

“AdvanceHE

+ Teaching Excellence Framework 2023: Patterns of excellence

**A summary of analysis of UK Teaching Excellence
Framework 2023 submissions for senior leaders**

May 2024



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1 Introduction

This briefing is based on a qualitative thematic research project analysing a sample of provider submissions to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) assessment in 2023. Commissioned by Advance HE as a member benefit, the study was designed to better understand how providers articulated and evidenced teaching excellence. This briefing will be of interest to both senior leaders across UK institutions and also to Advance HE member institutions globally as they reflect on their own institutional strategies for teaching excellence.

The report, to be published as 'TEF 2023: Patterns of Excellence' on 5 June 2024, focuses on a sample of 40 providers. They had all achieved a Gold award in at least one of the aspects of teaching excellence as a new entrant to the TEF or as an 'improved' provider whose award had risen compared to a previous assessment. The report maps patterns across the sample and provides in-depth analysis of a subset of providers with a Gold award in all TEF categories ('Triple Golds').

The provider and student submissions to TEF 2023 are a very rich seam of information for researchers and there have already been other reports drawing on this source.¹ The Advance HE report has been produced independently of these and is intended to be complementary. It focuses exclusively on what the providers in the sample said about themselves; it does not cover student submissions or TEF Panel Statements.²

The clock is already ticking towards the next TEF in 2027 and this paper aims to provide senior teams with what they need to know about reported developments in teaching and learning across the HE sector in order to navigate their institutional contexts. A series of headlines below reflect the overarching developments within institutional policy and practice identified by the Advance HE research. These are followed by a description of the prominent trends emerging in responses to each of the 'features of excellence' represented by the TEF criteria related to the Student Experience and Student Outcomes and the findings from the analysis of the Triple Gold subset.

Although the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is a scheme specific to the United Kingdom, the underlying dimensions of practice it highlights are adaptable to a wide range of international contexts. The principles of teaching excellence, student satisfaction, and learning outcomes assessed by the TEF can be effectively applied in diverse educational environments to enhance quality and performance.

¹ Of particular note are: Wonkhe's crowd-funded overview of the TEF submissions, [TEF submissions reveal a range of conceptions of educational gain](#); Dilly Fung's two reports commissioned by the Office for Students: [Educational gains explored](#) and [Stepping up](#); the QAA's [Evaluating excellence](#): TEF 2023 Submission and Panel Statement Analysis; and Janice Kay's [analysis](#) of the TEF panel statements about educational gains.

² The detailed methodology is laid out in the main report.

We therefore encourage our international members to read the TEF report and consider its insights.

What is the TEF?

As a reminder, The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)³ was introduced in 2017 as a national scheme run by the Office for Students (OfS) that aims to encourage higher education providers to improve and deliver excellence in the areas that students care about the most: teaching, learning and achieving positive outcomes from their studies. Providers are assessed and rated for excellence above a set of minimum requirements for quality and standards.

Participating providers receive an overall rating as well as two underpinning ratings – one for the student experience and one for student outcomes. The ratings reflect the extent to which a provider delivers an excellent experience and outcomes for its mix of undergraduate students and across the range of its undergraduate courses and subjects.

Headline findings

1 Overarching strategies of teaching excellence

Across the providers, there was a prevalence of designated whole-institution strategies for teaching excellence. While varying in focus and scope, they are typically holistic and ambitious in their coverage of different aspects of the student experience and across academic and professional services, as relevant to all subject areas. Such strategies underpin the leadership of teaching excellence, from which to systematise practice, ensure consistent high quality and standards and improve student outcomes.

2 Consistency around diversity

There was a recurrent trend that providers aimed for consistency in terms of high-quality standards of practice, curriculum features and aspects of the student experience or competencies, in order to achieve teaching excellence and maximise student outcomes. Consistency was sought across contexts of notable diversity, whether of the student body, disciplines or programme types, and persistent across a range of provider types, missions, sizes and locations. The drive for consistency underpins the prevalent use of whole-institution strategies, frameworks, policies, staff processes and systems, with implementation at scale.

