Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023

TEF panel statement

Provider name:	The University of Northampton

Overall rating

The TEF panel (the panel) considered the overall rating to be Silver**.**

Aspect ratings

The panel considered the aspect ratings to be as follows:

Student experience	Silver
Student outcomes	Silver

Rationale for rating decisions

Context

The submission and the 'size and shape' data dashboard include information about the context of the provider.

In summary:

The provider is a medium-sized university, with around 9,570 full-time (FT), 410 part-time (PT) and 110 apprenticeship under-graduates (UG), based on the TEF 'size and shape' data dashboards, for 2020-21. It also had a significant number of transnational education (TNE) students (1,560). There are marked differences in subject preference for each study mode, in 2020-21; with highest numbers in, Business and management (25.2%) for FT; Engineering (37.9%) for PT; and Law (43.2%) and Health and Social Care (23.4%) for apprenticeships; and further variations across the (TEF) 4-year aggregate data. A large proportion of students are young students studying on a three-year, FT, UG course. In addition, its intake, by Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) in 2020-21 varied, with high numbers of students from quintiles 1 and 2 and with 25.1% of FT UGs eligible for free school meals

Other notable size and shape data, based on 4-year aggregate data includes:

- Students are largely UK-based, and many are not local to the area (81.9% for FT UGs)

- Most FT UGs are of white (48.8%) or black (25.1%) ethnicity

- 13% or higher had a reported disability or learning difficulty, across all groups

- There is a higher proportion of males (60.2%) on PT study

- Integrated Foundation Year students account for 7% of FT UG

- The majority students enter through BTECs or Access to HE programmes

The provider, in its submission, sets out its institutional mission: '"Transforming Lives and Inspiring Change". Our education is relevant to the world of work and values social impact for the betterment of individuals and society, and it is underpinned by personal and holistic support.'

The submission describes its full time (FT) undergraduate (UG) student cohort as being UK domiciled and from a diverse mix of ethnicities (for example, white (55%), black and black British (28.7%), Asian and Asian British (7.3%), Other or mixed ethnicities (6.3%) and Unknown (2.3%). The submission states, how many students have childcare, work or other demands on their time and live 'off campus' and commute. The provider's educational provision is organised into three faculties: Arts, Science and Technology, Business and Law, and Health, Education and Society, with Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) accreditation of courses in all three faculties.

In their submission, students noted that their 'voice' is embedded across the institution, with the University of Northampton's Students' Union (SU) leading on formal student representation structures. The student submission added that the provider has a very strong widening participation and raising aspiration ethos, accompanied by a significant demographic of students from traditionally lower-participation backgrounds, some of whom may be first generation entrants to higher education (HE), have a lower entry tariff, are returners to education and/or are transitioning careers. The student submission commented that these factors bring about complications (from an intersectional and inclusion perspective), when navigating the academic, professional, and personal development that accompanies degree level study.

The provider submission sets out University ambitions as follows:

- Working closely with partners and employers to design and deliver its provision
- Enabling students flexible study to suit their needs; with its Active Blended Learning (ABL) approach
- Embedding innovative and effective approaches, with students as partners

The panel also took into account evidence presented by the provider with regard to the coronavirus pandemic; including a delayed move of some courses to its Waterside Campus (2019-20) and a major cyber-attack (2021), both which had significant impacts on the provider and its students.

Scope of the assessment

All of the provider's UG courses and students on those courses, as defined at paragraph 69 of RA22, were considered in scope of the assessment.

However, the panel noted that for the student experience indicators the denominator for the part time cohort was only 110 compared to a denominator of 6,060 for the full-time cohort.

No optional courses, as defined at paragraph 70 of RA22, were considered in scope of the assessment.

While some data was available for TNE provision, there were only general reference to international partnerships and study in the provider submission and so the panel did not consider TNE provision as being in scope of the assessment. This was also the case for apprenticeship provision, where there was limited TEF indicator data and no formal reference in either submission.

The evidence considered in the assessment is:

- The provider submission
- The student submission
- The TEF indicators and accompanying 'size and shape 'data.

