



Department  
for Business  
Innovation & Skills

Teaching Excellence Framework

Technical Consultation for Year  
Two

MAY 2016

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# Teaching Excellence Framework Technical Consultation

This consultation is of primary relevance to higher education providers, students and employers, as well as others with an interest in higher education, including representative bodies, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, and academic support organisations.

Higher education in the UK is a devolved matter. This consultation applies to higher education providers in England. At the time of writing, we are working with the Devolved Administrations who are considering whether or not providers in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland will take part in the TEF in Year Two<sup>1</sup>. The extent to which the proposals set out here will apply in these countries will therefore be made clear when Government responds to this consultation in autumn 2016.

This consultation presents detailed proposals for:

- how the TEF will assess teaching excellence;
- the criteria that will define teaching excellence;
- how judgements about excellence will be made, including the evidence base and use of core metrics;
- how TEF outcomes will be communicated.

The White Paper: *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice* outlines the development of the TEF in a high level overview across Years One to Four and covers the operation of the TEF in **Year One**.

This consultation applies to the operation of the TEF in **Year Two**, which corresponds to the academic year 2016/17, when assessment takes place and TEF outcomes are published. TEF awards made in Year Two will be primarily relevant to the decision-making of the cohort of students applying in 2017/18 for courses starting in 2018/19.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Devolved Administrations have confirmed that providers in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland will take part in the TEF in Year One.

<sup>2</sup> We recognise that not all students will follow a traditional pattern of entry and may apply for courses starting at different times during the academic year

## Introduction

1. **The White Paper: *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice* (May 2016) reiterates the Government's manifesto commitment to introduce a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The TEF will provide clear information to students about where the best provision can be found and should encourage providers to improve teaching quality to reduce variability.**
2. **UK higher education has a justly deserved global reputation for excellence. The TEF will build on the existing high standards we expect of providers, assured through the broader quality assurance system, stretching the best and placing pressure on those with variable quality to improve.**
3. **The TEF will help to drive UK productivity by ensuring a better match of graduate skills with the needs of employers and the economy. It will ensure better outcomes for all students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.**
4. **This document is a technical consultation, to be read alongside the White Paper, and puts forward detailed proposals for how the TEF will operate in Year Two.**
5. Broader arrangements for quality assurance in England will, as currently, continue to offer verification that academic quality and standards meet national expectations, while the TEF will provide an added incentive for a provider to demonstrate its excellence in teaching above the baseline.
6. The proposals have been developed with a series of principles in mind, which underpin the current and future development of the TEF. These are that the TEF will:
  - keep bureaucracy and burden to a minimum
  - be voluntary, allowing providers to consider the benefits and costs of applying before deciding whether or not they wish to
  - allow for diverse forms of excellence to be identified and recognised
  - support rather than constrain creativity and innovation
  - respect institutional autonomy
  - be based on peer assessment
  - be robust and transparent
  - result in clear judgements about excellence for students, employers and other stakeholders
  - avoid driving perverse or unintended behaviours in the pursuit of demonstrating excellence
  - be sufficiently flexible to allow for further development as the TEF evolves.

## Widening Participation and the TEF

7. The White Paper sets out how we are ensuring that our commitment to widening participation is embedded throughout the TEF. In Year Two, the principal ways in which this will be done are as follows:

- Providers wishing to apply for the TEF will be required to demonstrate their commitment to widening participation and fair access either through an Access Agreement or other means (see **Chapter 2: Eligibility and Pre-requisites**);
  - The core metrics that will inform TEF assessments will be appropriately benchmarked and also reported on separately for students from different backgrounds (see **Chapter 3a: Evidence - Metrics**), allowing assessors to take full account of how a provider is performing with respect to disadvantaged students;
  - The contextual information, which we propose should include information on student population, should enable the TEF Panel to appreciate the makeup of the student population at an individual provider when making its final judgment (see **Chapter 3a: Evidence - Metrics**);
  - A proposed criterion as part of the assessment framework specifically about outcomes for disadvantaged students will help the TEF Panel to assess the extent to which positive outcomes are achieved for students from all backgrounds (see **Chapter 1: The Assessment Framework**);
  - The extent to which all criteria are met with respect to students from diverse backgrounds, including disadvantaged students, is an embedded theme (see **Chapter 1: The Assessment Framework**); and finally
  - A potential commendation for providers showing outstanding success in supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds (see **Chapter 4: The Assessment Process**).
8. A key characteristic of high quality teaching is that it is effective in meeting the needs of a diverse student body. The suite of measures included on widening participation will ensure that the TEF considers evidence that teaching practices and the wider environment for learning are effective in supporting the experiences and outcomes achieved by all students, including in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### Development of the TEF