3 Strategic approach to managing areas of poor performance

Strategic management of performance was taken through a proactive approach to using data to inform provider-level, programme-level and individual student-level interventions, backed up by collective responsibility for performance on student outcomes. Actions to

³ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-tef/about-the-tef/>

address poor performance were underpinned by mechanisms for listening and responding to students and for sharing effective approaches across faculties and teams.

4 Adopting a strategic approach to evidence and evaluation

Providers were developing evaluation strategies (or frameworks) to systematise the collection of data, performance monitoring and collection of evidence of impact, particularly of educational gains. There was a marked tendency to be proactive rather than reactive in data collection: conducting regular pulse surveys, learner analytics or mid-module evaluation to identify emergent issues in order to tailor or target support, rather than relying entirely on retrospective end-of-module evaluation and NSS-type surveys. Ensuring that performance data was accessible to, and understood by, student-facing staff, and coordinating responsibility for responding to it were key elements of this.

5 Commonality of approach to educational gains

There was a significant level of uniformity across the providers with respect to educational gain. Having four enduring dimensions of gain – and a general recognition that they are acquired over time, are multi-dimensional and are interconnected – had a bearing on how they are conceived, approached and evaluated. There is strong alignment to existing metrics, particularly completion and progression, and use of baseline data, which underpins the synergies. However, providers have nuanced their educational gains, in particular through alignment to their particular mission and approach, and differ in the extent to which they have socialised gains among students, leading to variations in the use and ownership of educational gains.

6 Triple focus on success

Providers' focus on success was multi-faceted and future focused, going beyond developing students' success during their time in higher education to supporting their eventual success as graduates. There was a noticeable triple impact approach to success among the triple gold-rated submissions, extending a focus on supporting student success and graduate success to include preparing graduates to make a successful contribution to society.

7 Developing, recognising and rewarding student-facing staff

Providers were taking a more targeted approach to continuing professional development (CPD) in order to ensure greater consistency of teaching excellence and the allocation of resources. There was a stronger focus on institutional priorities in the reward of recognition, and recognition of all staff involved in different aspects of the student experience or in the CPD, whether delivered centrally, devolved or contracted out.

8 Greater levels of partnership with students

There was evidence of a greater level of student partnership in quality assurance and enhancement. Student engagement strategies (or frameworks) co-created with students have been developed. Increased partnership working between staff and students and the

drive to ensure greater diversity in student representation were aligned to efforts to foster a greater sense of community, to impact improved student outcomes.

9 Knowing who to target and what students need

Maximising the student experience for all students means targeted interventions because not all students are in the same boat. Targeting at group level was aligned with access and participation objectives and extended beyond targeting of academic support to include targeted extra/co-curricula activities and tailored employability support opportunities. Providers had invested in sophisticated student data systems to enable targeted approaches for individual students which joined up intelligence across teams (academic indicators and student support measures).

10 Personalisation

Personal tutoring was a key mechanism used to develop student-centred relationships and personalise support. Systems of personal tutoring were being enhanced through the development of new frameworks and codes of practice which maximised the tutor role and helped to ensure consistency, backed up by enhanced training for personal tutors, better access to resources and internal networks, and more consistent workload allocations. Some providers had used data analytics for targeted interventions via personal tutors and were making links between tutoring and other individualised aspects of the provision (such as delivery of career planning support).

2 Features of excellence by criterion

The first part of the research identified emerging themes ('patterns of excellence') in the provider submissions. The structure of the analysis reflected the TEF 2023 criteria, clustered around different priorities and activities for excellence within the student experience.

