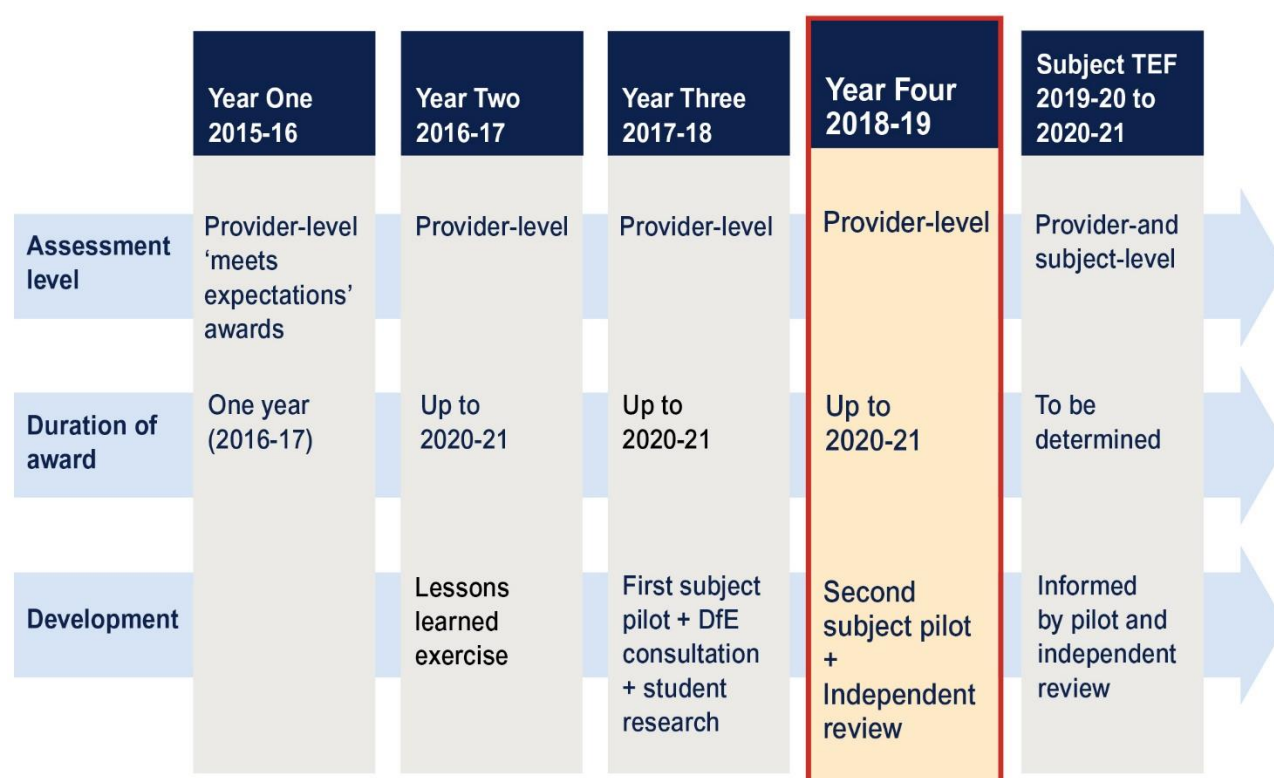
Development of subject-level TEF

26. Subject-level TEF is being developed over two years (academic years 2017-18 and 2018-19) before it will be implemented. The first subject-level pilot (which ran in 2017-18) tested two options for producing both provider-level and subject-level ratings in one exercise.

⁵ For the pilot subjects are defined using 34 subject categories based on the second level of the Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH2). See www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/hecos for more information.

27. The second pilot will be carried out in academic year 2018-19 alongside, but independently from, the provider-level TEF Year Four exercise. The final design of subject-level TEF will take account of the findings of the two years of pilots and the outcomes of the statutory independent review of TEF established by HERA⁶.
28. Up to now, each TEF exercise has been completed within a single academic year. However, given the scale of the first full subject-level TEF exercise, it will be conducted across two academic years, 2019-20 and 2020-21, to enable it to produce robust outcomes. This will ensure additional time for providers to make submissions and for panels to conduct the assessments. We expect the application window to open in early 2020, and to publish the outcomes in spring 2021. This will also allow more time for the findings of the second pilot and the independent review to be fully considered before moving to full implementation. Figure 1 summarises the TEF development timeline.

Figure 1: Transition from provider-level to subject-level TEF timeline



Changes to the duration of provider-level TEF awards

29. The final provider-level exercise with published outcomes⁷ (TEF Year Four) will take place in 2018-19 and will operate completely independently from the subject-level pilots. So that subject-level TEF produces comprehensive outcomes to inform student choice, the DfE has decided that published awards from provider-level TEF Years Two, Three and Four should no longer be valid when subject-level TEF awards are published in

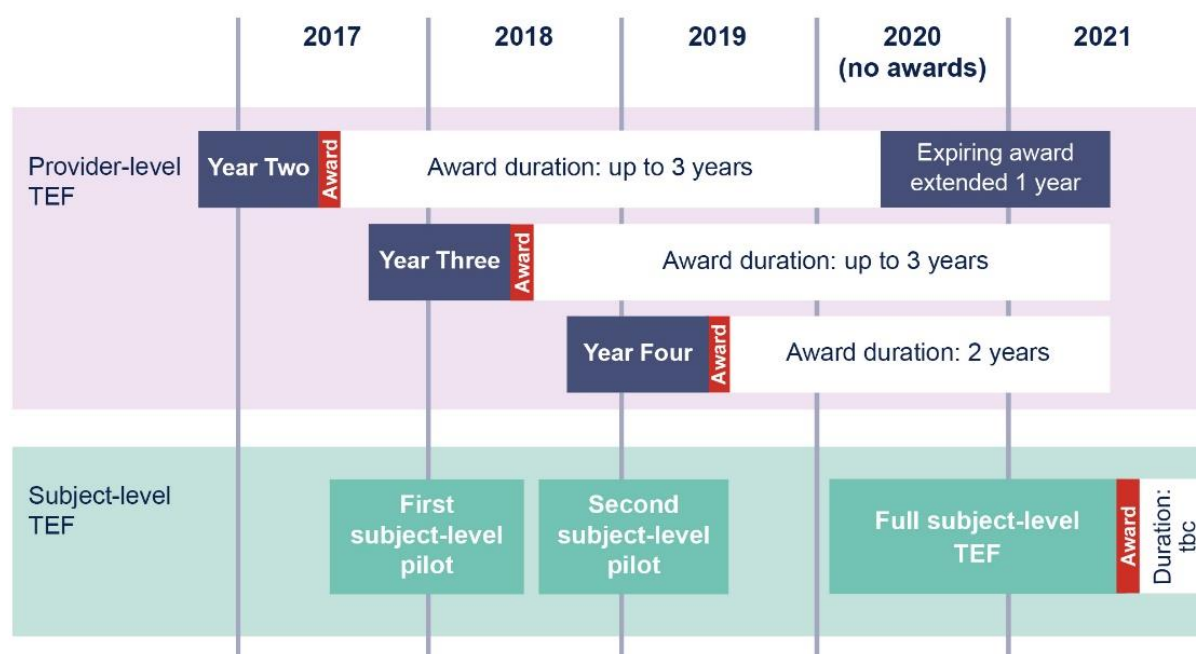
⁶ See section 26 of HERA at www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/29/section/26/enacted.

⁷ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-outcomes/.

2021. At that point, all awards from provider-level TEF will expire, and be replaced by awards made through the first full subject-level TEF exercise (these awards will be at both provider and subject levels). To achieve this, the duration of awards made from provider-level TEF (TEF Years Two, Three and Four) will be adjusted as follows (as illustrated in Figure 2):

- a. All Year Two and Year Three awards due to expire in 2020 will be extended by one year (to 2021).
- b. Year Four awards will last for two years (to 2021).

Figure 2: Award duration summary⁸



30. These changes to award duration apply to all assessed awards (Bronze, Silver and Gold) and Provisional awards. Providers must continue to meet the TEF eligibility criteria (set out in Section 3 of the specification and updated by this guidance) throughout the period to retain a TEF award.
31. Participation in provider-level TEF remains voluntary. If a provider has an award that is due to expire in 2019 and wishes to retain an award until subject-level TEF awards are published in 2021, it will need to participate in TEF Year Four. Paragraphs 35 to 39 provide more information on participation and providers will receive a personalised email

⁸ Figure 2 summarises changes to Year Two or Year Three awards with the maximum three years' duration. Year Two or Three awards lasting less than three years will be affected as set out in Table 1.

explaining what the changes mean for their award. Table 1 illustrates the duration of TEF awards.

Table 1: TEF award durations

Year of award	Provisional	Gold/Silver/Bronze	Original duration	Expiry date ⁹
TEF Year Two Awarded June 2017	✓	✓	Up to 1 year	Expired June 2018
	N/A	✓	Up to 2 years	June 2019
	N/A	✓	Up to 3 years	Originally 2020 Extended to 2021
TEF Year Three Awarded June 2018	✓	✓	Up to 1 year	June 2019
	N/A	✓	Up to 2 years	Originally 2020 Extended to 2021
	N/A	✓	Up to 3 years	2021
TEF Year Four Awarded June 2019	✓	✓	Up to 2 years	2021

Implications for a provider's TEF award

32. Any eligible provider may choose to apply for a TEF Year Four award. A provider may choose to participate for the first time in TEF Year Four, to replace an expiring TEF award, to update an existing award, or because it previously held a provisional award but now has suitable metrics for an assessed award.

- a. TEF awards due to expire in June 2019 will not be extended. Providers must apply for a TEF Year Four award in order to hold a TEF award from 2019 until 2021.
- b. Awards due to expire in 2020 will be automatically extended until 2021, unless a provider applies for a Year Four award, or opts out of the extension (by emailing tef@officeforstudents.org.uk by 3 May 2019).

33. For clarity:

- a. TEF Year Three provisional awards had a maximum duration of one year and will expire in June 2019. TEF Year Four provisional awards have a maximum duration of two years and will remain valid until the publication of subject-level outcomes in 2021, assuming the provider continues to meet all eligibility requirements.
- b. TEF Year Two and Three Bronze, Silver and Gold awards had a maximum duration of three years. Those expiring in 2020 will be extended by one year. TEF Year Four awards have a maximum duration of two years.

⁹ Providers with an award expiring in 2019 will need to apply for a Year Four award if they wish to hold a TEF award from 2019 to 2021.

34. As in previous years, a new TEF award, once published, replaces a previous award.

Superseding TEF specification paragraphs 3.24, 3.42, 5.38, 9.2 and Figure 2:

- the maximum duration of a TEF Year Four assessed award is two years
- the maximum duration of a TEF Year Four provisional award is two years.

TEF Year Two and Year Three awards due to expire in June 2020 will be automatically extended by one year until the first full subject-level TEF ratings are published in 2021, unless the provider opts out.

Participation in TEF

35. Participation in TEF Year Four is voluntary for any eligible UK provider.

Providers in England

36. For providers in England, from 1 August 2019, the OfS Regulatory Framework registration condition B6¹⁰ will require providers in England with more than 500¹¹ students on higher education courses to participate in the first full subject-level TEF, provided they are eligible to do so.

37. Registered providers in England with fewer than 500 students may continue to participate on a voluntary basis.

Providers in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

38. Providers in the devolved administrations that satisfy TEF eligibility requirements may participate on a voluntary basis.

39. HERA (section 25 (1) (b)) enables the OfS to give TEF ratings to providers in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales where providers apply for an award and their government has given the appropriate consent for them to do so. Reflecting the powers granted under HERA to the devolved administrations, the TEF specification paragraph 2.3 is updated as set out below.

¹⁰ See OfS 2018.01 paragraphs 356 to 363.

¹¹ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/calculating-student-numbers-consultation-on-the-principles-guiding-how-we-will-calculate-student-numbers-for-regulatory-purposes/. We anticipate that a consultation response will be published in autumn 2018.

Updating TEF specification paragraph 2.3:

- The devolved administrations in Northern Ireland and Scotland have confirmed they are content for providers to take part in TEF Year Four (academic year 2018-19) should they wish to do so.
- In Wales, providers should write at the earliest opportunity to CeisiadauAU.HEApplications@llyw.cymru notifying the Welsh Government of their intent to apply to the OfS for a TEF assessment rating. Consent, where given, will be subject to review and may be revoked.

Part 2: Procedural guidance for providers

Paragraphs 40 to 113 apply to all providers, including providers holding a TEF Year Two or Year Three award, providers applying for a Year Four award and providers that do not intend participating in TEF.

Updates to the TEF specification

40. The TEF specification published in October 2017 for TEF Year Three (academic year 2017-18) remains valid for TEF Year Four and the assessment process is unchanged. There are, however, some revisions required to reflect the implementation of HERA, the transition to subject-level TEF and some technical improvements to the TEF metrics. These revisions are summarised in the box below and detailed in the relevant sections of this guidance. A full list of changes to the specification is provided at Annex A.

Summary of key revisions to the TEF specification

Creation of the Office for Students

All references to 'the Higher Education Funding Council for England' or 'HEFCE' and 'the Office for Fair Access' or 'OFFA' in the document should be read as referring to 'the Office for Students' or 'the OfS', and all references to 'the Director of Fair Access' or 'DFA' should be read as referring to 'the Director for Fair Access and Participation' or 'DFAP' (implementing paragraphs 1.7 and 3.14 of the TEF specification).

Award duration

Superseding the TEF specification (paragraphs 3.24, 5.38, 9.2 and Figure 2):

- All TEF Year Four awards will have a maximum duration of two years.
- Year Two and Year Three awards that were due to expire in June 2020 will be automatically extended by one year until the first full subject-level TEF ratings are published in 2021, unless the provider opts out.

Metrics improvements

- The grade inflation supplementary metric data is centrally generated by the OfS, superseding the requirement for the provider to self-declare degree classification data (updating TEF specification paragraphs 5.16 to 5.20 and 5.74).
- The supplementary LEO metrics are updated to include three years of data, the median salary is revised in line with Office for National Statistics and HMRC annual updates, and an additional split metric is introduced showing the population excluding graduates in 'self-assessed employment only' (updating TEF specification paragraphs 5.24 and 5.27).

- The methodology used to derive a student's Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) quintile is updated from POLAR3 to POLAR4, (updating TEF specification, Table 6).
- The time period covered by each TEF metric is rolled forward by one year (updating TEF specification Tables 4 and 7).

Eligibility processes

For **providers in England**, processes for meeting TEF eligibility criteria are aligned with the OfS Regulatory Framework registration conditions, such that registration with the OfS confers TEF eligibility requirements for:

- quality (revising TEF specification paragraphs 1.13 to 1.23 and 3.31 to 3.32)
- designation for student support (revising paragraph 3.7)
- widening access and participation (revising paragraphs 3.9 to 3.13).

Updates to procedures for ongoing TEF Year Two and Three awards

41. Providers holding an existing TEF award that is due to expire after June 2019, and providers applying for a TEF Year Four award, should familiarise themselves with the updated procedures for eligibility (paragraphs 151 to 185) and award duration (paragraphs 29 to 34) in this guidance. This applies to providers:
 - a. Holding a TEF Year Two award (made in June 2017) with a duration of three years.
 - b. Holding a TEF Year Three award (made in June 2018) with a duration of two or three years.
 - c. Applying for a TEF Year Four award.
42. Providers that are planning a merger or division (demerger) should familiarise themselves with the merger and divisions section of this guidance (paragraphs 202 to 211).