Approach to assessment

In reaching the decision on ratings, panel members applied their expert judgement, within the framework of principles and guidelines set out in RA22 and followed the approach to assessment set out at paragraph 231 of RA22 by: 1) identifying excellent features within each aspect; 2) considering a rating for each aspect; and 3) considering the overall rating (taking account of the provider's context at each step of the assessment).

The reasoning for the panel's rating decisions is set out below.

Student experience

Student experience: aspect rating

The panel weighed up all the evidence in the indicators and the submission relating to the student experience aspect as a whole and determined the student experience aspect rating to be 'Silver', where the student experience is typically of very high quality. The panel judged that the 'best fit' descriptor is that all features of this aspect are very high quality for most groups of students.

In accordance with the guidance, the panel considered all the evidence available in the submission and the indicators to identify very high quality and outstanding quality features (further detail set out below), noting that the indicators contributed no more than half of the evidence of excellence. The panel then considered the extent to which there are very high quality and outstanding quality features across the aspect as a whole. The panel considered how far any outstanding or very high quality features apply across all the provider's student groups and the range of its courses and subjects. To determine the student experience aspect rating, the panel applied the ratings criteria set out at Annex B of RA22.

For the reasons given below, the panel considered that:

- There is sufficient evidence of very high quality in relation to the features SE1, SE2, SE3, SE4, SE5 and SE7 for most of the provider's groups of students.
- There is insufficient evidence of very high quality with regard to SE6.

Student experience features of excellence.

SE1: Teaching, assessment and feedback:

The panel noted the following evidence;

The FT overall indicator for teaching on my course is (93.3%) broadly in line with the benchmark. However, the panel noted variation in the subject spilt indicators with the majority (27) of splits materially in line with benchmark and 12 are materially below.

The full time overall indicator for assessment and feedback is materially (100%) in line with benchmark and the majority of splits are materially in line with benchmark.

The panel noted that there were some underrepresented groups materially below benchmark, for example; mature students; black students and other UG.

For the part time cohort, the teaching and assessment indicators were materially below benchmark and this was reflected in the split indicators. However, the panel noted that the denominator in all cases was low (110).

Thus the indicators provide initial evidence of a very high quality feature.

The provider's submission referenced the following in respect of this feature:

- Its 'active blended learning' (ABL) approach to teaching, feedback, and assessment practices

- Case studies outlining interventions in teaching, assessment and feedback practices, tailored to support students; with emphasis on some groups most impacted by campus restrictions during the pandemic and cyberattack, which adversely affected online study and campus access

- Embedding realistic scenarios in to its programmes to enhance teaching, learning and the application of theory to practice. For example;

  o simulated car crash experiences for Paramedic Science students in collaboration with other students (e.g. Acting, Stage, Make-Up etc.) to enable the creation of realistic victims and crash scenarios

  o a Hydra Suite, enabling students on the Policing and Health programmes to collaborate with practitioners digitally

- Building formative feedback and feedforward opportunities into learning and teaching, through written 'and' oral feedback from module tutors

- Staged and scaffolded assessments incorporating student reflection and feedback

- Using real world scenarios in collaboration with employers (e.g. experts from Barclays speaking to Computing UGs)

- The implementation of improvement plans for subjects where NSS indicators are low

- The SU's submission noted that students were positive about the University's response to the coronavirus pandemic and valued the 'no detriment' approach. The SU submission also commented on delays in awards, where students could not complete essential work

experience or placements, such as those required by accrediting bodies (PSRB), or where they could not access specialist on campus resources. In their submission, students were positive about their experiences of teaching, learning and assessments and included evidence from its annual Student Life Pulse (SLP) survey (1,900 respondents in 2020-21) which showed 79% satisfaction with teaching, 75% with assessment, 82% with course content, 81% with intellectual challenge. Students valued the active blended learning approach and the varied, authentic and relevant assessments approach with clear briefs; and anonymous marking (2020).