SE1-3 Teaching, learning, curriculum and pedagogy

Features of practice	Patterns identified
Strategic alignment	+ The narratives regarding teaching and learning were contextualised with reference to mission and values, which drew on differing educational traditions and linkages to industries and communities.
Curriculum design	+ Provider-wide frameworks linked curricula to key priorities including graduate outcomes, sustainable development goals, wellbeing objectives. + Employability considerations were being embedded earlier and coordinated across modules within programmes. + Planning processes were being designed to incorporate latest developments in the subject/field (drawing on professional bodies, employers). + Providers were putting efforts into generating wider and more flexible student placement opportunities.
Pedagogy	+ The narratives foregrounded pedagogical approaches that made use of technology to create an equitable learning environment. + Consideration was being given to active learning strategies and use of practice-based opportunities for students to apply learning. + Submissions detailed how they were approaching pedagogic research and evidence-based knowledge to enhance teaching strategies.
Assessment and feedback	+ Assessment strategies were being linked across units/modules within programmes, along with efforts to sequence and balance formative and summative assessments and use a variety of assessment types. + Examples were given of new procedures for managing students' assessment loads. + Assessment practices were being geared to the development of transferable and employability skills as well as academic skills. + There was a trend towards use of simulations and innovative methods of assessment that offer 'real world' opportunities for critical thinking and engagement.

	+ Online assessment and virtual feedback mechanisms were enhancing student engagement in the process.
Inclusivity	+ Major reviews of curriculum as well as ongoing enhancement activities based on shared responsibility for addressing equity gaps had been undertaken including inclusive curriculum and decolonisation initiatives linked to student engagement and teacher CPD programmes.
Research and scholarship	+ Attention was being paid to designing 'research through-lines' into the curriculum. + Providers spoke about support and funding at institutional level for student research projects and arrangements for staff-student collaborations on research and research conferences. + All types of providers, including colleges, spoke about setting intentions regarding the Research Excellence Framework (REF).
Academic support	+ A proactive approach to reaching out to students included using online methods of academic support, which had been introduced during the pandemic.
Staff CPD	+ The narratives emphasised keeping abreast of developments in the field (such as involvement in external networks) and the encouragement of sharing of pedagogical practices and innovations across teams.
Evidence	+ TEF metrics were used to demonstrate effective approaches, for example drawing on the split metrics to illustrate inclusiveness. + The narrative was supported by testimonials (from students, examiners, PSRBs, employers), survey results and module evaluations and, where available, external awards and recognition. + In some cases, providers were able to make a direct correlation between changes in curriculum design and delivery at institutional or subject/department level and improvements in student outcome measures.

SE4 Professional development of staff and academic practice

Features of practice	Patterns identified
Promotion	+ New career pathways had been introduced to full professorship in student-facing roles in institutional priority areas such as Enterprise and Innovation, Education, Pedagogy and Citizenship. + Actions were in evidence to address inequalities in staff promotion; for example, advice sessions targeting women and BAME staff. + Academic Promotion Frameworks had been revised to re-balance esteem between teaching and research.
Recognition	+ Support for recognition included via academic practice frameworks accredited by Advance HE. + Advance HE Fellowship at various levels was becoming a prerequisite for career progression; for example, for successful completion of probation and for promotion to associate and full professorship. 85% of providers in the sample mentioned Fellowships. + Support for Fellowship was being extended to professional staff in student-facing roles, in particular librarians and technicians.
Qualification to teach	+ Ensuring that academic staff had recognised teaching qualifications was a key driver of staff development for most providers and some had made the PG Certificate in Learning and Teaching/Academic Practice a contractual commitment for all new staff.
CPD	+ The submissions sought to demonstrate how working arrangements provided time for specialist staff to maintain their employment credentials. + A common trend was the increased targeting of training on strategically important areas, most notably on inclusive teaching and learning, and digital capability.
Evidence	+ In evidencing the impact of reward, recognition and training on academic practice, providers tended to use measures of student or staff satisfaction or to cite raw numbers or percentages of staff with Fellowships or completed PG Certificates and it was clear that developing more robust measures of evaluation in future was necessary.