Accessing data and the TEF extranet

Publication of TEF data

43. The OfS is designated as a producer of official statistics and complies with the UK Statistics Authority's code of practice for statistics. In line with the code, the OfS would normally expect to provide free and equal access to its statistics through their publication, prior to any release to third parties (such as providers or panel members). On any occasion that the OfS grants earlier access to its statistics, circulation is very

strictly limited and solely for the purposes of quality assurance of the data or operational requirement.

44. The OfS has released TEF metrics and contextual data to each potentially eligible UK provider that has any TEF Year Four metrics data available (whether or not it meets the definition of 'suitable metrics'). Publication will include the core metrics and splits, the supplementary Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) metrics, the grade inflation data and the contextual data in the same format as they will be presented to panel members and assessors. (An example of a workbook is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-excellence-and-student-outcomes-framework-specification>.) The contextual data maps will be published as separate files.

Providers in England

45. We will publish TEF metrics and contextual data for all English providers, whether or not the provider has applied for a TEF Year 4 award, on 10 January 2019 at 0930. Publication of the TEF metrics and contextual data is timed to follow the completion of activities related to data quality assurance and operational requirement. Specifically, publication follows completion of the TEF data amendments process (which addresses data quality assurance issues arising from release of the metrics to providers, and is described in paragraphs 75 to 113). The data amendment process applies to providers that wish to correct data errors that will materially affect the published metrics, whether or not they participate in TEF Year Four.

Providers in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

46. For providers in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the publication strategy for TEF metrics is a devolved matter. Each of the devolved administrations has decided that Year Four TEF data will only be published for providers that choose to participate in TEF Year Four, reflecting the voluntary nature of participation. Accordingly, the OfS will publish data for TEF Year Four participants from the devolved administrations on 24 January at 0930.

Responsibilities of the head of provider or accountable officer

47. The TEF Year Four metrics workbooks and contextual data (as described in the TEF specification) will be made available to providers in advance of their publication, under the very strict condition that access to the information is limited to individuals in the provider whose access is demonstrably critical to its participation in TEF and to the quality assurance of the data.
48. The OfS will only release the metrics information to the head of the provider or the accountable officer who is responsible for signing off the submissions of individualised student data to the Higher Education Skills Agency (HESA) or the Education and Skills Funding Agency and who is therefore ultimately responsible for the quality assurance of the metrics. The following responsibilities will be conferred upon this individual:
- a. On receipt of access to the TEF metrics and contextual data, the head of the provider or the accountable officer must ensure that access to the information is only

disseminated to individuals in the provider for whom this access is directly related to the provider's participation in TEF and to the quality assurance of the data.

- b. A record of the individuals to whom access has been granted must be made and maintained by the provider, for inspection by the OfS or the Office for Statistics Regulation in the event of a breach of the code of practice for statistics.
- c. The OfS recognises the need for a participating provider to share information with a selection of its staff and its student representative bodies or equivalent in advance of the planned publication date, 0930 on 10 January 2019. However, this information must not be disclosed to any third parties (including staff or students) who are not directly involved in the production of TEF submissions until after publication.

49. Failure to comply with these requirements will cause the OfS to reconsider its approach to providing any access to TEF metrics and contextual data in advance of publication for future iterations of TEF assessment.

Data resources available to support quality assurance processes

50. Individualised student-level data has been made available via the TEF extranet so that providers can understand how the indicators have been derived from the underlying data and can check their underlying data for accuracy.

51. The data includes information on the ways in which each student at a provider has been categorised and counted in the TEF Year Four metrics, and in the derivation of the TEF benchmarking factors. This data will not be published, and providers must ensure that access to and use of individualised student-level data complies with the General Data Protection Regulation¹².

52. In addition, the OfS has published a suite of technical documents that describe the algorithms used to derive the indicators from the underlying student data, DLHE survey and NSS data. A workbook containing sector averages used in the benchmarking calculations has also been published. These are available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/assessment-timeline/technical-guidance-for-participants/.

53. Queries about the metrics workbooks and supporting data should be raised with tefmetrics@officeforstudents.org.uk.

Accessing the TEF extranet

54. Providers must use the TEF extranet to access their metrics workbooks and to complete their application or opt in for a provisional award. The TEF extranet is available at <https://tef.officeforstudents.org.uk/Submissions>.

¹² See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/justice-and-fundamental-rights/data-protection/2018-reform-eu-data-protection-rules_en.

55. There are two TEF extranet user 'groups', each with access to specific information and functionality:

- The **TEF Year Four group** is for staff overseeing the application or opt in to TEF Year Four. It provides access to:
 - the metrics workbook and data maps
 - general templates
 - the facility to upload the provider submission, the authorisation letter and any other required information
 - the facility to lodge an appeal.
- The **TEF Year Four individualised student data group** is for staff involved in processing individual-level student data. It only provides access to student-level data that underpins the calculation of TEF Year Four metrics (see paragraphs 50 to 51).

56. Each provider has been informed of the unique group keys that are needed to access the TEF extranet user groups. A hard-copy letter, dated 3 October 2018, was sent to the head of provider or accountable officer with this information. The head of provider or accountable officer is responsible for disseminating these group keys to the appropriate individuals, taking care to ensure that they have the responsibility and authority to access the content provided via the TEF extranet.

57. Providers' TEF contacts were informed by email that access instructions for the TEF extranet would be sent to the head of provider or accountable officer on 3 October 2018.

58. Queries about access to the TEF extranet should be sent to tefmetrics@officeforstudents.org.uk.

Changes to metric definitions for TEF Year Four

59. The definition and coverage of each metric are set out in Annex B, 'Full metrics descriptions'. The substantive changes to metric definitions in TEF Year Four compared with TEF Year Three are summarised in the box below with further explanation in paragraphs 60 to 66.

- a. **Year of data:** Each core and split metric will be calculated using the latest three years of available student data. The latest data is moved one year forward from TEF Year Three to TEF Year Four.
- b. **Grade inflation:** The grade inflation supplementary metric will be generated centrally by the OfS where applicable, using data from the HESA and Individualised Learner Record (ILR) returns. There is no longer a requirement for providers to submit a grade inflation declaration (updating paragraphs 5.17-5.20 of the TEF specification).

- c. **LEO:** The supplementary Longitudinal Education Outcomes metrics will include three years of data. The 'Above median earnings threshold or further study' metric will use a median earnings threshold relevant to each year. It will also include data from self-assessment in addition to Pay As You Earn (PAYE) data (updating paragraphs 5.24 and 5.27 of the TEF specification). The metrics will include an additional split metric showing the population excluding graduates in 'self-assessed employment only'.
- d. **POLAR:** The methodology used to derive a student's POLAR quintile is updated from POLAR3 to POLAR4, (updating TEF specification, Table 6). Further information, including the differences between POLAR3 and POLAR4, can be found at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/polar-participation-of-local-areas/.

Changes to the supplementary grade inflation metric

- 60. The TEF specification describes arrangements for the supplementary grade inflation metric. This will be generated centrally by the OfS for the purposes of TEF Year Four, and will be made available in the TEF metrics workbooks issued to providers that hold taught degree awarding powers (TDAPs). It will not be produced for providers that do not hold TDAPs. This replaces the requirement in Year Three for a provider declaration of grade inflation data. All providers can include other evidence of rigour and stretch in their provider submission.
- 61. The supplementary grade inflation metrics will include Level 6+ undergraduate degree awards made by a provider with existing TDAPs to the students it has taught. The grade inflation data will provide the number and proportion of degrees awarded as 1sts, 2:1s, other degree classifications and unclassified degree awards 10 years ago, and in the most recent three years of available data. Further definitional information is provided at Annex B.
- 62. We are aware that some providers that hold TDAPs have chosen not to use them for some or all of the years considered by the grade inflation metrics. The OfS has sought to identify the year in which the provider first awarded qualifications with its TDAPs. We have informed providers of this baseline year in a letter dated 3 October 2018 sent to the head of provider or accountable officer. If the provider does not agree with the OfS-identified baseline year, it should contact tefmetrics@officeforstudents.org.uk by 5 November 2018 latest. We will assume that providers that do not contact the OfS by this date agree with the baseline year identified. Revised supplementary grade inflation metrics will be issued according to the timetable of the data amendments process described at paragraph 113.

Changes to the supplementary LEO-based metrics

- 63. The LEO dataset has been enhanced since the production of the TEF Year Three metrics, such that the information it contains on self-assessed employment and earnings is now available and consistently defined across all three of the graduating cohorts that contribute to the TEF Year Four supplementary LEO metrics.

64. Graduates in self-assessed employment will contribute to the calculation of both the LEO-based TEF Year Four metrics, and the ‘above median earnings’ metric definition will no longer be limited to graduates with recorded PAYE earnings. The proportion of graduates in scope for the LEO-based metrics with self-assessment records is included in TEF workbooks as contextual data.
65. An additional split is also introduced, showing the population excluding graduates in ‘self-assessed employment only’. This split has been added to reflect the fact that earnings data for self-assessed employment is not directly comparable with that for PAYE employment because of the differences in collection of the data. Earnings from PAYE are annualised by calculating the average daily wage for the days spent in employment, and annualising this across a full tax year. However, there is particular uncertainty regarding the profile of self-assessment earnings across a full tax year, because we are not able to observe how much of the year someone has spent working¹³.
66. The ‘above median earnings’ metric measures salary outcomes for each cohort against a median salary threshold that is specific to the tax year in which their outcome is being measured. The median salary for 25- to 29-year-olds that forms the threshold for the salary-based LEO metric is drawn from the series of Office for National Statistics and HMRC publications, Personal Incomes Statistics¹⁴, for the appropriate tax year in which the graduates’ outcome is being measured, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Median earnings thresholds for LEO-based metric cohorts

Higher education qualifiers in	Outcomes in tax year	Median earnings threshold
2009-10	2013-14	£20,000
2010-11	2014-15	£21,000
2011-12	2015-16	£21,500

Data disclosure

67. The OfS has a duty to prevent the disclosure of personal data. As a result, we have applied a secure suppression strategy (see paragraph 69) and we must remind providers that all users of the TEF metrics that have been issued to them must comply with data protection legislation. In particular, the individualised student-level data made available through this exercise contains sensitive data items, so access to this data must be

¹³ While a graduate whose only outcome in the relevant tax year is a short period of self-assessed employment may be counted positively in the sustained employment or further study metric, it is less likely that they will be counted positively in the above median earnings threshold metric, because earnings in a short period are unlikely to exceed the threshold except for those in disproportionately highly paid work.

¹⁴ See ‘Personal incomes: tables 3.12 to 3.15a for 2015 to 2016’, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/personal-incomes-tables-312-to-315a-for-2015-to-2016>.

restricted to those staff who have a legitimate reason to access and process individual student-level data.

68. While the OfS has sought to be as transparent as possible, data supplied to providers must be at a sufficiently aggregated level to prevent disclosure of certain information. Therefore:

- a. NSS responses are collected by a third party and data supplied to providers must protect the anonymity of responses.
- b. A student's continuation outcome cannot be disclosed to a provider if it involves that student transferring to another provider.
- c. To ensure that no provider is able to identify any individual student's contribution (or lack thereof) to the LEO-based supplementary metrics, which draw on students' linked HMRC and Department for Work and Pensions tax and benefits records, the OfS is unable to supply student-level data to providers in relation to these metrics.
- d. Benchmarking calculations involve student-level data from all providers in the sector. To prevent disclosure, the OfS can only provide sector averages in proportional terms. As a result, providers will be able to derive the benchmark figures calculated in their metrics, but not the standard deviations or Z-scores that determine the flagging of any TEF metric.

Data protection suppressions

69. To remain compliant with the data protection legislation it is necessary to make a further assessment of a provider's TEF metrics to determine whether or not they are reportable. To prevent the disclosure of personal data, it is sometimes necessary to apply secondary suppression to TEF metrics to avoid the scenario in which data suppression implemented is rendered ineffective by the comparison of the metric splits. The OfS has taken a pragmatic approach to the data protection suppressions applied, with the objective of minimising the levels of non-reportable data arising from data protection suppression. However, it should be noted that in designing the data protection suppression approach that has been applied, the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation have been paramount.

70. If a core or supplementary metric does not meet the requirement to be reportable because it has a numerator that differs from the denominator by no more than two students, then it will be deemed **partially reportable**. The metric's denominator, flag, difference from benchmark and associated standard deviation and Z-score, and any very high or very low absolute value marker will be the only metric information that is shown: to do otherwise risks disclosing information on outcomes for individual students within the cohort.

71. If a split metric does not meet the requirement to be fully reportable because it has a numerator that differs from the denominator by no more than two students, or the split has a denominator of fewer than five students, then that split metric will be partially

reportable in its entirety: only limited metric information will be shown for any of the attributes in the same split (specifically, the metric's flag, difference from benchmark and associated Z-score, and any very high or very low absolute value marker). For example, partial suppression of the disability split metric referring to disabled students would also lead to the partial suppression of the corresponding metric referring to students without a disability.

Checking the data

72. The OfS has released metrics workbooks and supporting data to all providers that have any available TEF Year Four metrics data. Any provider considering participation in TEF Year Four should check its metrics workbook, and whether it contains suitable metrics, as follows:

- a. **Providers without suitable metrics** – If there is no metrics workbook available for the provider, or the provider does not have suitable metrics, then it may not apply for a TEF assessment¹⁵. The provider may be eligible for a provisional TEF award, subject to meeting the remaining eligibility requirements (see the TEF specification Chapter 3).
- b. **Providers with suitable metrics** – If the metrics workbook indicates that the definition of 'suitable metrics' has been met¹⁶, the provider can apply for a TEF assessment and will need to meet the remaining eligibility requirements to receive a TEF award (see the TEF specification Chapter 3). In this case the provider should check the following details which may affect its application:
 - i. **The majority mode of delivery**, either full- or part-time, and whether there are a 'similar number of students' (at least 35 per cent) in each mode. If the majority mode is part-time or there are at least 35 per cent of students in each mode, the provider may include in its application an additional page of data on part-time provision (see the TEF specification paragraphs 6.26 to 6.31). Note also that if there are at least 35 per cent of students in each mode, an initial hypothesis will be calculated for both modes (see the TEF specification paragraphs 7.32 to 7.34).

¹⁵ Exceptionally, a provider with a workbook that does not contain suitable metrics may request data amendments if these would result in suitable metrics. If such amendments are accepted, the provider may apply for an assessment. Such amendments will need to be requested by noon on 5 November 2018, according to the criteria and process set out in paragraphs 75 to 113.

¹⁶ For a suitable set of metrics, the TEF metrics must cover a majority of those students taught by the provider that are in scope for TEF. The OfS is aware of a small number of providers whose metrics suitability requires a greater understanding of their total student population in scope for TEF. OfS officers will contact these providers to seek the information that will enable the OfS Data Amendment Panel to consider the affected providers' number of suitable years of metrics.

- ii. **Whether there are any non-reportable metrics** relating to significant numbers of students (in either mode). If this is the case, the provider is encouraged to include relevant information in its submission.

73. The TEF specification (paragraph 5.29) briefly defines the majority mode of delivery. The full definition applied by the OfS in identifying the majority mode is as follows:

- a. Only one majority mode has been calculated for each provider (rather than a majority mode calculated for each year of data). The majority mode has been calculated on the basis of the full-time and part-time student headcounts, averaged over the same number of years used for the provider's contextual data.
- b. Where the headcount of full-time students is greater than or equal to the headcount of part-time students, full-time has been identified as the majority mode.
- c. Where condition b. is not met and the headcount of part-time other undergraduate students is greater than or equal to the combined headcount of full-time and part-time first degree students, part-time other undergraduate has been identified as the majority mode.
- d. If neither condition b. nor condition c. is met the majority mode is part time.