The panel also noted the provider's response to the coronavirus pandemic, for example;

- The establishment of a critical incident group which includes students;

- Changes to academic requirements for assessment to no detriment

- Offering additional support to students including pastoral support (through its Additional Student Support and Inclusion Services Team (ASSIST), Counselling and Mental Health Team and the Needs Assessment Centre)

- The new IT infrastructure allied to a new leadership and governance approach.

Overall, taking all of the available evidence into consideration, the panel judged that there is sufficient evidence of a very high quality feature, where the provider has embedded very high quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices, that are effective in supporting students learning, progression and attainment.

SE2: Course content and delivery; student engagement in learning and stretch.

The panel noted the following evidence;

- A University wide modular curriculum framework

- Mandatory co-production events (CAIeROs); collaborating students with other university stakeholders (employers for example) to shape course, content and delivery, including the development of its ABL approach

- Engagement with and accreditation by PSRBs to inform and assure course content and delivery

- A strong focus on developing student digital skills

- A strong focus on small group teaching

- A 'decolonising the curriculum' programme, addressing the ethnicity awarding gap, coined Decolonising Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA) (2020), which includes a 'Black Advocates scheme'.

The SU's submission cited evidence from their SLP survey, where 82% of respondents were satisfied with their course content (showing a trend of improvement from; 78%, 2020-21; 80%, 2019-20). The SLP survey also showed that 79% of students were satisfied with teaching on their course; 75% satisfied with assessment; and 70% satisfied with feedback on their work. In their submission students were also positive about an inclusive and supportive learning environment

with substantive contact time, student-tutor engagement and smaller groups, which students suggested all help to promote good interaction and support in transitioning their learning to careers.

Overall, taking all of the available evidence into consideration, the panel judged that there is sufficient evidence of a very high quality feature, where course content and delivery effectively encourage students to engage in their learning and stretch and challenge students to develop their knowledge and skills.

SE3: Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement

The panel noted how the provider submission describes learning through an evidence-based and research informed curriculum which is embedded into the ABL model. It also provides good evidence of employer engagement in both course design and delivery.

Evidence in the provider's submission includes:

- An annual Teaching and Learning Conference, with students and staff co-presenting

- Funding projects, for example the UG Research Bursary at Northampton (URB@N) with 170 projects to date, which enable staff and students to inform pedagogical issues and influence university-wide innovations

- Examples of how students can experience research through the curriculum, although the panel noted that the case studies offered were for relatively small numbers

- A commitment to funding innovations in teaching through projects often using student as partners

- Employer engagement in curriculum design, assessment and delivery which is embedded as part of the provider's strategy (that is, the co-design of authentic assessments through partnership)

- A Learning Enhancement and Innovation fund to promote curriculum innovation.

The student submission cited a survey (but just 5 respondents) and a focus group (16 respondents), noting that the University provides opportunities for students to engage in research and that tutors are 'very…skilled in these areas'. The student submission included positive comments from the SU focus group with regard to opportunities for and experience of research.

Students were positive about course content, the mix of practical, skills based and theory and the relevance of course content / applied learning to their career. They valued opportunities to choose modules and to tailor their curriculum. They recognised intellectual challenge and commented that their critical thinking had improved.

Overall, the panel judged this feature to be of very high quality where the provider uses scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement, to contribute to a very high quality academic experience, for students.

SE4: Staff professional development and academic practice

The panel noted the following evidence;

- Changemaker@Northampton Development Opportunities (C@N-DO), a framework for staff development aligned with and leading to Advance HE Fellowship. The provider submission cites 56.6% of staff as having achieved Advance HE Fellowship recognition.

- An institutional commitment to career progression via learning and teaching, with support for and routes to professorship, with input from an external visiting professor

- Support for Personal Academic Tutors (PAT) which is based on the UK Advisory and Tutoring Association.

- Communities of practice which facilitate sharing of good practice and pedagogical research.

- A Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework with evidence of its scope, activities and level of staff engagement

- A Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) in Academic Practice and support for staff to develop digital content and delivery

- The student submission commented that students have less insight into staff professional development and academic practices but did note support for SU officers who are involved in staff development; for example, a student-led Carers' Champion training programme which is compulsory for (some) Professional Service Staff.