SE5 Student support

Features of practice	Patterns identified
Strategic alignment	+ There were significant moves to coordinate different forms of student support (academic and professional) and to make them more visible and accessible, for example through a single portal.
Transition	+ Whole-provider frameworks co-created by academic and professional staff and students had been put in place to provide a cohesive approach to outreach and induction. + Support mechanisms included mentor pairing of new and existing students with shared characteristics such as ethnicity.
Academic support	+ Providers were introducing frameworks and codes of practice for personal tutors. + Examples of enhanced academic support included the use of 'success coaches' to assist those students failing or in danger of failing. + There was a trend towards the use of personalised support plans.
Wellbeing	+ There was evidence of whole-institution approaches to securing wellbeing in the social, physical and digital environment, including the appointment of Wellbeing Champions. + Providers had adopted, and were committed to adopt, the University Mental Health Charter designed by Student Minds. + New developments included the use of a 'Safezone' for all students and staff to report emergency situations.
Employability	+ Careers registration/readiness data was being used to target employability support to those in need. + New developments included the mentoring of final-year students by alumni; for example, 'coffee with a graduate' scheme. + Targeted careers support for disabled, BAME, LGBTQ+ , women and WP students had been introduced.
Evidence	+ Isolating the impact of particular interventions on student outcomes proved challenging and providers tended to rely on participant feedback, improved continuation rates and NSS scores. The exceptions tended to be where there had been investment in specific evaluation projects.

SE6 Physical and virtual learning resources

Features of practice	Patterns identified
Physical	+ The majority of providers had made significant investment in the physical learning environment, such as student centres + Student support mechanisms were being consolidated and concentrated, facilitated by capital investment. + Streamlined services were being developed to replace dispersed access points. + Providers spoke about provision of spaces for group/social and independent learning (for example, hubs, family rooms). + Library provision had been made more accessible (for example, 24/7/365 opening; increased online provision).
Virtual	+ Large-scale investment in digital infrastructure was facilitating a variety of innovations/improvements: – delivery of industry-relevant teaching and learning experiences via simulation activities – integration of student systems in the digital space such as aligning student apps, placement allocation systems and student records – learner analytics acting as a catalyst for targeted interventions with individual students, including 'push' notifications – online call centres for disengaged students.
Evidence	+ Evidence of the impact of student engagement with the physical and virtual learning resources on teaching and learning largely took the form of responses to the NSS questions and figures for student usage, for example of the library and online resources. Formal evaluations of physical and virtual resources were rare.

SE7 Student engagement in quality assurance

Features of practice	Patterns identified
Systems of student representation	+ Providers spoke about increases in the number of student posts/roles to increase the diversity of student representation and amplify the voice of minority groups and different cohorts (including part-time, apprenticeships).
Student feedback mechanisms	+ A proactive approach to collecting feedback was evident, for example using pulse surveys. + Providers were making more use of qualitative feedback routes (such as focus groups/listening rooms) and developing initiatives to make the most use of student intelligence (such as research to collate qualitative comments in the NSS). + Student-owned platforms – such as online discussion groups – were being encouraged.
Student role in quality assurance	+ There was evidence of more frequent module and programme evaluations and more regular staff-student liaison mechanisms. + Quality enhancement processes were drawing on a wider range of feedback beyond surveys, including encouraging informal feedback and use of online/apps.
Student role in quality enhancement	+ Opportunities for students to engage in partnership working and co-creation activities were increasing, including through funded student posts. + The submissions included examples of student-led development of teacher resources and CPD tools for staff.
Communication	+ The arrangements for student engagement were being formalised (variously called frameworks, charters, principles and memoranda of agreement on student engagement). + There was an emphasis on ‘closing the feedback loop’ by communicating back to students the new developments made in response to feedback.
Evidence	+ Submissions pointed to improved performance in NSS student voice results, and examples to illustrate enhancements in practices and delivery that could be directly related to student feedback. + Changes to student support based on feedback during the pandemic were commonly cited in the submissions.