74. Providers should also check the individualised files and may, in exceptional circumstances, request amendments to their data.

Superseding paragraphs 3.24 and 5.38 of the TEF specification, the number of years of suitable metrics a provider has does not impact on the duration of a TEF Year Four award. In Year Four, the maximum duration of all TEF Year Four awards is two years, regardless of the number of years of suitable metrics.

Data amendments

The processes described at paragraphs 75 to 113 apply to all providers that wish to correct data errors that will materially affect the published metrics, including English¹⁷ providers that do not intend to participate in TEF Year Four.

75. The TEF metrics and contextual data is formed using the provider's original data returns that have been signed off at year end as quality-assured by the head of provider or accountable officer. Amendments that have been specifically approved for the purpose of TEF since June 2017, and have been signed off by the head of provider or accountable officer by 15 August 2018, are already incorporated into the TEF Year Four

¹⁷ For providers in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, TEF metrics will only be published for providers participating in TEF Year Four. Metrics will be published for all providers in England, whether or not they participate in TEF Year Four.

metrics, including amendments approved during the TEF Year Two and Year Three amendment windows.

Data amendments criteria

76. The OfS will consider requests to amend the data used in calculating the TEF Year Four metrics only in exceptional circumstances, in accordance with the following criteria:

- a. The amendment request refers to data returned in 2012-13 or later student or DLHE data collections (as identified by the academic year to which they refer). Amendments to 2011-12 and earlier HESA and ILR returns may result in the disclosure of an individual student's contribution (or lack thereof) to the LEO-based metrics, and cannot be accepted.
- b. All the requested amendments are due to widespread and significant errors in the underlying data affecting a large proportion of the provider's records. There must be clear evidence of data error, and clear evidence that the request does not constitute reinterpretation of the data (for example, re-categorisation).
- c. Amended data must make a material difference to the core TEF Year Four metrics. A 'material difference' is defined as one of the following:
 - i. At least one of the core TEF metric flags used in the calculation of the initial hypothesis in step 1.a. of the assessment process changes from positive, negative or unflagged to a different category. (A change between '-' and '-' or between '+' and '++' will not be considered sufficiently material to merit a data amendment.)
 - ii. At least one of the absolute value markers changes from marked to not marked, or vice versa.
 - iii. Metrics that do not meet the definition of 'suitable metrics' change to meeting the definition, or vice versa.

77. Outside the TEF Year Four process, a request to amend data for TEF purposes can be made in the usual way¹⁸.

Making a data amendment request

78. If a provider believes it can satisfy the criteria set out at paragraphs 76a **and** 76b, it may request a data amendment by submitting an error summary spreadsheet.

79. The provider will be required to provide an explanation of the nature and reasons for the errors in its original year-end returns and of the changes it is requesting by completing a separate error summary spreadsheet for each return it wishes to amend.

¹⁸ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/amendments-to-data/.

80. A return is an individual, complete year-end dataset for a particular year that informs the TEF Year Four metrics – for example, the DLHE and the student return are considered to be different returns, as are the student returns for 2013-14 and 2014-15.
81. Explanations should be as comprehensive as possible as it will provide the basis for the OfS Data Amendment Panel to test the criteria in paragraphs 76a and 76b. The explanation should make it clear that the evidence represents data error and does not constitute reinterpretation of the data (for example, re-categorisation).
82. Instructions are published at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/amendments-to-data/data-amendments-process/.
83. Providers should notify the OfS of their intent to request a data amendment, by email to tefmetrics@officeforstudents.org.uk by **noon on 31 October 2018**. The deadline for submitting completed error summary spreadsheets is **noon on 5 November 2018**. Late requests, or requests that are incomplete or not in the correct format, will not be accepted.

Franchised provision

84. We can accept data amendment requests only for data which the provider itself has submitted to HESA or the Education and Skills Funding Agency, or directly to the OfS in the case of DLHE for further education colleges. If a teaching provider in a franchise relationship wishes to make an amendment to data supplied by the registering provider, it must be routed through the registering provider that made the original data submission.
85. A registering provider that wishes to amend data that directly affects the metrics of a teaching provider in a franchise relationship must obtain written agreement to the amendments from the affected providers beforehand. Providers are advised to keep a written copy of any such agreement for audit purposes.
86. A teaching provider in a franchise relationship can request its metrics be deemed unsuitable, if it believes there are significant and material inaccuracies in its data which are outside its control. Where data is submitted by a registering provider that is unwilling or unable to request amendments to the data, the teaching provider may request that its metrics be deemed unsuitable and opt in for a provisional TEF award. The OfS must be notified at tefmetrics@officeforstudents.org.uk of such a request for metrics to be deemed unsuitable by **31 October 2018**, and it must be made in full by **5 November 2018**. The request will need to explain the nature and extent of inaccuracies in the data.

Data amendments that follow data audit

87. If a provider has data errors identified through data audits that have taken place since January 2017, it will already have been instructed to correct the data errors. If those errors were not correct by 15 August 2018, it may use the TEF data amendment process to submit and sign off corrected data. Failure to do so may result in the provider's metrics being deemed unsuitable for TEF Year Four assessment. In this case, the provider would be unable to apply for a TEF Year Four assessment, but may be able to opt in for

a provisional TEF award. OfS officers will notify individual providers where this is applicable via email by 26 October 2018.

Data amendment decisions

88. Data amendment requests are considered by the OfS Data Amendment Panel, which is chaired by an OfS director and includes representation from HESA. The panel meets at intervals throughout the year, and works to a set of terms of reference¹⁹. Officers from the other UK funding bodies will be asked for advice as appropriate to inform the panel's decisions in relation to providers from Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.
89. The panel determines whether the data amendment request should be accepted or rejected for TEF purposes on the basis of the criteria in paragraphs 76a and 76b. The panel will only accept or reject each amendment request in its entirety. It will not be possible to selectively approve and process some amendments contained in a request and not others.
90. If the data amendment panel accepts the request, the provider will be informed by **noon 16 November 2018** and invited to submit their corrected data by **noon 30 November 2018**, according to the process described at paragraphs 97 to 101.
91. Once the data is submitted, checked by OfS officers and signed off by the provider then the criteria described at paragraph 76c will be tested.
92. Once tested, the data amendment panel will review the extent to which all of the criteria in paragraphs 76a, 76b, and 76c are satisfied by the amendment, and will make a recommendation to the OfS chief executive who will decide whether the amended data will be used in the metrics for TEF Year Four assessment.
93. Providers will be informed of the chief executive's decision and, where applicable, provided with the revised metrics by 19 December 2018.

Appealing a data amendment decision

94. If a provider believes there has been a procedural irregularity capable of materially affecting the OfS decision whether to accept or reject a data amendment request, it may use the appeals process described at paragraphs 197 to 201.
95. **If a data amendment decision results in a provider's metrics being deemed unsuitable and the provider intends to appeal the data amendment decision, the provider must notify the OfS of its intention to appeal by emailing tef@officeforstudents.org.uk by 4 January 2019.**
96. Arrangements will then be made for the provider to upload a submission to the TEF extranet. The submission will only be used in the event of a successful appeal related to the suitability of that provider's metrics being upheld. In the absence of a submission the

¹⁹ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/amendments-to-data/data-amendments-process/.

TEF panel will apply the assessment process described at paragraph 7.65 of the TEF specification.

Submitting corrected data

97. Where providers are permitted to submit corrected data, they will be granted access to the relevant data collection system.

98. For providers who subscribe to HESA this means submitting:

- corrected data for 2015-16, 2016-17 or both to the HESA data collection system
- corrected data for 2014-15, earlier data or both to the OfS data collection system.

99. For providers whose data collection agency is the Education and Skills Funding Agency this means submitting corrected data to the OfS data collection system.

100. The provider must make all corrections to a copy of the signed-off year-end data originally submitted to the relevant data collection agency. The amended file must represent a complete return that includes records for all students, including those whose records remain unchanged. For the file to be processed, it must be in exactly the same format as was required in the year when it was originally submitted.

101. All corrections, whether submitted to HESA or the OfS, must be submitted and signed off by the head of provider or accountable officer by the deadline of **noon on 30 November 2018**.

102. When corrected data is received by the OfS, either directly or via HESA, OfS officers will test that the corrected data conforms to the following requirements:

- a. The data files are in the correct format and do not contain errors which prevent them from being processed.
- b. At an aggregate field-by-field level, the changes to the data appear to match those declared in the error summary.
- c. They do not include amendments to data which directly affects another provider.

103. If these checks reveal that the corrected data does not conform to the requirements listed at paragraph 102a, 102b or 102c, then the data amendment panel will, if necessary, deploy its scheme of delegation to decide whether or not the provider is permitted to sign off the data.

104. Late submissions of data corrections and data corrections that have not been signed off by the head of provider or accountable officer will not be accepted.

105. A recommendation will be made to the OfS chief executive on whether data corrections that have not been accepted following the process described in paragraphs

102 to 104 should result in the provider's original TEF Year Four metrics being permitted to stand, or whether they should be deemed unsuitable for TEF assessment.

Further information regarding HESA data submissions

106. HESA will only open its post-collection system (the fixed database) when it has received explicit instructions to do so from one of the UK higher education funding bodies. The OfS will liaise with the other funding bodies to ensure that HESA is instructed to open this system for providers whose error summaries have been approved for progression to this stage.
107. When amended data is submitted to HESA, HESA will process those amendments according to its normal validation and credibility checks. It will pass data that reaches the 'committed' status to the OfS.
108. The agreement between HESA and the OfS allows for the costs of processing such exceptional amendments to be recovered from providers by HESA. This charge is set at 20 per cent of the provider's annual HESA subscription. For more cost information please contact liaison@hesa.ac.uk.

Revised metrics workbooks

109. To prevent delay in the release of benchmarked data, the OfS has frozen all sector figures used for benchmarking at the point of releasing metrics to providers in October 2018. The sector average percentages that have been used in the calculation of the benchmarks for each of the metrics will remain as published at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/assessment-timeline/technical-guidance-for-participants/. This is to ensure that providers that are not requesting amendments are able to progress their applications without benchmarks changing based on amendments made by other providers. In the event of an amendment being approved during the TEF Year Four amendment process, the amended profile of a provider's students with regard to the benchmarking factors will be compared with the fixed sector averages to recalculate its benchmarks.
110. Revised metric workbooks will only be provided by the OfS where the metrics have satisfied the criteria in paragraph 76a to 76c and the OfS chief executive has approved the use of the amended data in TEF Year Four. If the criteria have not been satisfied, the original TEF Year Four metrics provided will stand.
111. Where amended TEF Year Four metrics are accepted, providers should use the revised metrics in finalising their applications, and the revised metrics will be published and supplied to the panel members and assessors. When revised metrics are received, providers have the opportunity, but are not obliged, to check this information for any processing errors on the OfS's part. If a provider identifies a material error in the processing of its amendments, it must notify the OfS by **4 January 2019**.

Data audits

112. Providers whose data amendments are accepted for use in TEF Year Four assessment may be audited on the advice of the OfS Data Amendment Panel. Should an audit find the requested amendments to be materially inaccurate, this could result in the metrics being deemed unsuitable. The provider may then be disqualified from a full TEF assessment, but may remain eligible to hold a provisional TEF award.

Timetable for data amendments

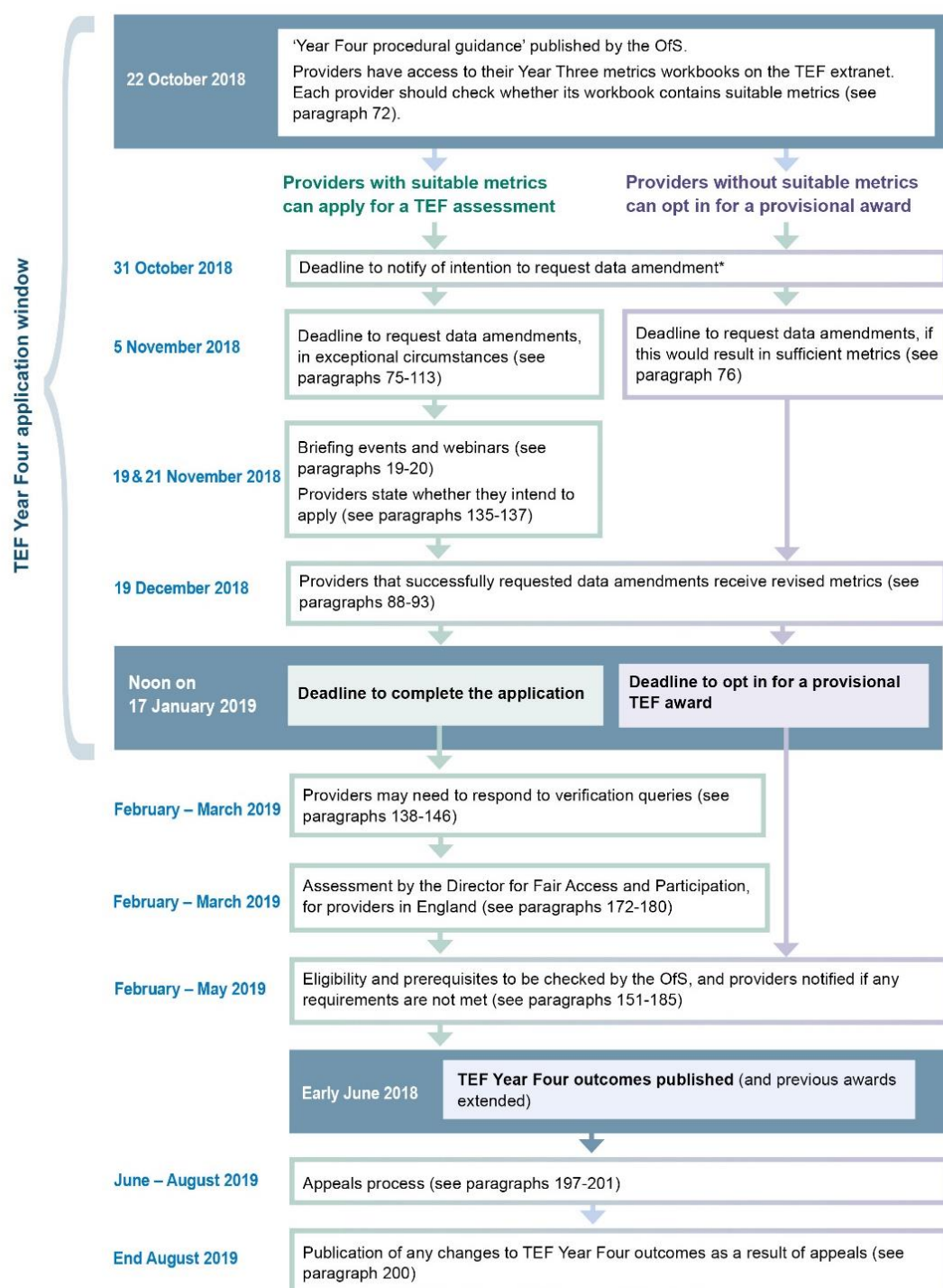
113. In summary, the timetable for data amendments is as follows:

Noon 31 October 2018	Deadline for providers to notify the OfS of their intent to request a data amendment (see paragraph 83).
Noon 5 November 2018	Deadline for providers to submit an error summary form (see paragraphs 78 to 83).
Noon 16 November 2018	Providers will be informed if their requests satisfy the criteria in guidance paragraphs 76a to 76b and can progress to the next stage. If they do, providers will be granted access to the systems through which they must submit corrected data.
Noon 30 November 2018	Deadline for providers to submit corrected data to the relevant body (see paragraphs 88 to 90).
By 19 December 2018	Providers who have submitted corrected data by the deadline will receive revised metrics workbooks, and will be informed if the requests satisfy the criterion in paragraph 76c. If they do, the revised metrics workbook should be used for the TEF application.
Noon on 4 January 2019	Deadline for providers to notify the OfS of an intention to appeal a data amendment decision (see paragraph 95) and to notify the OfS if any errors are found in the OfS's processing of the revised metrics (see paragraph 111).