Overall, the panel judged that there is sufficient evidence that this is a very high quality feature where there is very high quality support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is promoted.

SE5: Learning environment and academic support

The panel noted the following evidence:

The FT overall indicator for Academic Support is materially broadly in line with benchmark and the majority of split indicators are materially in line with benchmark.

For the part time cohort, the overall and split indicators were materially below benchmark but the panel noted that the denominator in all cases was low (110).

Thus the indicators provide initial evidence of a very high quality feature.

Evidence in the providers submission includes:

- Students as Learning Development Mentors (LDMs) with those who engaged cited as having increased grades by 2 to 4 sub-grades and with greater impact outcomes for black ethnicity UGs

- Integrated Learner Support approach using learner analytics to inform Personal Academic Tutors (PAT)

- Inclusivity, which is embedded into support strategies, as evidenced by the Cultural Integration Workshops, which seek to create a more inclusive learning environment through

a programme of workshops and to increase the support for assistive technology for students

- Specialist Support Teams with regard to Finance, Mental Health, Disability and the Student Support and Advice Team

- Academic support which is provided through a Virtual Skills Hub (which includes Learner Development Tutors) for study skills workshops and one-to-one support, with evidence of high levels of student engagement cited

- A range of SU support networks, groups and societies.

The student submission referenced, students feedback on personal academic tutors, from their Big SU Survey, 2020-21. (the Big SU survey is an annual exercise administered internally by the SU, consisting of 53 questions) where 74% of students reported tutorials were 'very' or 'extremely' effective. The student submission also noted, students were positive about the support they receive, citing their SLP Survey (2021-22), at 57% for a 'sense of belonging', with some students commenting, 'they felt a part of the wider community of staff and students.' The student submission added that 100 students have been seen by LDMs (since inception across this TEF period) and that many preferred that option for support. The student submission also referenced, good engagement with and the effectiveness of the PAT system; recognising the collective partnership, in developing student mentors.

Overall, the panel considered that this is a very high quality feature where the provider fosters a supportive learning environment and its students have access to a range of very high quality academic support.

SE6: Learning resources

The panel noted the following evidence;

The FT overall indicator for Learning Resources is 74.7% and -6.6ppt materially (100) below benchmark, with a majority of split indicators also below benchmark.

For the part-time cohort, the overall indicator and split indicators are in line with benchmark but with low materiality. The panel noted that the denominator in all cases was low (110)

Thus, the indicators provide little initial evidence of very high quality.

Evidence in the provider's submission includes:

- Details of physical and virtual learning resources

- Tailored resources and support for students with disability or learning difficulty. For example, laptops and IT software, assistive technology and support for students to access and use this in the form of 1:1 specialist Assistive Technology Training

  o The provider submission responded to the indicators which were below benchmark for some UG subjects, including Law, Accounting and Finance, Policing, Creative Arts and Design, Performing Arts, Computing and Engineering. For example, the provider noted: The impact of its decision to delay Creative Arts and Design and Performing Arts

programmes moving from the former Avenue Campus to the Waterside campus with the rest of the University in 2018, resulting in students experiencing a sense of isolation and lack of community and resources. Planned responses to this were delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

- o For Computing and Engineering programmes the provider cites that in 2021-22 it invested in laboratories, studios, practical resources and IT facilities, totalling over £1.1 million, and that fundamental changes have been made to this portfolio of courses and the curriculum, with further changes planned.

- o For Architecture, Building and Planning and Geography programmes the submission notes that these programmes suffered from a combination of the pandemic and the cyber-attack, as students were unable to access specialist resources and software. The provider confirms that it has since invested in new hardware and software, which will be rolled out in 2022/23.

The provider submission referenced planned future resource initiatives for the 2022-23 period including:

- Further support for digital provision to be offered to eligible students
- Further investments into new hardware and software

The student submission cited:

- The digital resources e.g., loaned Laptops, with 70% student satisfaction with IT services in 2021/22.
- The eSports Suite, Sports Science laboratories and simulation wards complete with life-like mannequins, along with a student (Nursing) citation noting, "lots of opportunity to apply learning".
- Some concerns regarding timetabling and also with regard to the demand on student time vs placements, given the characteristics of the student body as described above.