SO1-3 Mitigation of student outcomes: addressing poor performance

Type of mitigation	Patterns identified
Provider-wide improvement strategy	+ Narratives regarding provider-wide improvement strategies were prevalent across the submissions. + Improvement strategies included structural changes to delivery at scale to boost retention (notably action on assessment and feedback) and graduate outcomes (notably embedding employability support).
Commitments on equity gaps	+ Providers pointed to research/scoping activities to better understand the underlying issues and the commitments they had made to future actions to address performance gaps.
Programme focused interventions	+ The submissions detailed various actions designed to improve student engagement and outcomes on poor performing programmes, including, among other things, restructuring curricula and making changes to delivery patterns. + Improvement-focused activities in poor performing areas were underpinned by the use of student intelligence and often aimed to transfer practices from high-performance programmes.
Changes to provision	+ Poor performing provision had been withdrawn or was being taught out in a handful of cases (mainly at the margins of provision or as part of departmental/school level transformation programmes).
Methodological considerations	+ Most submissions in the sample highlighted the small-scale, specialist or marginal nature of underperforming cohorts or programmes in comparison to the outcomes for the large majority of the provider's students. + The suitability of the measurements were questioned for some types of provision.
Evidence of improvement	+ Internal student success measures, module evaluation surveys and data collected as part of the ongoing programme reviews were used to evidence the impact of improvement-focused changes.

SO4 Educational gains: definitions

Features of practice	Patterns Identified
Positioning and language of educational gains	+ Providers built on sector research and institutional positioning to inform their conceptualisations of educational gains, including learning gain research or their mission, vision, values or ethos. + The terms associated with educational gain was wide-ranging and grouped into three broad categories – describing ‘what’ they are; ‘how’ they are achieved; and ‘so what’ they will help achieve.
The process of defining educational gains	+ A proportion of providers referred to how their educational gains had been defined, with input from students/student representatives, colleagues and employers. + Approaches included surveys, workshops, forums, or cross-provider working groups and ranged from identifying different perceptions and ideas to co-creating a definition to have wider relevance and ownership.
Definitions of educational gains	+ Providers universally conceived of educational gains as multi-dimensional or multi-faceted, referring to more than one gain. + Educational gains fell broadly into four inter-related dimensions across the submissions, characterised as professional (95%), personal (82%), academic (72%) and social (55%) gains. Some outcomes cut across all four dimensions and were more contextual, such as confidence or social capital. + Several change narratives were evident within submissions, with ‘personal’ and ‘academic’ gains contributing to the ‘professional’ gains or interconnecting ‘personal’ and ‘academic’ dimensions over time as a summation of curricular/non-curricular activity, across the student lifecycle or through all aspects of their student life (including school). + There was variation in how the four dimensions of educational gain were articulated, reflecting nuanced conceptions as relevant to providers’ context and student body. The dimensions are not mutually exclusive, with one provider’s description of ‘personal’ skills being another’s ‘academic’.
Relevancy to students	+ Relevancy was expressed in several ways by different providers (albeit not by all), in relation to their diverse student profile; the needs and interests of their students; the disciplines they provide; or relevancy to students’ onward progression.

SO5 Educational gains: approaches

Features of practice	Patterns identified
Strategic oversight	+ Providers commonly referred to strategies (models or frameworks) by which to systematise the achievement of educational gains, focused on employability, curriculum or enhancement. While some developed new ones for educational gains, other providers embedded gains into existing strategies. + Providers reported using governance structures (committees, academic board, senate) to approve, set indicators, monitor or drive achievement of educational gains. + Staffing-related enhancements were commonly part of the approach to achieving educational gains, including specialist recruitment, increased collaborative actions, the development of associated CPD and promotion criteria. + There was some reference to specific investments to support achievement of educational gains, in association with their Access and Participation Plan.
Curriculum	+ Educational gains had been embedded into the undergraduate curriculum within over half of the providers – whether having learning outcomes, signature pedagogy, structural changes, common content/modules, or specific interventions. + Employability and/or employer engagement was a strong theme across providers as part of their approach for achieving educational gains. This was through specific modules; entrepreneurship/enterprise schemes; work-experience; practice-based pedagogies/assessment; networking or event programmes. + There was limited reference to the use of curriculum review to embed or measure educational gains.
Co/extra-curricular activities	+ Co- or extra-curricular schemes emerged as a strong theme, with others referring to activities contributing to enrichment and achievement of gains. + A wide-ranging number of co-curricular activities were referenced as contributing to educational gains, including provision of CPD opportunities; volunteering/community engagement; enrichment programmes; networking groups or events; international experiences; competitions; clubs and societies; campaigns; or paid roles.