TEF Year Four procedures

Paragraphs 114 to 211 apply to providers applying for a Year Four award.

Figure 3: Timeline for providers applying for a TEF Year Four award



* Participating UK providers and English providers that do not intend to participate in TEF Year Four may request a data amendment (see paragraph 83).

Applying for a TEF Year Four assessment

This section applies to providers with suitable metrics taking part in Year Four.

Summary of application requirements

114. Providers applying for an assessment in Year Four will need to include the information in Table 3 as part of their applications, by the deadline of **noon on 17 January 2019**.

Table 3: Application requirements

Information	Requirements	Format
Provider submission	Any provider applying for assessment may include a provider submission. It is not required but if absent, the rules at paragraph 7.65 of the TEF specification will apply.	Must be in PDF format and may not exceed 15 sides of A4. Must also adhere to the format requirements in paragraphs 115 to 120. An optional template is available on the TEF extranet.
Additional data on part-time provision	May only be included if the provider has at least 35 per cent of students in part-time mode. May only cover the items stated in paragraphs 6.28-6.29 of the TEF specification. Including some or all of this data is optional for these providers.	Must be in PDF format and may not exceed one side of A4. An optional template is available on the TEF extranet, for providers that this applies to.
Authorisation letter	Required by all providers applying for a TEF assessment. Must be signed by the head of provider or accountable officer.	The template available on the TEF extranet must be completed and uploaded in PDF format.

A. Provider submission

115. The submission must be a single PDF document that may not exceed 15 sides of A4; there is no minimum length requirement.

116. In the interests of equity and clarity for the panel members and assessors, the following guidelines on formatting must be adhered to:

- Arial font, 11 point (minimum)
- single line spacing (minimum)
- 2cm margins (minimum)

- the name of the provider and its UK Provider Reference Number in the header (on all pages)
 - page numbers in the footer.
117. Use of formatting such as bold or underlined text, headings, lists, and so on are welcome. Tables, diagrams or any non-text content may be included in the 15-page limit.
118. Footnotes are permissible, either to clarify statements in the submission, or to indicate where the submitted evidence has been drawn from. However, hyperlinks to primary evidence **should not** be included, and the panel members and assessors will be instructed **not to access** any referenced sources or follow any hyperlinks in a submission. No appendices or any other type of information may be included if not incorporated within the 15-page limit.
119. Judgements will be based only on the metrics and provider submission (taking into account the contextual information and any clarification or verification queries), and no additional external evidence. The onus therefore is on the provider to ensure that all the information required to make the judgement (in addition to the metrics workbook and data maps) is included in the 15-page submission.
120. Submitted PDF documents must be accessible to screen-reading technology, and therefore not be scanned documents. The format and structure of the document should be accessible for panel members and assessors to support the assessment process and for the general public as it will be published.
121. A pre-formatted template document that providers may use is available on the TEF extranet. It adheres to the format requirements in paragraphs 115 to 120, and includes suggested headings (which may be used or adapted). Providers are not required to use this template, so long as their submission adheres to these format requirements.

B. Additional data on part-time provision

122. Providers with a substantial proportion of part-time provision may submit an additional page of quantitative information. Where submitted, this data will be considered in the assessment according to paragraphs 7.28 to 7.31 of the TEF specification. It should be clear from the TEF metrics workbook whether or not a provider is eligible to submit this additional page because either:
- the majority mode is part-time or part-time other undergraduate
 - the majority mode is full-time, but part-time study accounts for 35 per cent or more of the provider's students by headcount.
123. Submission of this additional page is optional for those providers that are eligible. Where an additional page is submitted, it must conform to the requirements set out in the TEF specification (paragraphs 6.27 to 6.29 and Table 9.)

124. Although the information provided need not follow a standardised template, it must be submitted as a **standalone PDF document**, containing a single side of A4 content. It **must not be integrated into the provider submission**, but must otherwise adhere to the same formatting requirements as the provider submission (as described at paragraphs 115 to 120).

125. Where an eligible provider chooses to submit this page, it must do so via a dedicated upload facility on the TEF extranet. The page should be submitted alongside all other required components of the provider's TEF application, by noon on 17 January 2019. This upload facility will be accessible only to providers that are eligible to submit additional data on part-time provision. Information submitted in this way is subject to verification in the same way as the provider submission (as described at paragraphs 138 to 146).

C. Authorisation letter

126. The provider application must be authorised by the accountable officer. A template for the authorisation letter is available on the TEF extranet. It must be completed, signed by the accountable officer (electronic signatures will be accepted), and uploaded to the TEF extranet by the deadline of noon on 17 January 2019.

127. The authorisation letter:

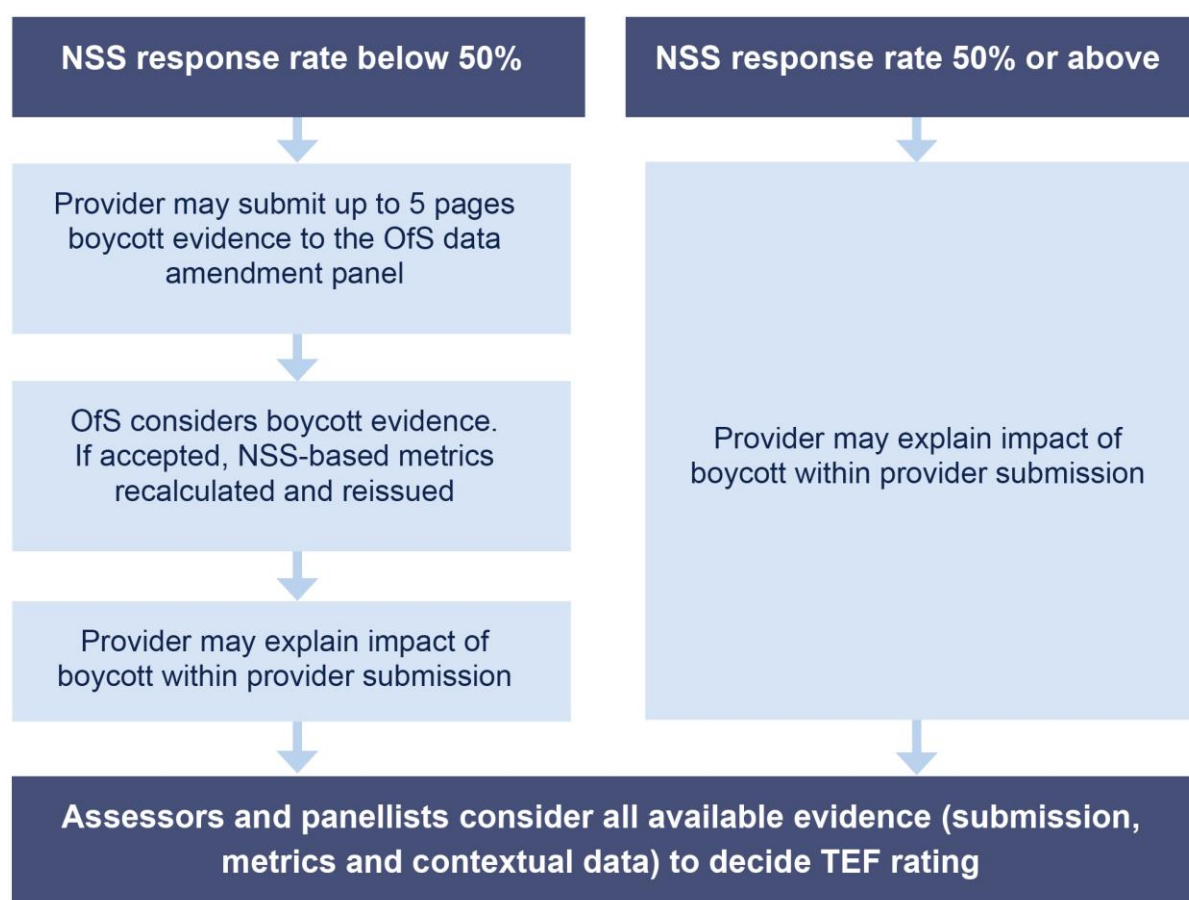
- confirms that the provider is applying for a TEF Year Four assessment
- authorises the provider application and attests to the accuracy of its content
- accepts the terms of publication of the provider's TEF submission.

Unsuitable metrics due to a National Student Survey boycott

128. The TEF specification (paragraphs 3.27 to 3.28 and 5.39 to 5.41) sets out that where a provider does not have reportable metrics for the NSS but provides evidence of a National Union of Students-sanctioned boycott of the NSS, it shall be treated as if it had reportable metrics for the purposes of eligibility for TEF assessment.

129. The OfS will take the steps detailed in paragraphs 130 to 134 and illustrated in Figure 4 to ensure that a provider is not deemed ineligible for a TEF assessment because of boycott activity.

Figure 4: NSS boycott process



Impact of boycott on NSS response rate

130. The OfS has applied the NSS metric definitions consistently to all providers. The response rate threshold for a reportable metric remains at 50 per cent. Where the response rate of the core NSS metrics (calculated using the most recent three years of NSS responses), or that of any one or more of the year-split metrics, has fallen below 50 per cent due to boycott activity, the provider may submit evidence of this boycott to OfS. All evidence of boycott activity must be submitted by **noon on 5 November 2018** to the TEF extranet.

NSS boycott evidence

131. Submissions of boycott evidence must be a single PDF document that may not exceed five pages of A4 and must adhere to the formatting guidelines described in paragraphs 116 and 117 for provider submissions.

132. Submissions of boycott evidence will be considered by the OfS Data Amendment Panel, which will make recommendations to the OfS chief executive on whether the boycott evidence should be accepted or rejected. If the chief executive accepts the evidence, the NSS responses for those years in which the boycott occurred will be removed for the purposes of recalculating the provider's NSS-based TEF metrics. The provider's NSS-based metrics will be recalculated to the same timetable as for data amendments, as described at paragraph 113.

133. Where a provider has experienced an NSS boycott, but this has not caused the core NSS metric, or any single year splits, to be non-reportable, the provider's NSS metrics will remain unchanged. In such cases, the onus is on the provider to demonstrate the existence and impact of the boycott activity through its submission. In particular:
- a. Providers that do not meet the criteria in paragraph 130 may not submit the additional PDF document of boycott evidence. Providers wishing to include evidence that an NSS boycott has affected their performance against the metrics will need to include this in their TEF submission.
 - b. Evidence about the impact of boycott activity on the provider's NSS metrics will be considered in the same way as any other evidence a provider includes in its submission which seeks to explain or mitigate performance in its metrics, in line with the guidance set out in paragraphs 6.1 to 6.18 of the TEF specification.
134. In cases where a provider has clearly demonstrated in its submission that boycott activity has taken place, and that its metrics have been affected by this activity, panel members are likely to hold metrics-based initial hypotheses with less confidence. Providers may therefore wish to focus particularly on providing evidence of performance above baseline in relation to the TEF criteria covered by the NSS metrics, demonstrating impact empirically wherever possible.

Survey of intentions to apply

135. Providers that have suitable metrics will be invited during November 2018 to indicate whether or not they intend to apply for a TEF Year Four assessment. The survey will enable the TEF team to identify the number and range of assessors required and the number of TEF officers needed to support the assessment stage, in order to make adequate preparations for assessment.
136. Responses to the survey will not commit a provider to participating, and a response is not required in order to apply. Responses to the survey will not be published. An aggregated and anonymised summary of responses will be reported to the TEF Project Board, which oversees implementation of the TEF.
137. Providers that do not have suitable metrics but are potentially eligible for a provisional award will **not** be surveyed. Providers that are potentially eligible for a provisional award will need to decide by the deadline of noon on 17 January 2019 whether or not to opt in.

Clarification and verification

138. The purpose of clarification and verification queries will be for panel members and assessors to satisfy themselves that judgements made are based on evidence that has been clearly understood and is sufficiently reliable to support those judgements against the assessment criteria.

Scope of clarification and verification queries

139. All information included in a provider submission and additional data on part-time provision, where applicable, may be subject to verification or clarification, at the request of panel members or assessors. Panel members or assessors may raise queries if any of the available evidence gives them reason to doubt the veracity of specific content in the submission, or if they consider that the submission is unclear about what is being claimed. In either case, queries will be raised only by exception, where the responses could potentially make a material difference to the overall outcome.
140. As outlined in the TEF specification (paragraphs 6.11 to 6.12), it is the provider's responsibility to include in its submission all the information required for the panel members and assessors to make a judgement. Consequently, queries will not be raised – and responses will not be considered – that seek to expand on or add new evidence to a submission. The absence of any queries does not mean that the panel members and assessors have accepted all contents of a submission to be true.

Timing and process for verification and clarification queries

141. Panel members and assessors will start to inform the TEF officers of any potential queries once they begin to review submissions in February 2019²⁰. TEF officers will check that queries fall within the scope of the guidance and the TEF assessment process, before sending them on to the provider's TEF contact. If unsure about the query, TEF officers will seek advice from the head of TEF, who will decide whether or not to raise the query.
142. Where queries are raised, TEF officers will email them to the provider's main TEF contact between early February and early March 2019. The main TEF contact is responsible for ensuring that such emails are acted on promptly.
143. TEF contacts will have five working days to respond by email to the query, providing as complete a response as possible within this timeframe. If more time is needed to complete the response, this should be stated clearly, at the earliest available opportunity, setting out the reasons an extension is required. An additional five working days will be allowed only where reasonably required by the provider, as decided by the head of TEF.
144. For verification queries, responses may need to include a copy of or link to primary sources of evidence that verify the particular claim being queried. For clarification queries, responses should comprise only a textual description to clarify the points being queried.

²⁰ This timing applies to clarification and verification queries during the TEF Year Four assessment period. The timing of queries that relate to additional information following a merger or division will vary depending on the timing of the merger or division. In these cases, queries may be raised via the TEF team.

Use of verification and clarification information

145. The TEF officer will review the response and provide information or advice to the panel members and assessors in a way which seeks to resolve the query, while limiting as far as possible any additional information becoming available to them. For clarification queries the TEF officer will seek to ensure the response is succinct and addresses the original request; superfluous or out-of-scope information may be excluded and no weight will be attached to its inclusion. For verification queries the TEF officers will advise the panel members and assessors of the nature of the evidence supplied, and will make a recommendation on whether it is sufficient to verify the claim. The panel members and assessors will be provided with the full response only if they request it and the head of TEF agrees. In all cases the panel members and assessors will decide on the outcome of the query.
146. Clarification and verification requests and responses to them will not be published. Where a query and the response made a material difference to the outcome, the panel may refer to this in the statement of findings.