In both submissions, there is positive reference to initiatives for some marginalised groups but overall the panel felt that the submission(s) did not fully respond to or mitigate the split indicators for this feature, neither in terms of all subjects where indicators were below benchmark nor for some of the wider mix of students, such as those from under-represented cohorts.

The panel judged that overall, for this feature there was insufficient evidence of very high quality but noted some very high quality practices.

SE7: Student engagement in improvement

The panel noted the following evidence;

The FT overall ''student voice' indicator is 2.8ppt below benchmark at 67.9% but with low materiality. The FT split indicators show stronger statistical evidence of groups materially below benchmark, for example, other UG, mature students, black students and those from IMD quintiles 1 and 2. There are also notable variations between subjects with a majority materially below benchmark.

For the part-time cohort, the overall and split indicators were materially below benchmark, but the panel noted that in all cases the denominator is low (110)

The panel noted the provider's submission which described how the provider works in partnership with students in the development and evaluation of programmes.

Other evidence within the provider's submission includes:

- Working with the SU to develop the Black Advocates Scheme

- Partnership with students to development the Cultural Integration Workshop

- Using the Student Life Pulse survey to inform its institutional strategy

- Student-Staff Liaison Committees which engage students in dialogue through a Student Representative scheme

- The consultation with students to re-design the Health and Social Care Degree

- Provider participation in the Global Student Living Index Survey which helps to inform University decision making.

The student submission referenced, a collaborative ethos and effort between the provider and SU quoting, the provider's "transparency and willingness to listen and action students' feedback." The student submission noted that both the SU President and SU Vice President Education were involved in the provider's TEF submission working group and participated in workshops with university staff in preparation for the TEF exercise. They noted; the provider enabled them to access relevant data, to support their submission; independence was maintained to prevent undue influence, taking the collective approach of support and trust.

The student submission also commented positively on how students had worked with the University to introduce anonymous marking in 2020, aiming, in part, to address the attainment gaps of ethnic minority students.

Overall, the panel considered that there is sufficient evidence that this feature is of very high quality where the provider effectively engages with its students, leading to improvements to experiences and outcomes.

Student outcomes

Student outcomes: aspect rating

The panel applied the ratings criteria set out in Annex B of RA22 and considered the best fit rating to be 'Silver'. Considering the features holistically, the panel judged there to be evidence of typically very high quality student outcomes, where all features of this aspect are very high quality for most groups of students.

For the reasons given below, the panel considered that:

- There is sufficient evidence of outstanding quality for most student groups in relation to SO1 and SO4
- There is sufficient evidence of very high quality for most student groups in relation to SO2, SO3, SO5 and SO6.

As above, in accordance with the guidance, the panel considered all the evidence available in the submission and the indicators and weighed up this evidence to identify very high quality and outstanding quality features (further detail below). The panel then considered the extent to which there are very high quality or outstanding quality features across the aspect as a whole, rather than treating the features as a checklist, and considered how far the outstanding or very high quality features apply across all the provider's student groups and the range of its courses and subjects.

The guidance sets out that the outcome indicators provide more direct measures of some of the student outcomes features (SO2 and SO3) and these student outcomes features could be identified without necessarily requiring further evidence in the submission. However, the panel noted that, should these indicators be below benchmark, this should not be determinative that the associated feature is 'not very high quality'. In these instances, the panel considered the evidence in the provider submission to be important to the panel's assessment of the indicator evidence and features, such as contextual evidence regarding the provider's focus on supporting students who might otherwise not complete or achieve in higher education

The rationale for the panel's assessment of each feature is below.

Student outcomes: features of excellence

SO1: Approaches to supporting student success

The provider submission describes how it supports its students holistically, based on evidence and informed by the student voice. There is a package of financial and other support based on the University's Access and participation Plan (APP). The panel noted substantive evidence presented on closing 'gaps' in student outcomes, including support and actions targeted to specific student groups, for example, black students accounting for 25% of the full time student cohort.