Student support	+ It was common for providers to refer to having one or more support schemes as part of their approach to achieving educational gains both within and outside the curriculum. + Varied support activities included targeted interventions, personal tutoring/coaching, peer-support schemes; and support for academic work; alumni; wellbeing and new entrants.
Student recognition and reward of educational gain	+ Providers commonly took steps to communicate educational gains to students, including through marketing materials; welcome activities; a charter; the programme specification; programme handbook or presentations. + Approaches for achieving educational gains were communicated, where gains were not directly referenced, including ways of developing associated competencies/skills, relevant opportunities and/or visibility of key priority areas. + Around a quarter of providers made provision for students to record and chart their own educational gains development.

SO6 Educational gains: evaluation

Features of practice	Patterns Identified
Evaluation approaches	Providers' evaluation approaches included the following features: – development of specific strategies for evaluation of educational gains – routine reporting of progress of educational gains through existing committee structures – using continuous innovation and improvement cycles for evaluating educational gains – setting targets to manage and monitor performance against educational gains – investment in data dashboards to monitor student data and track progress – regular analysis of student data against varying comparator measures. – use of benchmark data.
Evolution of evaluation methodologies	+ Providers were evolving their evaluation approach. + There was a noticeable trend to revise student surveys to better reflect their educational gains. + Providers were at different stages of advancement in terms of data collection.
Frame of reference	+ Interconnections with Access and Participation Plans and use of theories of change for measuring or evaluating educational gains. + Use of HEFCE/OfS learning gain research and measures, in particular 'value added' and 'distance travelled' measures. + Occasional reference to wider research and scholarship.
Sector-wide measures of educational gain performance	+ Providers referenced the use of a number of existing sector-level measures, due to them being externally validated, enduring and systematic data sources, including: – consistent high levels of progression across student groups to highly skilled professional employment or further study – high rates of continuation – high rates of completion and/or high award levels, as a measure of 'academic' gain. + NSS data to evidence student satisfaction with their provision for achieving educational gains, in association with more than one dimension of gain (personal, academic, and professional).

Other external data sources	+ There was a range of other external data sources, cited by small number of providers, including (among others) UK student engagement survey, REF impact case studies, prior awards, league table positioning and Ofsted.
Internal measures of educational gain performance	+ It was common for multiple measures to be used to evaluate gains and for methods to be repeated over time to evidence progress. + Evaluation measures were integrated into pre-entry, induction or welcome activities, or in advance of a learning activity, as a form of benchmark from which to demonstrate progress and support needs. + Providers commonly integrated measures of evaluation into the curriculum, particularly through module evaluation or reflective writing. + Providers referenced evaluation of specific initiatives or activities including pre- and post- activity evaluation. + Evaluation measures were primarily targeted at students, but other stakeholder groups (external examiners, PSRBs, employers and alumni) were mentioned by a few providers. + The most common evaluation measure of educational gain for students was surveys, with a range applied across the whole student lifecycle. Other methods used for students include feedback and reflection data, behavioural data, learning outcomes, research.
Measures of dimensions of educational gain	+ Varying conceptions and definitions of education gain influenced the measures used. + All four dimensions of educational gain were evaluated using a mix of self-reported (qualitative) and behavioural (quantitative) measures. + Measures of personal gain included surveys, take-up rates and reflective writing. + Measures of academic gain included value-added metrics, attainment, continuation, learner analytics, take-up rates, surveys and reflective writing. + Measures of professional gain included surveys, take-up rates, frequency, reflective writing and research. + Measures of social gain included surveys, reflective writing, take-up rates and research.
Application of educational gains	+ There were three perspectives through which success was demonstrated through educational gain, including: – Provider success: using achievement of educational gains as evidence of their own success, drawing on more generalised quality, effectiveness and/or impact data. – Disciplinary success: using a subject lens to demonstrate achievement of educational gain, drawing on discipline evidence of quality, effectiveness and/or impact.