9. In developing these proposals for consultation, BIS considered stakeholder responses to the Green Paper consultation, including responses from students, employers and higher education providers. On the basis of that consultation, we have sought advice from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) on the design of the TEF. The full programme of work has included:
- i. analysis of responses to questions about the TEF included in the Green Paper consultation from over 600 individual respondents or responding organisations;
  - ii. roundtable discussion events with stakeholders that took place during the main consultation period;
  - iii. a review of the data sources underpinning the TEF metrics to support the development of a robust assessment process for TEF purposes, commissioned from the Office for National Statistics (ONS);

- iv. research to gather the views of applicants and graduates on teaching quality and the availability of information to help them make informed choices.<sup>3</sup>
- v. a review of the literature on indicators of quality in higher education<sup>4</sup>;
- vi. expert advisory groups comprised of representatives from a range of higher education providers and support organisations to advise on aspects of TEF development;
- vii. input from a User Group consisting of representatives from providers, students and employers;
- viii. discussion with individuals from a range of providers, higher education representative bodies, academic support organisations, employer representative bodies and student representative bodies;
- ix. focus groups with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), employers, and students;
- x. a special meeting of the TEF working group of the HEA's PVC Network (composed of Pro-Vice-Chancellors and Deputy-Vice-Chancellors with responsibility for learning and teaching) which took place in February 2016.

10. See also **Annex I: Acknowledgements**.

### Definition of terms

11. This document uses a number of technical terms which are defined in the glossary in **Annex A**.

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<sup>3</sup> Teaching Quality: Survey of Applicants and Graduates

<sup>4</sup> Teaching Quality in Higher Education: Literature Review and Qualitative Research

## Overview of the TEF in Year Two

12. The White Paper outlines the development of the TEF over Years One to Four and sets out the Government's plans for Year One. This chapter provides a brief overview of the key features for Year Two, included in the White Paper, for ease of reference. The chapters that follow present our proposals in more detail.