Opting in for a provisional TEF Year Four award

This section applies to providers without suitable metrics

147. Providers that do not have suitable Year Four metrics, but meet the other prerequisites and eligibility requirements, may opt in for a TEF Year Four provisional award. Providers that do have suitable metrics may apply for an assessed award but are not permitted to opt in for a provisional award. As described at paragraph 72, each provider's metrics workbook indicates whether the definition of 'suitable metrics' has been met²¹.
148. Providers without suitable metrics wishing to hold a provisional TEF award beyond June 2019 must opt in for a TEF Year Four provisional award. TEF Year Three provisional awards will expire in June 2019. TEF Year Four provisional awards will be made in June 2019 and remain valid until publication of the first subject-level TEF outcomes in 2021, assuming the provider continues to meet eligibility requirements.

How to opt in for a provisional award

149. The OfS will inform the main TEF contact at all providers that do not have suitable Year Four metrics that they may be eligible for a provisional TEF award. To receive a provisional TEF award they will need to:

²¹ For a suitable set of metrics, the TEF metrics must cover a majority of all students taught by the provider that are in scope for TEF. The OfS is aware of a small number of providers whose metrics suitability requires a greater understanding of their total student population in scope for TEF. OfS officers will contact these providers to seek the information that will enable the OfS Data Amendment Panel to consider the affected providers' number of suitable years of metrics.

- a. Ensure that they will satisfy the prerequisite and eligibility requirements.
- b. Opt in by completing the authorisation letter available on the TEF extranet, and uploading it by **noon on 17 January 2019**. This letter must be signed by the accountable officer (electronic signatures will be accepted).

150. Provisional TEF awards will be published alongside other TEF awards, as outlined in paragraphs 186 to 196.

Updates to eligibility processes

This section applies to all UK providers applying for a Year Four assessment or opting in for a provisional award in TEF Year 4, and to providers with ongoing TEF Year Two and Year Three awards.

151. To be eligible to receive a TEF award in 2019 and to continue holding a TEF award until 2021, a provider must continue to meet all eligibility requirements for 2019-20 and 2020-21, as defined by Section 3 of the TEF specification (summarised in Table 4) and updated by this guidance. A full list of updates to the eligibility section of the specification is provided in the yellow box below.

Table 4: TEF eligibility criteria

Criteria	Description
Provision that is in scope	A provider must have undergraduate students being taught at that provider.
Designation for student support	A provider must deliver eligible higher education provision that is designated for student support purposes.
Quality requirement	Providers must meet the requirements of the quality assessment system in their home nation.
Widening access and participation	Reflecting the government's commitment to widening access and participation, all providers wishing to hold a TEF award should have an Access and Participation Plan, Statement or equivalent.

Revisions to TEF specification Section 3: Eligibility, prerequisites and provisional TEF awards

Designation for student support

For providers in Wales, updating paragraph 3.8:

- Designation of courses for the purposes of student support is not conditional on entry to the TEF. Providers in Wales should make themselves aware of the necessary regulations that relate to designation of higher education courses in Wales. Designation can be conditional on the type of provider, the mode of study and where the students are domiciled.

For providers in **England**, updating the TEF specification, paragraphs 3.7(A) and (C):

- Registration with the OfS confers eligibility for access to the student support system²². A provider that is registered with the OfS by 30 May 2019 and continues to satisfy all ongoing conditions of registration will meet this requirement for 2019-20 and 2020-21.

A provider that is designated for student support for undergraduate courses by the Secretary of State and regulated by the DfE in 2018-19 but is unsuccessful in its application to register with the OfS or chooses not to apply for registration, will still need to comply with the specific course designation requirements up to 31 July 2019 but it will not meet the TEF eligibility requirements for designation for student support²³. Providers that are on 'teach out' will not be eligible to hold a TEF award.

Quality requirement

For providers in **England**, superseding paragraphs 3.31 and 3.32:

- A provider that is registered with the OfS by 30 May 2019, and continues to satisfy all its ongoing conditions of registration, will meet the TEF eligibility requirements for quality for 2019-20 and 2020-21. This includes providers previously referred to as 'alternative providers'.

²² Registration confers the ability for eligible students studying on eligible undergraduate courses to apply for support under the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011 (as amended). www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2011/1986/contents/made.

²³ Up to 31 July 2019, some providers will be designated and regulated by the DfE under the Secretary of State's powers, as set out in 'Regulatory Notice 3: Regulation up to 31 July 2019 of providers currently designated for student support by the Secretary of State' (OfS 2018.13), available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-notice-3-regulation-up-to-31-july-2019-of-providers-currently-designated-for-student-support-by-the-secretary-of-state/.

Superseding paragraphs 1.13 to 1.23 and Figure 1:

- All references to the annual provider review are superseded by the provider being registered with the OfS.

For providers in **Northern Ireland**, paragraphs 3.31 and 3.32 remain valid.

For providers in **Wales**, paragraph 3.33 is superseded by:

For providers in Wales we will use the outcomes of the External Quality Assurance Reviews (EQAR), or the most recent Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education review (within the past six years) where an EQAR has not yet taken place, as the quality requirement for the TEF.

For providers in **Scotland**, paragraph 3.34 remains valid.

Widening access and participation

For providers in **England**:

- Superseding paragraphs 3.9 to 3.10, the requirement for an approved OFFA Access Agreement is replaced by a requirement for a provider to be registered with the OfS and to satisfy condition of registration A1 (to have an approved Access and Participation Plan²⁴).
- Superseding paragraphs 3.11 to 3.12, the requirement to publish an Access and Participation Statement is replaced by a requirement for a provider to be registered with the OfS and to satisfy condition of registration A2 (annual republication of an Access and Participation Statement²⁵).

Determining eligibility

152. From the close of the application window in January 2019 until 30 May 2019, the OfS will check that:

- a. Providers that apply for a TEF Year Four award, or opt in for a provisional award, meet the eligibility requirements in order to receive a TEF Year Four award.

²⁴ See 'Regulatory Notice 1: Guidance on access and participation plans for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.03), available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-notice-1-guidance-on-access-and-participation-plans-for-2019-20/.

²⁵ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-advice-7-advice-on-preparing-your-2019-20-access-and-participation-statement/.

- b. Providers holding a Year Three award with a duration of two or three years (that have not applied for a Year Four award) continue to meet eligibility requirements to retain their TEF award in 2019-20.
- c. Providers holding a Year Two award with a duration of three years (that have not applied for a TEF Year Four award) continue to meet eligibility requirements to retain their TEF award in 2019-20.

153. As TEF awards made or extended in June 2019 are valid until the publication of subject-level TEF outcomes in 2021, eligibility to continue holding a valid TEF Year Two, Three or Four award during 2020-21, including awards that are extended from 2019, will be checked:

- for providers in the devolved administrations, in spring 2020
- for registered providers in England, when the OfS deems that a provider has breached one or more of its ongoing conditions of registration
- for all providers, on a case by case basis following any changes in status that may be relevant to TEF eligibility, such as a merger or division, or change of legal form.

154. Providers that do not meet the eligibility will be deemed ineligible to receive or retain a TEF award.

Eligibility processes for providers in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

155. For providers in the devolved administrations, OfS officers will check with the relevant authorities that eligibility requirements for 2019-20 are met by 30 May 2019 and will check again in spring 2019 that all eligibility requirements are met for 2020-21.

Provision that is in scope

156. To be eligible for an award in 2019-20, providers must have undergraduate students (as defined in paragraph 2.1 of the TEF specification) taught at that provider in 2018-19. OfS officers will check this requirement is met, according to providers' in-year aggregate student data returns to the relevant UK funding body. Similarly, to determine eligibility for 2020-21, OfS officers will check in spring 2020 that undergraduate students have been recorded as taught at that provider in 2019-20.

Designation for student support

157. For eligibility in 2019-20, OfS officers will check that the designation requirements set out in paragraphs 3.7 to 3.8 of the TEF specification are met as at 30 May 2019 by providers in the devolved administrations. Providers that are on 'teach out' or that do have current designation for new entrants in 2019-20 will be deemed ineligible to hold a TEF award in 2019-20.

158. During spring 2019, OfS officers will check with the relevant authorities that providers continue to meet eligibility requirements for student support to maintain their TEF award during 2020-21.

Quality requirement

159. The TEF team will check with the relevant authorities that each provider meets the quality requirement defined at paragraphs 3.29 to 3.37 of the TEF specification, as at 30 May 2019. During spring 2019, OfS officers will check that providers continue to meet quality requirements to maintain their TEF award during 2020-21.
160. For providers in Wales, the quality requirement is revised to reflect new quality arrangements, using outcomes of EQAR where they have taken place. For providers in Scotland and Northern Ireland the TEF specification remains current.

Widening access and participation

161. For eligibility in 2019-20, OfS officers will check that, as at 30 May 2019:
- a. Providers in Northern Ireland have a Widening Access and Participation Plan for 2019-20.
 - b. Providers in Wales have a Fee and Access Plan for 2019-20 or an approved Statement of Public Good²⁶.
 - c. Providers in Scotland have an Outcome Agreement for 2018-19.
162. During spring 2019, OfS officers will check with the relevant authorities that providers continue to meet widening access and participation eligibility requirements to maintain their TEF award during 2020-21.

Eligibility processes for providers in England

Provision that is in scope

163. In order to be eligible for an award in 2019-20, providers must have undergraduate students (as defined in paragraph 2.1 of the TEF specification) taught at that provider in 2018-19. OfS officers will check this requirement is met, according to providers' in-year aggregate student data returns. Similarly, to determine eligibility for 2020-21, OfS officers will check in spring 2020 that undergraduate students have been recorded as taught at that provider in 2019-20.

²⁶ Statement of Public Good: applicants must demonstrate that they make a significant and ongoing contribution to the public good, generally in the sphere of education through publication of a statement which has been approved by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. This could include activities that: support access to, or the promotion of, higher education; contribute to the availability of education; improve the retention of students and employability of graduates; or develop Welsh medium provision.

Designation for student support, quality and widening access and participation

164. With the commencement of HERA and the new regulatory framework for higher education in England²⁷, providers in England may apply to be registered by the OfS²⁸ in the Approved or Approved (fee cap) categories of the Register. Registered providers ('approved' and 'approved fee cap' providers) have been assessed as satisfying the initial conditions of registration set out in the OfS regulatory framework²⁹.
165. The OfS's regulatory assessment supersedes previous mechanisms for assessing whether a provider satisfies TEF eligibility criteria for designation for student support, quality and widening access and participation.
166. Registration with the OfS confers eligibility for access to the student support system. Access and participation and quality eligibility requirements are aligned with the OfS's initial and ongoing conditions of registration A1 or A2, B1, B2, B3, B4 and B5, as detailed in Table 5.

²⁷ See OfS 2018.01.

²⁸ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-register/the-ofs-register/.

²⁹ See OfS 2018.01.

Table 5: OfS Regulatory framework conditions of registration and TEF eligibility requirements

OfS registration condition		TEF eligibility criteria	For registered providers in England
A: Access and participation for students from all backgrounds			
Condition A1	An Approved (fee cap) provider intending to charge fees above the basic amount to qualifying persons on qualifying courses must: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Have in force an access and participation plan approved by the OfS in accordance with HERA.Take all reasonable steps to comply with the provisions of the plan.	Widening access and participation	Compliance with this condition supersedes OFFA access agreements and HEFCE access and participation statements
Condition A2	An Approved provider or an Approved (fee cap) provider charging fees up to the basic amount to qualifying persons on qualifying courses must: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Publish an access and participation statement.Update and re-publish this statement on an annual basis.		Compliance with this condition supersedes HEFCE's TEF access and participation statements
B: Quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for all students			
Condition B1	The provider must deliver well designed courses that provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.	Quality requirement	Compliance with these conditions supersedes the annual provider review process in England.
Condition B2	The provider must support all students, from admission through to completion, with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.		
Condition B3	The provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers, and/or enable further study.		
Condition B4	The provider must ensure that qualifications awarded to students hold their value at the point of qualification and over time, in line with sector recognised standards.		
Condition B5	The provider must deliver courses that meet the academic standards as they are described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications at Level 4 or higher.		

167. A provider will meet TEF eligibility requirements for quality, designation for student support and widening access and participation for 2019-20 and 2020-21 if it is registered with the OfS by 30 May 2019 and continues to satisfy all ongoing registration conditions.
168. Providers that are not registered with the OfS as at 30 May 2019 and providers that are on 'teach out' will be deemed ineligible to receive a TEF Year Four award, or to retain an ongoing Year Two or Three award.
169. If a registered provider breaches one or more of the OfS ongoing registration conditions, we will review its TEF eligibility. Following the principles of relevance and proportionality, breaches will be considered on a case by case basis and the OfS will decide whether or not the provider continues to meet TEF eligibility criteria. For example, if the breach relates to the quality of undergraduate provision and means that the provider no longer meets TEF eligibility thresholds it will be deemed ineligible. If a provider does not meet TEF eligibility requirements, we will withdraw its TEF award.
170. Where a provider is deemed not to meet one or more of the eligibility requirements, the OfS will notify the provider's accountable officer and TEF contact of its decision, the reason for its decision and the process and timeline for the provider to make representations, if it wishes to appeal the decision.
171. As set out in the TEF specification paragraphs 2.8 to 2.11, franchised provision will continue to be assessed in respect of the provider that delivers the teaching. Franchise providers must be registered with the OfS in their own right to satisfy TEF eligibility requirements.

Assessment by the Director for Fair Access and Participation

Following the commencement of HERA in April 2018, all references in the TEF specification to 'the Director for Fair Access' should be read as 'the Director for Fair Access and Participation', updating paragraph 3.14 of the TEF specification.

172. As set out in the TEF specification (paragraph 3.14 to 3.22) the Director for Fair Access and Participation (DFAP) will consider whether a participating English provider has reduced the number or proportion of students from disadvantaged, under-represented or black and minority ethnic groups since the introduction of TEF in 2016-17, with the principal or major objective of improving its performance in the TEF.
173. This assessment will be carried out for providers in England that apply for an assessment or opt in for a provisional award in Year Four.
174. The DFAP will consider:
- data drawn from HESA and ILR student records for the 2017-18 entry cohort, compared with previous years

- UCAS data on acceptances, for the 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 entry cohorts, compared with previous years.
175. The data for each provider will be broken down, where possible, into the student categories that align with the following TEF metric splits:
- POLAR quintiles 1 and 2; POLAR quintiles 3 to 5
 - white background; black or minority ethnic background
 - disabled; not disabled
 - young; mature.
176. The DFAP will also take account of any other information they consider relevant, which may include evidence from those disclosing information in the public interest ('whistleblowers'). To report public interest concerns, use the OfS's public interest disclosure process³⁰.
177. For an Approved (fee cap) provider wishing to charge above the basic amount in 2020-21, the process will inform the OfS's assessment of its performance when considering its access and participation plan for 2020-21, where applicable.
178. Following consideration of the data and any other relevant information, if the DFAP determines that the conditions in paragraph 3.16.1 of the TEF specification have been met, the DFAP will normally request an explanation from the provider. The request will include details of the data or information of concern to the DFAP that the provider is invited to explain. Any such requests will be made by 28 February 2019 and providers will have 20 calendar days to respond (by 20 March 2019)³¹.
179. The DFAP will determine one of the three outcomes at paragraph 3.20 of the TEF specification, and inform the provider of the outcome, by 29 March 2019. If the second of the outcomes identified in the TEF specification is determined, or if any other concerns are identified as a result of the DFAP's consideration, the DFAP will use this within their consideration of the provider's access and participation plan for 2020-21 (where applicable). The OfS may also use the data and evidence when considering the provider's compliance with the other ongoing conditions of registration.
180. The OfS is currently developing a new strategy for access and progression, the aim of which is to ensure that all of its activities work effectively together to improve equality of opportunity in student access, success and progression for groups of students that are currently underrepresented in English higher education, which includes the publication of a new access and participation dataset on the OfS website. Building on its approach to

³⁰ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/contact/notifications-and-complaints/raising-concerns-and-complaints-with-the-ofs/.