	– Student success: using a personalised lens to demonstrate achievement of educational gains, with evidence of the effectiveness and/or impact of higher education on students.
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3 Triple Gold: reach, value and impact

The second part of the research spotlighted those who achieved three Gold ratings, as a different lens by which to interrogate the submissions and offer further insights. The analysis focused on patterns of approach, identifying commonalities in what the providers did and how they went about it that may have contributed to their success. The research focused in particular on the benefit or relevance, and how reach, value and impact was articulated. There were significant commonalities of approach to achieving teaching excellence identified and, while the sample was small, providers were diverse in size, location and mission group.

Input: blueprint for excellence

The first emerging area of commonality among those achieving a triple Gold rating was the presence of a clear **whole-institution** scheme or blueprint for achieving teaching excellence at scale across their entire undergraduate provision and ensuring a consistently high-quality experience for all students. These blueprints had four distinct dimensions.

Dimensions of practice	Features	Intent
Strategy for excellence	+ The articulation of a coherent set of outcome-based strategies/frameworks or policies offering a clear, defined and considered approach ('inputs') for achieving teaching excellence. Common features included: – coverage of values, expectations and standards – alignment to the providers' vision, mission or distinct identity – having an aspirational and future facing focus – a commitment to social justice, mobility or inclusion – articulation of value and relevancy to their students, now and in the future.	+ To drive a culture of excellence and consistent high-quality student experience. + To maximise the success and preparedness of all students including beyond HE. + To impact society including social mobility.
Pedagogy for excellence	+ The incorporation of a defined pedagogical approach, as dimensions of practice, used as foundational to the student experience enriching their learning, skills and application of knowledge. Aligned to the strategic focus, these incorporated:	+ To maximise student engagement, and/or stretch. + To widen students' learning and experiences (social, cultural, and work).

	– distinctive curricular themes – universal pedagogic methods – wider learning (research, applied learning).	+ To set high expectations and/or promote students' high aspirations. + To improve students' chance of success within/beyond HE.
Design for excellence	+ The inclusion of distinct curriculum design processes to embed both the strategic and pedagogic foci within all programmes. Also, it was common for curriculum to be: – informed by external partnerships (employers, industry, professions) – designed with students – incorporating designated curricular content, structures, experiences and forms of support.	+ To deliver up-to-date, distinct and relevant programmes. + To ensure a well-structured, coherent student experience. + To ensure programmes provide rigor and credibility. + To build students' knowledge skills and confidence. + To prepare students for onward progression and successful careers.
Professional excellence	+ Strong reference to staff processes being strategically aligned to achieve excellence. These included through: – staff recruitment and induction – targeted continuing professional development at scale – peer review, networks and external engagement opportunities – - systems for reward and recognition, including progression pathways.	+ To drive their strategic focus. + To build parity of esteem for teaching. + To recognise excellence academic practice. + To build capacity. + To encourage innovation.

Outputs: embedded continuous improvement cycles

The second common area among the triple Gold-rated providers was the prevalence of embedded and integrated data monitoring systems. There were three associated cycles of continuous improvement at student, programme and curriculum level, alongside an explicit commitment to innovation as shown below.