Further evidence in the provider's submission includes:

- A 2019, programme portfolio review and revision to improve the student experience and outcomes. This included phasing out joint honours provision based on evidence that includes NSS responses.

- Student outcomes which are monitored through the provider's Student Experience Forum.

- The QlikView system which is used by staff to monitor continuation, completion and other relevant data and thus to identify 'at risk' students and to make interventions where needed.

- Tailored initiatives at programme level, aimed at equalising awards to students e.g. a virtual Best Practise Hub, enabling staff to share best practice in removing continuation, progression and award gaps (for example in Technology and Engineering, Sports and Exercise, BSc Pre-registration Nursing, BA Advertising and Digital Marketing and BSc Marketing.

- University wide support initiatives with regard to enhancing continuation and completion, including induction, financial and wellbeing support outside of academic settings.

- Extensive placement and work-based learning opportunities embedded in programmes with high levels of student engagement.

- Careers and employability embedded in the curriculum.

- On line resources for CEIAG. These are the Changemaker Hub and Changemaker Portal, incorporating CV 360 and CV checker on line.

- Support for paid and volunteering work, including opportunities through UniTemps, which may be certificated.

- Placement and Work Based Learning (WBL) Policy implemented by a Placement and WBL Team to support students, whch has lead to an increase in students undertaking work placements / WBL.

- The Employability Plus Award, which captures and recognises extra – curricula achievement, with now 32% of FT UG taking part.

- The Northampton Employment Promise,whereby if students are not in job they want 1 year after graduation, they can enrol free to a Post Graduate Certificate and are supported in job search through the University Graduate Internship Programme.

- The Time2Grow internships with paid work experience in chosen sectors.

- The provider submission recognises the low indicators for the Foundation Year cohort and in response redesigned the curriculum.

- In their submission, students were positive about the support they receive to help them to achieve positive outcomes, recognising the widening participation nature of the cohort. They value the 'Stepping in to University' transition programme,

- They value the Changemaker Hub and Employability Plus Award.

- They value the wide range of subject / course specific activities which promote employability and progression.

Overall, the panel judged that this was an outstanding feature, where the provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring that students succeeed in and progress beyond their studies.

SO2: Continuation and completion rates

The panel noted the following evidence;

The overall, indicator for continuation for parttime students (n=650) is 10.8% materially (100%) above benchmark.

The overall indicator for continuation for fulltime students (n=13810) is materially (100%) broadly in line with benchmark.

The overall completion indicator for parttime students (n=1950) is 13% materially (100%) below benchmark.

The overall completion indicator for fulltime students (n=13910) is material (100%) broadly in line with benchmark.

The panel noted that the overall PT indicator for completion showed a marked improvement, in year 4, at 76.2% and 13.2% materially (100%) above benchmark.

Thus, the panel considered that the indicators offered initial evidence of a very high quality feature.

Evidence in the provider's submission includes;

- Improvements in student outcomes, across the TEF period. For example, the continuation gap for ethnic minority and white students narrowed from 11.4%, 2017-18 to 1.5%, 2019-20.

- The panel accepted the provider's mitigation for the low (Other UG) PT completion indicators, which the provider cited as being the result of a historical Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) return error (for 272 students, who completed study in Education and Teaching, which was not reflected in 2013-14), noting the correct figure should be 84.1% and above its benchmark of 82.4% (p.17)

- Tracking assignment non-submissions as early warning signs for students at risk of failure or withdrawal, e.g., between 2019-20 and 2020-21, this fell from 26.6% to 15.0% (overall); whilst for black students it fell from 33.5% to 22.5% and, for White male students 28.1% to 13.8%.

- The redesign of the Integrated Foundation Year (75 programmes in 2020), to address the low completion for these students. This was to embed academic & employability skills (from entry), focusing on developing resilience and independent learning. The panel noted that the impact on completion rates is not yet reflected in the indicators for this cohort.

- The use by staff of the QlikView platform to monitor continuation, completion and graduate outcomes, with reporting at board level on student outcome key performance indicators.