³¹ For providers that register with the Office for Students between 17 January and 30 May 2019, later timescales may apply. Where this is applicable, providers will be notified on a case by case basis.

2019-20 access and participation plans, the OfS intends that the measures in the access and participation dataset, TEF metrics and the indicators used for other regulatory purposes will be aligned where possible. These developments may be reflected in the future development of TEF.

Eligibility decisions

181. All decisions on eligibility and suitability of metrics will be taken by the OfS chief executive.
182. Recommendations on suitable metrics will be made to the chief executive by the OfS Data Amendment Panel (see paragraphs 88 to 93). Recommendations on eligibility will be made to the chief executive by the head of TEF, having consulted relevant sources of information and advice, including but not limited to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, the OfS Register, and the funding bodies for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as appropriate.
183. Where the available information to confirm a prerequisite or eligibility requirement is incomplete or unclear, OfS officers may contact the provider to seek further information before making the recommendation.
184. Where a provider is deemed not to meet one or more of the eligibility requirements, the OfS will notify the provider's accountable officer and TEF contact of its decision, the reason for its decision and the process and timeline for the provider to make representations, if it wishes to appeal the decision.
185. A TEF award will be withdrawn if a provider ceases to meet eligibility requirements, or is discovered afterwards to have included substantive factual inaccuracies in its TEF application, as set out in the TEF specification (paragraph 9.12).

Dissemination of outcomes

This section applies to providers applying for a Year Four assessment and those opting in for a provisional award, and those with ongoing Year Two or Year Three awards.

186. Each provider participating in TEF Year Four will be informed of its outcome under embargo, shortly before they are published. DfE will receive the ratings under embargo after providers have received them. The higher education funding bodies of the devolved administrations will receive the ratings of providers based in the relevant nation under embargo after providers have received them.
187. In June 2019:
- a. TEF Year Four outcomes will be published alongside TEF Year Three and TEF Year Two outcomes that continue to be valid.

- b. TEF Year Two and Year Three awards that are extended until 2021 will be updated in June 2019 to reflect the extended expiry date³².
 - c. Awards that expire (a TEF Year Three award valid for one year including provisional awards, or a TEF Year Two award valid for two years) and awards that are withdrawn will be removed from all the OfS channels.
188. Providers with expired or withdrawn awards must remove the award logo from their website and other media, and must not claim to hold a current TEF award.
189. Where a provider continues to hold a valid Year Two or Year Three award and opts to apply for a Year Four award, the TEF Year Four award will replace the earlier award.
190. TEF Year Four awards (and Year Two and Year Three awards that continue to be valid) will be published on Unistats, the UCAS website, the OfS's TEF outcomes webpages and, for providers in England only, the OfS Register.
191. Full information will be published on the OfS's TEF outcomes webpages. For each provider with a TEF award, the published information will include:
- the award (Gold, Silver, Bronze, or provisional)
 - the month and year in which the award was made and its expiry date
 - for providers with a Gold, Silver or Bronze award:
 - the TEF Panel's statement of findings
 - the provider submission
 - the metrics workbook (this will include supplementary LEO and grade inflation metrics where applicable)³³
 - the contextual data maps
 - the additional page of data on part-time provision, where applicable.
192. Provider-level TEF metrics will not be recalculated or republished for 2020-21. The TEF award, publication status and supporting materials published in June 2019 will remain on the OfS website until the publication of subject-level TEF awards in 2021 (excepting changes due to circumstances such as a provider merger, division or award withdrawal).

³² A provider may opt out of the automatic extension of awards by emailing tef@officeforstudents.org.uk by 3 May 2019.

³³ Metrics workbooks will be published in January 2019, as described at paragraphs 43 to 46.

193. Materials submitted by the provider as part of their application for an award will be published under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public Licence³⁴. Providers should ensure that the submitted materials are suitable for publication, and that they do not infringe the copyright (or any other intellectual property right) or other right of any third party.
194. The publication of provider-level TEF outcomes will continue to reflect the voluntary nature of the TEF and the awards made through TEF Years Two, Three and Four. The TEF outcomes pages on the OfS website will list only those providers that have participated in provider-level TEF and have valid awards, excepting the TEF metrics data published in January 2019 (see 43 to 46).
195. Any awards that cease to be valid in June 2019 will be removed. In cases where a participating provider's award is withdrawn for other reasons (for example, if a provider no longer meets all the eligibility requirements), it will be made clear from that point that the provider's TEF award was withdrawn.
196. Further details and timetables for the dissemination of outcomes will be made available in spring 2019.

Appeals process

197. A provider will be able to appeal on the basis of a significant procedural irregularity in the determination of its TEF outcome, according to the criteria set out in the TEF specification (paragraphs 8.21 to 8.22).

Updating the TEF specification (paragraph 8.21), 'changes to the rating of a TEF award following a merger or division' is added to the list of decisions that are appealable.

198. For appeals relating to Year Four outcomes (including data amendment, eligibility and ratings decisions), OfS will make the necessary appeals forms available on the TEF extranet and provide a detailed timetable for the appeals process, prior to publication of the outcomes in June 2019. Any provider wishing to appeal the outcome must do so by completing and uploading the TEF appeal template, signed by the accountable officer. Appeals not made on this form will not be considered.
199. Appeals will be considered as follows:
- a. Initially, an appeals panel will consider the appeal. The chair and members of the appeals panel will be individuals who were not TEF panel members or assessors, or otherwise directly involved in the TEF decisions. The membership of the panel will be confirmed prior to the publication of TEF outcomes in June 2019. The TEF Chair and head of TEF may attend to provide information as requested by the appeals

³⁴ <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

panel. In the case of an appeal from a provider in a devolved nation, a member of the relevant funding body may also attend. The appeals panel will consider:

- i. Whether there was a procedural irregularity that affected one of the decisions listed in the revised paragraph 8.21 of the TEF specification.
 - ii. If so, whether it was capable of materially affecting that decision.
- b. If the appeals panel concludes that either there was no such irregularity, or that it was not capable of materially affecting the decision, the appeal will be declined and the provider informed of this.
 - c. If the appeals panel concludes there was an irregularity capable of materially affecting the decision, the original decision will be reconsidered, in the light of that procedural irregularity. An eligibility decision will be reconsidered by the OfS chief executive or by the Director for Fair Access and Participation, depending on which element of the eligibility decision is being appealed. A judgement on the rating will be reconsidered by a TEF sub-panel comprising at least three TEF Panel members, overseen by the TEF Chair.
200. Providers will be informed of the outcomes of the appeal, and in the event of a successful appeal, any resulting changes will be made to the published outcomes by 30 August 2019.
201. For appeals relating to changes to the rating of a TEF award following a merger or division (which may involve any combination of TEF Year Two, Year Three or Year Four awards), appeals will be considered in line with the stages set out in paragraphs 197 to 200. As mergers or divisions may happen at any point during the year however, providers will be given an appeals template and timetable on a case by case basis. In such instances, details will be set out in the letters which communicate the merger/division assessment decisions to providers.

Mergers and divisions

Applicable to providers applying for an assessment in Year Four, those opting in for a provisional award and those with continuing Year Two or Year Three awards

202. The TEF specification (paragraphs 3.44 to 3.47) sets out how providers that are applying for a TEF Year Four award that are merging or dividing (de-merging) during the application window or assessment process can participate in the TEF.
203. When mergers or divisions occur after the TEF Year Four application window closes on 17 January 2019, the following principles will guide our approach to reviewing the TEF award(s) for the legal entity(ies) after the merger or division. This applies to merging

or de-merging providers holding TEF Year Two or Year Three awards and Year Four applicants or awards.

Principles

- a. **In a merger**, the TEF award will follow the 'lead' provider. The lead provider is the provider that does not dissolve as part of the merger. The TEF award held by the lead provider will be reviewed to determine the rating for the merged entity. The lead provider must hold a valid TEF award or have applied for a Year Four award for the resulting entity to hold a TEF award.
- b. **Duration**: TEF award duration will follow the lead (or original) provider. For example, where the lead provider's TEF award will expire in June 2019 and it has not applied for a TEF Year Four award, the TEF award for any eligible new legal entity(ies) will also expire in June 2019.
- c. **TEF awards are not transferrable**: TEF awards held by providers that dissolve in a merger are no longer valid and cannot be transferred to the new entity(ies).
- d. **In a division (de-merger)**, the contribution of each of the new entities to the award held by original entity will be considered.

Process

204. The OfS will determine whether each new legal entity is eligible to hold a TEF award, according to the eligibility criteria set out in the TEF specification and paragraphs 151 to 185 of this guidance.
205. The OfS will, if possible, produce TEF metrics for each of the new legal entity(ies). The metrics will be shared with the provider(s) and published on the OfS website. Merged metrics will be produced using the Year Four methodology, even if an original award was made in Year Two or Year Three.
206. The TEF Chair will consider all available TEF metrics, pre- and post-merger or division, and submission(s) to determine whether the original TEF award requires reassessment by a TEF sub-panel:
 - a. Where supported by the available information, the original rating of the lead entity (in a merger) or original entity (in a division) will be conferred on the new legal entity(ies).
 - b. Where the TEF Chair deems that the available information calls the original rating into question, the TEF Chair will consult up to three TEF panel members to reassess and determine the rating for the new entity(ies).
207. Where a sub-panel reassessment of the original rating is required, the TEF Chair may decide that additional evidence is required from the new entity(ies) to clarify the impact of the merger or division on the available metrics and submission(s). In such cases, the provider will be asked to provide a single PDF document that may not exceed

five sides of A4 and must adhere to the formatting guidelines described in paragraphs 116 and 117 for provider submissions. The specific requirements and the timetable for reassessment will be determined on a case by case basis. In such instances, OfS officers will contact the provider(s) concerned with more information.

208. Where a TEF award is reassessed following a merger or division, the sub-panel will follow the processes set out in the TEF specification and Year Four procedural guidance, even if an original award was made in Year Two or Year Three.
209. Where the lead provider originally held a Gold, Silver or Bronze TEF award, a reassessment may result in a lower or higher rating than the original award. Where a merger or division means the new legal entity(ies) no longer has suitable metrics, the provider would be deemed ineligible for an assessed award though they may be eligible for a provisional award.
210. Where the lead provider originally held a provisional award but becomes eligible for an assessed award as a result of the merger or division, it may receive a TEF rating. In such circumstances, it is highly likely that additional evidence will be requested. If additional information is requested by the TEF Chair but not provided, the TEF sub-panel may invoke the process described in the TEF specification paragraph 7.65 for assessment where there is no substantive additional evidence available.
211. Any additional evidence provided to the panel for assessment will be published alongside the original submission(s), the merged metrics and a revised statement of findings (or a new statement of findings where the merger or demerger moves a provider from a provisional to an assessed award). A brief explanation will be published alongside providers' TEF awards that are affected by mergers or divisions.

Part 3: Procedural guidance for panel members and assessors

This part of the guidance sets out the assessment processes for panel members and assessors. TEF Year Four assessment processes are the same as in Year Three.

Table 6: Timeline for panel members and assessors

October 2018	The OfS confirms extension of appointments of TEF Year Three panel members and assessors, to continue for TEF Year Four
December 2018	Panel members and assessors update declared conflicts of interest
November 2018 to January 2019	Panel members and assessors complete relevant online training
January to end February 2019	Assessment Stage 1: Panel members and assessors review their allocated applications
March 2019	Assessment Stage 2: Panel members and assessors meet and form recommendations to the TEF Panel
April – May 2019	Assessment Stage 3: TEF Panel meet to decide the outcomes and finalise statements of findings
June 2019	Publication of TEF Year Four outcomes and extension of valid Year Two and Year Three awards
August 2019	TEF Panel members reconsider outcomes in the light of any upheld appeals

Conflicts of interest

212. Panel members and assessors are required to declare conflicts of interest they hold with any UK higher education providers. These must be declared in December 2018 prior to the allocation of applications, and kept up-to-date during the course of the assessment.
213. Panel members and assessors will not take part in assessing or recommending or deciding the outcome for any provider with which they hold a conflict of interest.
214. In addition, where a panel member or assessor holds a conflict of the type described in paragraph 215a, they will not be privy to any information about the assessment of that provider by other panel members and assessors; and will leave the room during those parts of meetings where the provider is discussed. Panel members and assessors holding conflicts of the type described in paragraph 215b may, for logistical reasons, be privy to such information and may remain present during those parts of meetings where the provider is discussed, but may not contribute to the discussion or otherwise seek to influence its assessment.

215. For the purposes of the TEF, conflicts of interest are defined as follows:

- a. Within the last five years:
 - i. The individual worked for or studied at the provider.
 - ii. The individual was a board or council member of the provider.
 - iii. The individual held an honorary position at the provider.
 - iv. The provider was an awarding body or delivering partner of the individual's institution, and the individual had personal responsibility for or involvement in these arrangements.
- b. Within the last three years:
 - i. The individual acted as a consultant, giving individual advice to the provider.
 - ii. The individual undertook internal or external validation or examination for the provider (including at postgraduate level).
 - iii. The individual was shortlisted for a post at the provider.
 - iv. The individual had an immediate relative studying or working there.
 - v. The provider was an awarding body or delivering partner of the individual's institution, but the individual had no personal responsibility for or involvement in these arrangements.

216. In addition, if a panel member or assessor is aware of any other circumstance that presents a potential conflict of interest with a provider, or is unclear whether their involvement with a provider meets the definitions above, they should raise this with OfS officers. The head of TEF will decide whether or not a conflict of interest should be recorded against the provider in question.

Allocation of applications

217. Panel member and assessor appointments were made as a result of a competitive selection process and appointments were extended to Year Four. An open competitive application process will be put in place for the recruitment of panel members for full subject-level TEF.

218. All panel members and assessor are trained to a standard that enables them to undertake their duties fairly, consistently and robustly across a range of applications. Panel members and assessors with a range of expertise work together to make recommendations to the TEF Panel, and decisions are taken with the involvement of all members of the TEF Panel, which includes members with experience and expertise across diverse types of providers and provision across the UK.

219. Each application will be allocated to at least three individuals with a mix of expertise and perspectives, for review in the stage one assessment process. Wherever possible:
- a. Two will be academics and one a student.
 - b. Two of these will be assessors, and one a panel member.
 - c. The three individuals will among them have expertise or experience of providers with similar characteristics to, and of providers with different characteristics from, those of the provider being assessed. This includes consideration of the following characteristics:
 - i. Type of provider.
 - ii. The national context of the provider.
 - iii. Subject-specific approaches to learning and teaching, for small and specialist providers.
220. In the light of these principles, initial allocations for the stage 1 assessment process (see paragraphs 226 to 230) will be made based on the expected applications (as determined by the survey of providers' intentions to apply).
221. After the application deadline (17 January 2019) the provisional stage one allocations will be finalised. Each panel member and assessor will be allocated a caseload of up to 15 applications.
222. As described in paragraphs 229 to 234, after the stage one review by three individuals, recommendations to the TEF Panel will be considered and formed by a larger group of panel members and assessors; each group will include a wide range of expertise and experience.