Dimensions of practice	Features	Intent
Continuous improvement of student success	+ Integrated systems for 'in year' monitoring of student data through: – developing and monitoring systematic and robust sources of student data – holistic, data platforms to improve access to student data – shared responsibilities and accountabilities for student data – targeted, integrated support interventions to improve student engagement, performance and outcomes.	+ To effect timely and prompt interventions for students who require additional support to achieve success. + To effect prompt adjustments to delivery practices, tailored to students' preferences, needs and/or aspirations. + To maximise academic performance and wellbeing of all students.
Continuous improvement of programme excellence	+ Integrated, robust (bi)annual assurance processes for monitoring programme quality through: – reporting processes, requiring the programme team to review, reflect and identify quality improvement actions – mechanisms to ensure peer scrutiny (including by external examiners governance) of programme performance data against quality standards, indicators or benchmarks – Systemic support interventions for programmes at risk of poor outcomes.	+ To prompt routine internal and external scrutiny and dialogue about programme effectiveness and quality improvement. + To sustain high academic standards and student outcomes.
Continuous improvement of curriculum /service excellence	+ Periodic cycle of curriculum/service review by which to: – receive constructive feedback on the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of programmes	+ To standardise the quality and/or distinctiveness of the student experience.

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	– continuously evolve, refine and/or refresh curriculum content and pedagogy – rationalise the curriculum portfolio, by reducing, refining, or introducing new programmes.	+ To increase curriculum/service attractiveness, efficiencies, and effectiveness. + To ensure that core values (such as flexibility, inclusivity, sustainability) have been upheld. + To maximise the potential for programme and student success.
Innovation for excellence	+ Explicit commitment to innovative pedagogic practice, through: – staff networking (such as webinars, conferences, learning festivals) – co-creation activity (communities of practices; learning circles) – seed funding staff/student innovative projects – reward and recognition systems.	+ To enable continuous enhancement of academic practice. + To cultivate creativity or 'engender a sense of prestige' in teaching innovation. + To motivate, inspire and/or empower colleagues. + To support and maintain high-quality academic experience and student outcomes.

Impact: a future focus and impact beyond higher education

A third commonality among the triple Gold-rated providers was a focus on success and impact into the future. There were three tiers of impact identifiable, as shown below: maximising success of their students throughout their journey in HE; their graduates deriving the greatest value from their education in their working and personal lives; and being successful in society, contributing to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the world around them.

Dimensions of practice	Features	Intent
Impact on student success	+ Maximising students' educational gains, across curricular, work-based, and co/extra-curricular experiences through: – enabling students to reach their full potential – ensuring equitable success for all students – supporting students to connect their achievements and have them recognised – having clearly defined graduate attributes and distinctiveness.	+ For students to: – have agency, self-confidence and personal insight – recognise the skills and knowledge acquired across every aspect of their student experience – articulate their distinctiveness within the workplace – apply and/or adapt their skills within a range of contexts.
Impact on graduate success	+ Harnessing the transformative impact of higher education on students as graduates through: – extending their networks – facilitating lifelong learning – engaging in knowledge exchange activities – experiential, authentic and work-based experiences – developing a global mindset.	+ For students to: – meet future workforce demands – be adaptable to the complexities and ever-changing society – continue to learn and be successful as graduates. – be socially responsible citizens – improve their life chances.
Impact on success in society	+ Preparing students to contribute and/or shape societies in future through: – developing global and/or responsible citizenship – exploring global issues associated with sustainability and inclusivity – contributing to economic stability and growth.	+ For students to: – have an impact on sustainability and social justice – be agents of change – improve local, regional, national, and global communities – make a difference to other people – safeguard future societies.

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Our strategic goals to enhance confidence and trust in HE, address inequalities, promote inclusion and advance education to meet the evolving needs of students and society, support the work of our members and the HE sector.

We deliver our support through professional development programmes and events, Fellowships, awards, student surveys and research, providing strategic change and consultancy services and through membership (including accreditation of teaching and learning, equality charters, knowledge and resources).

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