In their submission, students noted 'a big step in independence and responsibility from first year to second year'. One student, taking part in a focus group, commented, "the University provides us with all the support [we need] but it's up to us on how we utilise it." Separately, the students' submission cited a question from its SLP survey, offered to assess challenges around continuation and completion; i.e., 'for which reasons did you consider leaving University?' It noted, across the last 3 years of the TEF time series; Mental health, financial difficulties, social experience and other competing responsibilities [including feelings unpreparedness verses increased workload] were selected as key reasons for students leaving prematurely. This narrative supports some initiatives pursued by the provider which have been outlined above.

Overall, the panel considered that there is sufficient evidence to suggest this feature typically of very high quality, as there are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's mix of students and courses; with some evidence to address some groups falling below benchmark.

SO3: Progression rates

The panel noted the following evidence;

For Progression, the FT overall indicator (3,730 students) is materially (100%) broadly in line with benchmark. The FT split indicators were also materially in line with benchmark for most student groups, although materially below benchmark for the integrated foundation year cohort, Asian and black students and, for some subjects (including Business and Management and Psychology, both with significant student populations).

Overall, the panel considered that the indicators provided initial evidence of very high quality

The provider's submission also offered some mitigation for some of the split indicators which were below benchmark.

For example;

- A new institution wide employability strategy
- The curriculum re-design of the integrated foundation year; e.g., IFY curriculum redesign
- The introduction of a 'Psychology for Life' module

Further evidence in its submission includes;

- Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data which indicates that, on average, graduates earn a median of £20900 1 year after graduation, compared to a sector median of £20,100, as cited by the provider

- Embedded work-based learning: the Placement and Work Based Learning (PWBL) policy provides overarching direction and guidance to inform placements. For example, between September 2019 and August 2020, 5291 students in 68 programmes undertook PWBL.

- The Northampton Employment Promise through its Graduate Internship Programme; including Time2Grow internships offering paid work experience in chosen sectors and, where, if students are not in a desired role within 1-year after graduation they can enrol free to do a Post Graduate Certificate and are supported in their job search.

- The Employability Plus Award, capturing and recognising extra-curricular achievements; with over 32% of FT UG taking part (within the TEF period)

The student submission, offered a rationale for limitations on gathering evidence or feedback from graduates, outlining that its evidence refers to current students. Examples included:

- Students were positive about the support they receive to help them to achieve positive outcomes, recognising the widening participation nature of the cohort. They value the 'Stepping into University' transition programme,

- They value the wide range of subject / course specific activities which promote employability and progression.

- Students were positive about the Changemaker Hub and the Employability Plus Award 'for opening doors to opportunities for them.' Lastly, it referenced events, placements and competitions, which saw successes for students, since 2019.

Taking the all the available evidence and mitigations (including some student groups and subjects falling below benchmark) into account, the panel judged that there is sufficient evidence that this feature is typically of very high quality, as there are very high rates of progression for most of the provider's students and courses.

SO4: Intended educational gains

The provider submission sets the educational gains in the context of its overall mission to transform lives and inspire change.

Three educational gains are articulated, and their evaluation is described along with their current overall status.

1. Academic development – as shown by movement in Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) groups. The submission states that 63.4% of graduates have moved up one SOC group.

2. Personal development – as shown by the graduate outcomes (GO) survey. The submission states that it has a current 72.9% GO survey score for positive responses to the statement "I am utilising what I learnt during my studies in my current activity/activities" (ranked 45/189).

3. Work readiness – as shown in scores for the quality of CVs submitted to CV360 and general self-efficacy based on the University's Employability Award. This evaluation is in the early days of development.

In their submission students recognised and valued the development of their general self-efficacy based on the University's Employability Award.

Students were positive about the educational gains that they make, citing the Pulse survey, with 59% noting a positive impact on their personal confidence and self-esteem and that 72% know their career plan.