Assessment process

223. Section 8 of the TEF specification outlines the three-stage assessment process and the roles of the panel members and assessors in determining the assessment outcomes.
224. At each **stage** in the process (individual review, forming recommendations, and decision making), the panel members and assessors should adhere to the three-**step** approach to assessment, outlined in section 7 of the TEF specification.
225. Further procedural guidance on the three **stages** is set out in paragraphs 226 to 238.

Stage 1: Individual assessment

226. During stage 1, each panel member and assessor will review their caseload of applications and, independently of one another, form a view about the TEF ratings.
227. During stage 1, panel members and assessors should, where necessary, raise clarification and verification queries (see paragraphs 1138 to 146).
228. The TEF officer will collate the three assessments to inform discussions in the next stage; and will pursue verification and clarification queries as necessary.

229. The widening participation (WP) and employment expert panel members will review samples of applications, focusing on their respective areas of interest and not necessarily considering all the components of an application. Their review of a sample of applications will not be intended to form a view about the ratings, but to identify general issues relating to WP and employment, to feed into the discussions in stage 2.

230. The outputs from stage 1 will be:

- a. Three independent assessments of each application, collated by the TEF officer to inform discussions in stage 2 about each application.
- b. Identification of cross-cutting WP and employment related issues (by the WP and employment panel members) for discussion in stage 2.
- c. Identification of other general issues for discussion in stage 2.
- d. A record of individuals' ratings of their caseloads of applications, and analysis of their variance by OfS officers, to inform discussion in stage two.

Stage 2: Recommended outcomes

231. All panel members and assessors will meet together in a single location, to discuss their assessments and form recommendations to the TEF Panel.

232. The meeting will include general briefing and discussion of cross-cutting issues arising from stage 1 and to develop consistency in the application of the rating descriptors; discussion among the three individuals who reviewed each application to refine their views; and discussion in larger groups of panel members and assessors (comprising, for example, three panel members and six assessors).

233. The larger groups of panel members and assessors will consider the full set of applications reviewed in stage one by that group of individuals. They will consider cases where all three individuals agreed a single rating to test for consistent application of the rating descriptors; and consider in more detail the complex or borderline cases. These groups of panel members and assessors will be responsible collectively for forming recommendations to the TEF Panel.

234. The outputs from stage 2 will be:

- a. A recommendation and accompanying rationale for each application, made by the group of panel members and assessors. The recommendation may be for a rating of Gold, Silver or Bronze, or that the case is close to a borderline and should be scrutinised in more detail by the TEF Panel.
- b. A summary of the recommendations.

Stage 3: Decisions on final outcomes

235. The TEF Panel will collectively make the final decisions on the outcomes. In reaching its decisions:

- a. The panel will consider feedback from each group of panel members and assessors, summarising the spread of recommended outcomes and any key issues identified.

- b. The panel members from each group will be responsible for presenting that group's recommendations to the TEF Panel, on the basis of the whole group's collective advice and recommendations.
- c. The panel will need to satisfy itself that in deciding on the merits of each case, the rating descriptors have been applied consistently, paying particular attention to borderline cases. If necessary, additional panel members will consider in detail the evidence contained in the application, to inform the panel's considerations further (alongside the recommendation).
- d. Where the panel does not reach consensus on a decision, paragraph 8.19 of the TEF specification will apply.

236. The outputs from stage 3 will be the TEF Panel's decision of a TEF rating of Gold, Silver or Bronze and an accompanying statement of findings for each application.

237. OfS will separately determine providers' eligibility, and the ratings decided by the panel will be awarded to all eligible providers.

Panel member and assessor support and guidance

238. Panel members and assessors will be provided with training, support and further guidance including:

- online training, and analytical support in relation to TEF metrics
- access to, and technical guidance and support in using, the TEF assessment extranet
- guidance on confidentiality and data security
- support and guidance on the assessment procedures from TEF officers (one TEF officer will support each group of panel members and assessors)
- provision of templates to complete at each stage of the assessment
- administrative support in relation to meeting arrangements, payment of fees and claiming expenses.

Annex A: Updates to the TEF specification

Annex A provides a full list of updates to the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) specification from Year Three to Year Four.

Summary of change	TEF specification paragraphs	Revision to specification
Office for Students	Throughout the specification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All references to 'the Higher Education Funding Council for England' or 'HEFCE' and 'the Office for Fair Access' or 'OFFA' in the document should be read as referring to 'the Office for Students' or 'the OfS'.
Director for Fair Access and Participation	Throughout the specification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All references to 'the Director for Fair Access' should be read as 'the Director for Fair Access and Participation'.
Award duration	3.24 3.42 5.38 9.2 Figure 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provisional and assessed TEF Year Four awards have a maximum duration of two years. This is a reduction from three years for an assessed award and an increase from one year for provisional awards in previous years. Year Two and Year Three awards due to expire in June 2020 are extended until 2021. TEF Year Four award duration is not dependent on the number of years of suitable metrics a provider has.
Devolved administration consent	2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The devolved administrations in Northern Ireland and Scotland have confirmed they are content for providers to take part in TEF Year Four should they wish to do so. In Wales, providers should write at the earliest opportunity to CeisiadauAU.HEApplications@llyw.cymru notifying the Welsh Government of their intent to apply to the OfS for a TEF assessment rating. Consent, where given, will be subject to review and may be revoked.
Grade inflation improvement	5.16 to 5.20 5.74	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The grade inflation supplementary metric, where applicable, will be generated centrally by the OfS. There is no longer a requirement for providers to submit a grade inflation declaration.
LEO improvements	5.24 to 5.27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supplementary Longitudinal Employment Outcomes metrics will include three years of data. The 'Above median earnings threshold or further study' metric uses a median earnings threshold relevant to each year (up to 2015-16) and includes data from self-assessment in addition to Pay As You Earn data. The metrics will include an additional split metric showing the population excluding graduates in 'self-assessed employment only'.

POLAR improvement	Table 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The methodology used to derive a student's Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) quintile is updated from POLAR3 to POLAR4.
Year on year updates	Table 4 Table 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each core and split metric will be calculated using the latest three years of available student data. The latest data is moved one year forward from Year Three to Year Four.
Eligibility – quality	1.13-1.23 3.31-3.32 Figure 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For providers in England, all references to the annual provider review are superseded by the provider being registered with the OfS. A provider that is registered with the OfS by 30 May 2019, and continues to satisfy all its ongoing conditions of registration, will meet the TEF eligibility requirements for quality for 2019-20 and 2020-21. This includes providers previously referred to as 'alternative providers'.
	3.33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For providers in Wales we will use the outcomes of the External Quality Assurance Reviews (EQAR), or the most recent Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education review (within the past six years) where an EQAR has not yet taken place, as the quality requirement for the TEF.
Eligibility – widening access and participation	3.9 to 3.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For providers in England, the requirement for an approved OFFA Access Agreement is replaced by a requirement for a provider to be registered with the OfS and to satisfy condition of registration A1.
	3.11 to 3.12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For providers in England, the requirement to publish an Access and Participation Statement is replaced by a requirement for a provider to be registered with the OfS and to satisfy condition of registration A2.
Eligibility – designation for student support	3.7(A) and (C):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For providers in England, registration with the OfS confers eligibility for access to the student support system. A provider that is designated for student support for undergraduate courses by the Secretary of State and regulated by the DfE in 2018-19 but is unsuccessful in its application to register with the OfS or does not apply for registration, must comply with specific course designation requirements up to 31 July 2019 but it will not meet TEF eligibility requirements.
	3.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For providers in Wales, designation of courses for the purposes of student support is not conditional on entry to the TEF. Providers in Wales should make themselves aware of the necessary regulations that relate to designation of higher education courses in Wales. Designation can be conditional on the type of provider, the mode of study and where the students are domiciled.
Appealable decisions	8.21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Changes to the rating of a TEF award following a merger or division' is added to the list of decisions that are appealable.

Annex B: TEF Year Four: Full metrics descriptions

1. Annex B sets out the definition and coverage of each TEF metric.

Metrics based on the National Student Survey

2. Paragraphs 3 to 20 provide a full description of the metrics to be used in TEF Year Four which are based on the National Student Survey (NSS). Unless otherwise stated, the details of the metrics' coverage, exclusions and benchmarking factors (described in paragraphs 4 to 10) are applicable to all three of the metrics derived using NSS responses.
3. The NSS asks a range of individual questions which are organised into different sets. These are known as NSS question scales, with each representing a different theme. In responding to an individual NSS question, students indicate their agreement with each statement on a five-point scale. Across the questions that make up a given scale, total agreement by each student is calculated as the percentage of responses that are 'Agree' or 'Strongly agree'. Questions marked with 'N/A' or not answered are ignored. An example, based on the 'Teaching on my course' scale (which comprises Questions 1 to 4), is given in Table B1.

Table B1: Example data

Student	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Percentage agree
A	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	75
B	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Agree	N/A	100
C	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	75
D	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	50
E	Agree	Disagree	N/A	N/A	50

4. In this example, the total percentage agreement for the provider would be 70 per cent (the sum of percentages divided by the number of students: $(75+100+75+50+50= 350) \div 5 = 70$).

Coverage (applicable to all NSS-based metrics)

5. The NSS is targeted at all final year undergraduates. Non-final year students on flexible provision or who change their study plans may also be included by participating providers.
6. The NSS covers UK, other EU and non-EU students.
7. The NSS-based metrics cover students surveyed during the spring of:
 - 2016 (defines the Year 1 year-split metric)
 - 2017 (defines the Year 2 year-split metric)
 - 2018 (defines the Year 3 year-split metric).
8. The NSS response rate in 2018 was 70 per cent.

Exclusions (applicable to all NSS-based metrics)

9. The following exclusions apply:

- a. Students who did not reach the final year of their course in any of the three most recent years.
- b. Students not aiming for an undergraduate level qualification, or aiming for a qualification of 1 FTE or lower.
- c. Students who were not on a full-time or part-time mode of study.

Benchmarking factors (applicable to all NSS-based metrics)

10. The factors used to benchmark the NSS-based metrics for full-time students are:

- subject of study
- age of entry
- ethnicity
- disability
- level of study
- year of cohort.

11. The factors used to benchmark the NSS-based metrics for part-time students are:

- subject of study
- age of entry
- disability
- year of cohort.

‘Teaching on my course’ metric

12. This metric is based on student’s responses to NSS questions 1 to 4 which cover the NSS scale ‘Teaching on my course’.

13. In 2016 these questions were as follows:

- Q1** – Staff are good at explaining things.
- Q2** – Staff have made the subject interesting.
- Q3** – Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching.
- Q4** – The course is intellectually stimulating.

14. In 2017 and 2018 these questions were as follows:

- Q1** – Staff are good at explaining things.

- Q2** – Staff have made the subject interesting.
- Q3** – The course is intellectually stimulating.
- Q4** – My course has challenged me to achieve my best work.

‘Assessment and feedback’ metric

15. This metric is based on student’s responses to NSS questions which cover the NSS scale ‘Assessment and feedback’.

16. In 2016 these were Questions 5 to 9, as follows:

- Q5** – The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.
- Q6** – Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair.
- Q7** – Feedback on my work has been prompt.
- Q8** – I have received detailed comments on my work.
- Q9** – Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand.

17. In 2017 and 2018 these were Questions 8 to 11, as follows:

- Q8** – The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.
- Q9** – Marking and assessment has been fair.
- Q10** – Feedback on my work has been timely.
- Q11** – I have received helpful comments on my work.

‘Academic support’ metric

18. This metric is based on student’s responses to NSS questions which cover the NSS scale ‘Academic support’.

19. In 2016 these were Questions 10 to 12, as follows:

- Q10** – I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies.
- Q11** – I have been able to contact staff when I needed to.
- Q12** – Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices.

20. In 2017 and 2018 these were Questions 12 to 14, as follows:

- Q12** – I have been able to contact staff when I needed to.
- Q13** – I have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my course.
- Q14** – Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices

Continuation metrics

21. The continuation metrics described at paragraphs 22 to 35 are based on the individualised student data captured in the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Individualised Learner Record (ILR) student records.

Full-time continuation metric

22. This metric tracks students from the year they enter a higher education provider to the following academic year. Students who qualify at undergraduate or postgraduate level, continue at the same provider, or are studying at higher education level at another provider are deemed to have continued. All other students are deemed non-continuers.
23. To be counted as continuing, the student must either have qualified or be recorded as actively studying on a higher education course in the relevant HESA or ILR dataset. Students who transfer to a provider that does not submit data to HESA or ILR will be counted as non-continuers.
24. Further detail can be found on the HESA website³⁵.

Coverage of the full-time continuation metric

25. This metric includes all UK-domiciled students who are included in one of the relevant HESA or ILR datasets and registered as entrants on higher education Level 4, 5 and 6 programmes³⁶.
26. The full-time continuation metric covers students entering higher education in academic years:
- 2013-14 (defines the Year 1 year-split metric)
 - 2014-15 (defines the Year 2 year-split metric)
 - 2015-16 (defines the Year 3 year-split metric).

Exclusions of the full-time continuation metric

27. The following exclusions apply:
- a. EU and non-EU international students.
 - b. Students not registered on a first degree or other undergraduate course.
 - c. Students recorded in another provider's HESA or ILR data for the same activity.
 - d. Students with more than one record at a provider with the same mode and level of study.

Benchmarking factors for the full-time continuation metric

28. The factors used to benchmark the full-time continuation metric are:
- subject of study
 - entry qualifications
 - age on entry
 - ethnicity

³⁵ See www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/performance-indicators/non-continuation/technical

³⁶ Throughout this annex references to Level 6 qualifications should be taken to include integrated masters' qualifications.

- Participation of Local Areas (POLAR4) quintile
- level of study.

Part-time continuation metric

29. This metric tracks students from the year they enter a higher education provider to the two following academic years. Students who qualify at undergraduate or postgraduate level within these two years, continue at the same provider, or are studying at higher education level at another provider in the second of the two years are deemed to have continued. All other students are deemed non-continuers.
30. To be counted as continuing, the student must either have qualified or be recorded as actively studying on a higher education course in the relevant HESA or ILR dataset. Students who transfer to a provider that does not submit data to HESA or ILR will be counted as non-continuers.
31. Further detail can be found on the HESA website³⁷.

Coverage of the part-time continuation metric

32. This metric includes all UK-domiciled students who are included in one of the relevant HESA or ILR datasets and registered as entrants on higher education Level 6 programmes.
33. The part-time continuation metric covers students entering higher education in academic years:
- 2012-13 (defines the Year 1 year-split metric)
 - 2013-14 (defines the Year 2 year-split metric)
 - 2014-15 (defines the Year 3 year-split metric).

Exclusions of the part-time continuation metric

34. The following exclusions apply:
- a. EU and non-EU international students.
 - b. Students not registered on a first degree (Level 6) course.
 - c. Students who are studying at less than 30 per cent intensity.
 - d. Students who were registered on a first degree course in the year prior to entry.
 - e. Students active on more than one higher education course at any provider in the year of entry.
 - f. Students recorded in another provider's HESA or ILR data for the same activity.
 - g. Students with more than one record at a provider with the same mode and level of study.

³⁷ See www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/performance-indicators/non-continuation/technical

Benchmarking factors for the part-time continuation metric

35. The factors used to benchmark the part-time continuation metric are:

- subject of study
- age on entry
- ethnicity
- POLAR4 quintile.

Employment metrics

36. The employment metrics described at paragraphs 37 to 53 are based on the Destinations of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE) survey.

‘Employment or further study’ metric

37. This metric expresses the number of UK-domiciled leavers who say they are working or studying (or both), as a percentage of all those who are working or studying or seeking work at approximately six months after leaving. All other categories are excluded from the denominator for this indicator.

38. Leavers are asked to indicate their current activity, selecting from eight categories. They are then asked to indicate the most important activity. In table B2 (adapted from HESA³⁸) the responses that are included in the ‘Employment or further study’ metric are highlighted (those in white or yellow are included in the denominator; those in yellow are included in the numerator). The responses that are excluded from the indicator are shaded in grey.

39. The indicator is therefore those leavers in categories 01 to 06 divided by those leavers in categories 01 to 08.

40. Further detail can be found on the HESA website³⁹.

³⁸ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/defs#DLHE>.

³⁹ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/emp>.

Table B2: DLHE responses that are included in the ‘employment or further study’ metric

(Those responses shown in white and yellow are included in the denominator; those highlighted in yellow are included in the numerator). The responses that are excluded from the indicator are shaded in grey.)

Most important activity (MIMPACT)	If any other activity includes (ALLACT)	Derived activity category
		XX Ineligibility or explicit refusal
Working full-time	Engaged in full-time study, training or research OR Engaged in part-time further study, training or research	03 Primarily in work and also studying
	Otherwise	01 Full-time work
Working part-time	Engaged in full-time study, training or research OR Engaged in part-time further study, training or research	03 Primarily in work and also studying
	Otherwise	02 Part-time work
Unemployed and looking for work		08 Unemployed
Due to start a job in the next month	Working full-time	01 Full-time work
	Engaged in full-time further study, training or research, provided that Working full-time has not been selected.	05 Full-time study
	Working part-time, provided that Working full-time AND Engaged in full-time further study, training or research have not been selected.	02 Part-time work
	Otherwise	07 Due to start work
Engaged in full-time further study, training or research	Working full-time OR Working part-time	04 Primarily studying and also in work
	Otherwise	05 Full-time study
Engaged in part-time further study, training or research	Working full-time OR Working part-time	04 Primarily studying and also in work
	Otherwise	06 Part-time study
Taking time out in order to travel		09 Other
Something else		09 Other

Coverage of the employment or further study metric

41. This metric includes all UK-domiciled leavers who are included in the relevant HESA and ILR datasets and have been awarded full Level 4, 5 or 6 qualifications.

42. The metric covers students leaving higher education in academic years:

- 2014-15 (defines the Year 1 year-split metric)
- 2015-16 (defines the Year 2 year-split metric)
- 2016-17 (defines the Year 3 year-split metric).

Exclusions of the employment or further study metric

43. The following exclusions apply:

- a. EU and non-EU international students.
- b. Students who are not counted in the DLHE target population.
- c. Students who were not awarded an undergraduate Level 4, 5 or 6 qualification.
- d. Students who are recorded in another provider's ILR data for the same activity.

Benchmarking factors for the employment or further study metric

44. The factors used to benchmark the highly-skilled employment or higher study metric are:

- subject of study
- entry qualifications
- age on entry
- ethnicity
- sex
- level of study.

'Highly skilled employment or further study' metric

45. This metric expresses the number of UK-domiciled leavers who say they are in highly skilled employment or studying (or both), as a percentage of all those who are working or studying or seeking work at approximately six months after leaving. All other categories are excluded from the denominator for this indicator.

46. Leavers are asked to indicate their current activity, selecting from eight categories. They are then asked to indicate the most important activity. In table B3 (adapted from HESA⁴⁰) the responses that are included in the 'Highly-skilled employment or further study' metric are highlighted (those in white or yellow are included in the denominator; those in yellow are

⁴⁰ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/defs#DLHE>.

included in the numerator). The responses that are excluded from the indicator are shaded in grey.

47. Those who indicate they are in employment are asked to provide further detail about that employment including a job title. That job title is mapped to the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)⁴¹. For this metric, jobs that are coded in SOC major groups 1 to 3 are counted as highly skilled.

48. The indicator is therefore those leavers in categories 01 to 06 (where employment is in SOC 1-3) divided by those leavers in categories 01 to 08.

49. Further detail can be found on the HESA website⁴².

⁴¹ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/industrial-occupational>.

⁴² See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/emp>.

Table B3: DLHE responses that are included in the ‘highly-skilled employment or further study’ metric

(Those responses shown in white and yellow are included in the denominator; those highlighted in yellow are included in the numerator). The responses that are excluded from the indicator are shaded in grey.)

Most important activity (MIMPACT)	If any other activity includes (ALLACT)	Derived activity category	SOC group
		XX Ineligibility or explicit refusal	
Working full-time	Engaged in full-time study, training or research OR Engaged in part-time further study, training or research	03 Primarily in work and also studying	SOC 1-3
			Other
	Otherwise	01 Full-time work	SOC 1-3
			Other
Working part-time	Engaged in full-time study, training or research OR Engaged in part-time further study, training or research	03 Primarily in work and also studying	SOC 1-3
			Other
	Otherwise	02 Part-time work	SOC 1-3
			Other
Unemployed and looking for work		08 Unemployed	
Due to start a job in the next month	Working full-time	01 Full-time work	SOC 1-3
			Other
	Engaged in full-time further study, training or research, provided that Working full-time has not been selected.	05 Full-time study	
	Working part-time, provided that Working full-time AND Engaged in full-time further study, training or research have not been selected.	02 Part-time work	SOC 1-3
			Other
	Otherwise	07 Due to start work	
Engaged in full-time further study,	Working full-time OR Working part-time	04 Primarily studying and also in work	

training or research	Otherwise	05 Full-time study	
Engaged in part-time further study, training or research	Working full-time OR Working part-time	04 Primarily studying and also in work	
	Otherwise	06 Part-time study	
Taking time out in order to travel		09 Other	
Something else		09 Other	

Coverage of the highly-skilled employment or further study metric

50. This metric includes all UK-domiciled leavers who are included in the relevant HESA and ILR datasets and have been awarded full Level 4, 5 or 6 qualifications.

51. The metric covers students leaving higher education in academic years:

- 2014-15 (defines the Year 1 year-split metric)
- 2015-16 (defines the Year 2 year-split metric)
- 2016-17 (defines the Year 3 year-split metric).

Exclusions of the highly-skilled employment or further study metric

52. The following exclusions apply:

- EU and non-EU international students.
- Students who are not counted in the DLHE target population.
- Students who were not awarded an undergraduate Level 4, 5 or 6 qualification.
- Students who are recorded in another provider's ILR data for the same activity.

Benchmarking factors for the highly-skilled employment or further study metric

53. The factors used to benchmark the highly-skilled employment or further study metric are:

- subject of study
- entry qualifications
- age on entry
- ethnicity
- sex

- disability
- POLAR4 quintile
- level of study.

Supplementary metrics based on the Longitudinal Education Outcomes dataset

54. The supplementary metrics described at paragraphs 55 to 72 are based on the LEO dataset, which links higher education and tax data together to chart the transition of graduates from higher education to the workplace. The LEO dataset links information about students, including their personal characteristics, their education (including schools, colleges and higher education providers attended as well as courses taken and qualifications achieved), their employment and income, and any benefits claimed.

‘Sustained employment or further study’ metric

55. This supplementary metric considers the proportion of qualifiers in sustained employment or further study three years after graduation, based on the LEO dataset.

56. The Department for Education’s definition of sustained employment is consistent with definitions used for 16-19 accountability, and the outcome-based success measures published for adult further education. The definition of sustained employment three years after graduation looks at employment activity captured by Pay As You Earn (PAYE) employment records for at least one day a month in five out of six months in the October to March periods in 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16, for graduates in 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12 respectively. If they are employed in all five months from October to February, but do not have a PAYE employment record for March, then graduates must have an additional employment record in April to be considered as being in sustained employment. The definition also includes any graduates returning a self-assessment tax form in 2013-14, 2014-15 or 2015-16 stating that they have received income from self-employment during that tax year.

57. ‘Sustained employment’ is taken together with further study in the definition of TEF metrics: the numerator counts all graduates identified as being in sustained employment or further study. A graduate is defined as being in further study if they have a valid higher education study record at any UK publicly funded higher education institution or any English alternative provider or further education college in the HESA and ILR student records in the 2013-14, 2014-15 or 2015-16 tax year. The further study does can be a higher education qualification at any level (undergraduate or postgraduate).

58. Further detail can be found on the Gov.uk website⁴³.

Coverage of the sustained employment or further study metric

59. This metric includes all UK-domiciled leavers who are included in the relevant HESA and ILR datasets and have been awarded full Level 4, 5 or 6 qualifications.

⁴³ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/graduate-outcomes-by-degree-subject-and-university>.

60. The metric covers students leaving higher education in academic years:

- 2009-10 (defines the Year 1 year-split metric)
- 2010-11 (defines the Year 2 year-split metric)
- 2011-12 (defines the Year 3 year-split metric).

Exclusions of the sustained employment or further study metric

61. The following exclusions apply:

- a. EU and non-EU international students.
- b. Students who were not awarded an undergraduate Level 4, 5 or 6 qualification.
- c. Students who are recorded in another provider's ILR data for the same activity.
- d. Students at providers in Northern Ireland, or at providers that were not required to return HESA or ILR data in 2009-10, 2010-11 or 2011-12.
- e. Students without an HM Revenues and Customs (HMRC) or Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) tax or benefits record in any year, and the small minority of students whose personal characteristics data was not sufficiently complete to enable linking to HMRC or DWP records.

Benchmarking factors for the sustained employment or further study metric

62. The factors used to benchmark the full-time sustained employment or further study metric are:

- subject of study
- entry qualifications
- age on entry
- ethnicity
- sex
- level of study.

63. The factors used to benchmark the part-time sustained employment or further study metric are:

- subject of study
- ethnicity
- level of study.

‘Above median earnings or in further study’ metric

64. This supplementary metric is based on the LEO dataset, and considers the proportion of qualifiers in sustained employment who are earning over the median salary for 25- to 29-year-olds, or are in further study.
65. Qualifiers in sustained employment or further study are defined as in the description of the ‘Sustained employment or further study’ metric. It is the population of graduates who were in sustained employment (with known salary information) or in further study who form the denominator of this metric. The numerator includes graduates within this denominator population who were in further study or whose PAYE or self-assessment earnings exceed the median salary for 25- to 29-year-olds in the relevant tax year three years after graduation. This is defined according to the statistics published in the annual HMRC publication series ‘Personal income statistics’⁴⁴. The median salaries for 25- to 29-year-olds, as published, were £20,000 in 2013-14, £21,000 in 2014-15 and £21,500 in 2015-16.
66. Earnings from PAYE are annualised by calculating the individual’s average daily wage for the days recorded in employment and multiplying this by the number of days in the tax year. Self-assessed earnings are not annualised as this calculation is not possible. This means that the metric considers raw earnings data for graduates who have only been matched to a self-assessment tax return. For a graduate with a combination of earnings from PAYE and self-assessment, the metric considers the combination of annualised PAYE earnings and raw self-assessed earnings.
67. Further detail can be found on the Gov.uk website⁴⁵.

Coverage of the above median earnings or in further study metric

68. This metric includes all UK-domiciled leavers who are included in the relevant HESA and ILR datasets and have been awarded full Level 4, 5 or 6 qualifications.
69. The metric covers students leaving higher education in academic years:
- 2009-10 (defines the Year 1 year-split metric)
 - 2010-11 (defines the Year 2 year-split metric)
 - 2011-12 (defines the Year 3 year-split metric).

Exclusions of the above median earnings or in further study metric

70. The following exclusions apply:
- a. EU and non-EU international students.
 - b. Students who were not awarded an undergraduate Level 4, 5 or 6 qualification.
 - c. Students who are recorded in another provider’s ILR data for the same activity.

⁴⁴ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/personal-incomes-statistics>.

⁴⁵ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/graduate-outcomes-by-degree-subject-and-university>.

- d. Students at providers in Northern Ireland, or at providers that were not required to return HESA or ILR data in 2009-10, 2010-11 or 2011-12.
- e. Students without an HMRC or DWP tax or benefits record in any year, and the small minority of students whose personal characteristics data was not sufficiently complete to enable linking to HMRC or DWP records.
- f. Students who were not in sustained employment or further study three years after graduation.
- g. Students who were in sustained employment three years after graduation but whose salary information was not known.

Benchmarking factors for the above median earnings or in further study metric

71. The factors used to benchmark the full-time above median earnings or in further study metric are:

- subject of study
- entry qualifications
- ethnicity
- sex
- disability
- POLAR4 quintile
- level of study.

72. The factors used to benchmark the part-time above median earnings or in further study metric are:

- subject of study
- age on entry
- entry qualifications
- ethnicity
- sex
- disability
- POLAR4 quintile
- level of study.

Supplementary grade inflation metric

73. Paragraphs 7.50 to 7.59 of the TEF specification sets out how grade inflation data will be considered in the second step of the assessment alongside evidence in the submission, with regard to the rigour and stretch criterion (TQ3). For all providers with teaching degree awarding powers (TDAPs), panel members and assessors will consider a supplementary metric on the degrees awarded alongside any evidence on the effect of their grading policy and practice, and the factors influencing grading outcomes, which providers may make available in their submission. For providers that do not hold TDAPs, their workbooks will not include this additional metric, but they can include other evidence of rigour and stretch in their provider submission.
74. The grade inflation data will provide the number and proportion of Level 6+ undergraduate degrees classified as firsts, 2:1s, other degree classifications and unclassified degree awards 10 years ago, as well as in the most recent three years of available data. This equates to students qualifying in the academic years 2016-17, 2015-16, 2014-15 and 2008-09 respectively.
75. Information will be provided for these years, where it is available within providers' HESA and ILR student-level data returns. The OfS considers information 'available' for any year in which the provider held and used their own TDAPs: information will only be considered as unavailable if the provider did not award any Level 6+ undergraduate degrees to students it taught and registered in a given year. If information is unavailable for 2008-09 but is available for a year between 2008-09 and 2014-15, data will be provided for the year that is nearest to 2008-09.

Coverage

76. The supplementary grade inflation metric will only be produced for providers that currently hold TDAPs. It covers all awards made by a provider to the students it has taught.
77. The data will include all students who are included in one of the relevant HESA or ILR datasets and recorded as qualifying from a Level 6 (or higher) undergraduate degree award.
78. The data covers UK, other EU and non-EU students.
79. The data covers students awarded qualifications in academic years:
- 2008-09 (defines the baseline year, as the '10 years ago' position), or the year of available data that is nearest 2008-09
 - 2014-15
 - 2015-16
 - 2016-17 (the most recent year of available data).

Exclusions

80. The following exclusions apply:
- a. Students who were not awarded an undergraduate Level 6+ qualification.

- b. Awards made by a provider to students who are registered or taught elsewhere, under franchising or validation arrangements.
- c. Students who are recorded in another provider's ILR data for the same activity.

Benchmarking factors

81. The supplementary grade inflation metric is not benchmarked.

List of abbreviations

CAH	Common Aggregation Hierarchy
DFAP	Director for Fair Access and Participation
DfE	Department for Education
DLHE	Destination for Leavers of Higher Education survey
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EQAR	External Quality Assurance Review
HERA	Higher Education and Research Act 2017
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HMRC	HM Revenue & Customs
ILR	Individualised Learner Records
LEO	Longitudinal Education Outcomes
NSS	National Student Survey
OfS	Office for Students
PAYE	Pay As You Earn
POLAR	Participation of local areas
PSRB	Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies
TDAPs	Taught Degree Awarding Powers
TEF	Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework
WP	Widening participation



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