The provider's submission outlined how the provider embeds educational gains within its mission and strategy as a "Changemaker" University and, through its Changemaker Outcomes for Graduate Success (COGS)

The submission emphasised, the provider's approach to support students to achieve intended educational gains, through students becoming the 'Changemakers of the future,' and how this ethos is embedded into its students' education and extracurricular opportunities. This is formally adopted into its quality processes and, in students' official higher education records via its Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR)

The student submission expressed that, following a collective Working Group discussion around TEF, there was consensus that educational gains were core to the University's mission and ethos as a sense of adding value. The student submission also noted that the provider supports students, in understanding what they want to do and how to make positive steps towards achieving their goals after graduation. For example, they cited their SLP Survey (2021-22) where 72% of students surveyed reported, they knew their career plans.

Overall, the panel judged that this feature was of outstanding quality where the provider clearly articulates the range of educational gains it intends its students, to achieve and why these are highly relevant to its mix of students and their future ambitions.

SO5: Approaches to supporting educational gains

The provider's submission outlined, various strategies it employs and some future interventions it seeks to implement, to effectively support its students to achieve educational gains. These include;

- Academic development support, through its ABL framework

- Personal development support, through its integrated learner support (ILS) package

- Work readiness support, through embedding employability activities and skills into its curriculum

- An extra-curricular employability programme with evidence of increasing uptake; and volunteering opportunities including paid internships

- Targeted university-wide interventions to improve student continuation and completion, particularly in support of protected groups (for example, the ASSIST programme for disabled and other interventions for socioeconomically impacted students):

- Post graduation mentoring and support through initiatives such as the Northampton Employment Promise.

The student submission outlined that they were supportive of the work being done by the University, including the direction of travel in terms of enhancing students' outcomes and the provider's demonstration of transparency and its willingness to listen and act on students' feedback.

Overall, the panel concluded that this is a very high quality feature where the provider effectively supports its students to achieve the educational gains articulated by the provider.

SO6: Evaluation and demonstration of educational gains

The panel noted the following evidence;

In its submission the provider identifies four measures of the educational gains that it intends for its students and acknowledges that two are well established, with two that are more recent with a single year of data:

These measures are;

1. Numbers of students moving socio-economic group following graduation, using the proxy of Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Group. The submission states that 63.4% of graduates have moved up one SOC group.

2. Whether graduates consider themselves to be: on-track in their careers; using the skills they gained and employed in meaningful activity (from the Graduate Outcomes Survey) The submission states that it has a current 72.9% GOS score and is ranked 45/189 universities.

3. CV360 quality scores – a new measure with reporting too early to show trends

4. General Self-Efficacy scores – a new measure with reporting too early to show trends.

The student submission noted that, in its 2021-22 SLP survey, 73% of respondents agreed their current activities at university were preparing them for their future careers.

Overall, the panel judged there to be sufficient evidence that this is a very high quality feature where the provider evaluates the educational gains made by its students.

Overall rating

Applying the regulatory guidance set out in RA22 and the panel members' expert judgment, the panel arrived at a rating of Silver for the student experience aspect and a Silver rating for the student outcomes aspect, the panel concluded the overall rating to be 'Silver'.

Accordingly, the panel judges that across all the available evidence the student experience and student outcomes are typically of very high quality.

In reaching this decision, the panel considered there to be evidence that the very high quality features apply to most of the provider's groups of students, including those students from a widening participation background and those from areas of multiple deprivation.

General duties

As a committee of the OfS, throughout its evaluation of the evidence provided and using its expert opinion, the panel considered the OfS's general duties set out in section 2 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA).

In this case, the panel noted how the provider, by providing quality, choice and opportunity, tailored to its locality and to the characteristics of its students, helps to ensure that its higher education provision is at the best quality for students and results in improved student experiences and outcomes. The panel judged that the provider strives to deliver higher education at high quality for the benefit of the students and employers.

General duties and public sector equality duty

The panel initially considered the OfS's approach to the consideration of the general duties and PSED set out in the 'OfS Consultation on the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF): Analysis of consultation responses and decisions' document.

Throughout its consideration of the evidence the panel paid due regard to the public sector equality duty set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This requires the OfS to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, foster good relations between different groups and take steps to advance equality of opportunity. In this respect the panel noted how the provider

provides a very high quality student experience and delivers very high quality student outcomes, in a locality where participation in higher education is relatively low and for students from areas of multiple deprivation and under-representation.