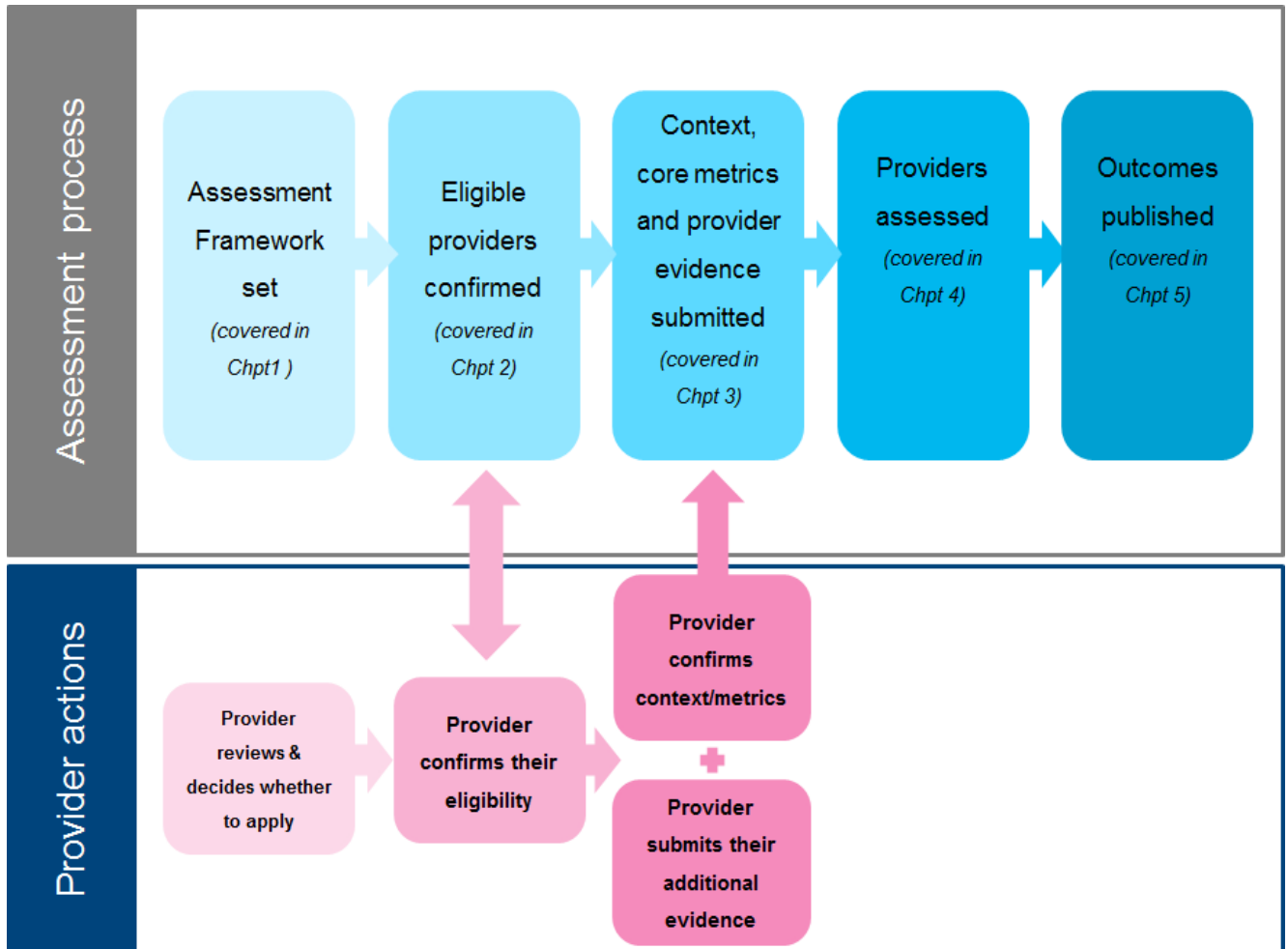
### Key features of Year Two

13. For providers, Year Two will be the first time that they could be assessed using the TEF framework and potentially receive a rating of 'Excellent' or 'Outstanding'. It will allow them to give a clear signal to students and other stakeholders about the quality of their teaching. The rating they receive will also, as highlighted in the White Paper, have financial and reputational benefits. For students and employers, the TEF in Year Two will be the first time they are able to see differentiated judgements of the teaching in different providers and to use this information to determine where the best provision can be found.
14. As set out in the Government's White Paper, in response to the views of stakeholders expressed during the Green Paper consultation, including the Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee, the Government has decided to make TEF Year Two a trial year.
15. In practice, this means that:
- We will trial assessments in Year Two on a voluntary basis but any provider who opts to apply for the TEF will – provided they meet the eligibility requirements including successfully meeting the requirements of the broader quality assurance system – be guaranteed to receive at least a rating of **'Meets Expectations'** (see **Chapter 5: Communicating TEF** which explains each of the TEF ratings).
  - We have responded to the concerns expressed by stakeholders, arguing that more time is needed to phase in greater levels of differentiation. On this basis, we have opted to introduce two additional TEF ratings for Year Two – giving three different ratings a provider could receive for the TEF (Meets Expectations, Excellent and Outstanding), rather than the four we had indicated in the Green Paper.
  - The financial incentive will not be differentiated according to higher ratings of award in Year Two, meaning all providers that achieve at least a rating of Meets Expectations will receive the full inflationary uplift to fees.
  - As part of trialling the TEF in Year Two, we also plan to conduct a lessons-learned exercise at the end of Year Two, feeding any necessary changes into the implementation of the TEF in Year Three.
16. Year Two of the TEF will be delivered by HEFCE, working with the QAA, on behalf of the Government. Reference in this document to 'delivery agencies' should be taken to mean HEFCE and QAA.



17. The Assessment Process for Year Two is summarised in Figure 1 below. The boxes along the top outline each stage in the process and provide a reference to the relevant chapters of this document. The boxes along the bottom identify key actions for providers. Key dates that providers should be aware of are in **Annex B**.

**Figure 1: A summary of the Assessment Process for Year Two**



## 1. The Assessment Framework

18. **While there may be agreement on certain aspects of what makes a high quality student academic experience, there is considerable diversity both within and between different providers. This diversity is key to ensuring the health and vitality of academic disciplines and to meeting the needs of a diverse student population - and is to be celebrated.**
19. As noted by respondents to the Green Paper, a narrow definition of teaching excellence would be unlikely to capture all relevant aspects. As such, we have designed an assessment framework that seeks to enable various forms of teaching and learning excellence to be identified. Assessment will be made against a set of common criteria, covering different aspects of teaching and learning. Assessment will be holistic, based on both core metrics and additional evidence, and carried out by peer review panels comprised of experts in teaching and learning and student representatives.
20. Reflecting the fact that in order to enter TEF a provider must first be meeting the high baseline standards for quality in the sector, the TEF will not be looking for evidence of the fundamental quality expectations and processes that are assessed during the QA process. Panel members will carry out their assessment with the assurance that these are in place and will instead focus on identifying evidence of excellence above the baseline. This will ensure that QA and TEF work as a single system and minimise the bureaucracy for the sector.
21. Reflecting the diversity of the sector, the Government expects that it will be possible to demonstrate excellence across a wide range of teaching styles and approaches to delivery. The TEF will not constrain creativity and innovation by imposing a one-size-fits-all definition of teaching excellence.
22. This chapter sets out the proposed framework, which balances the need for robust and transparent assessment, while at the same time avoiding introducing unnecessary burden and bureaucracy. The chapters that follow outline proposals for the evidence base for assessment in more detail and the assessment process itself.

### Summary of the framework

23. **Figure 2** provides a conceptual model of the assessment framework. In the text that follows we define each of the aspects and the proposed criteria.

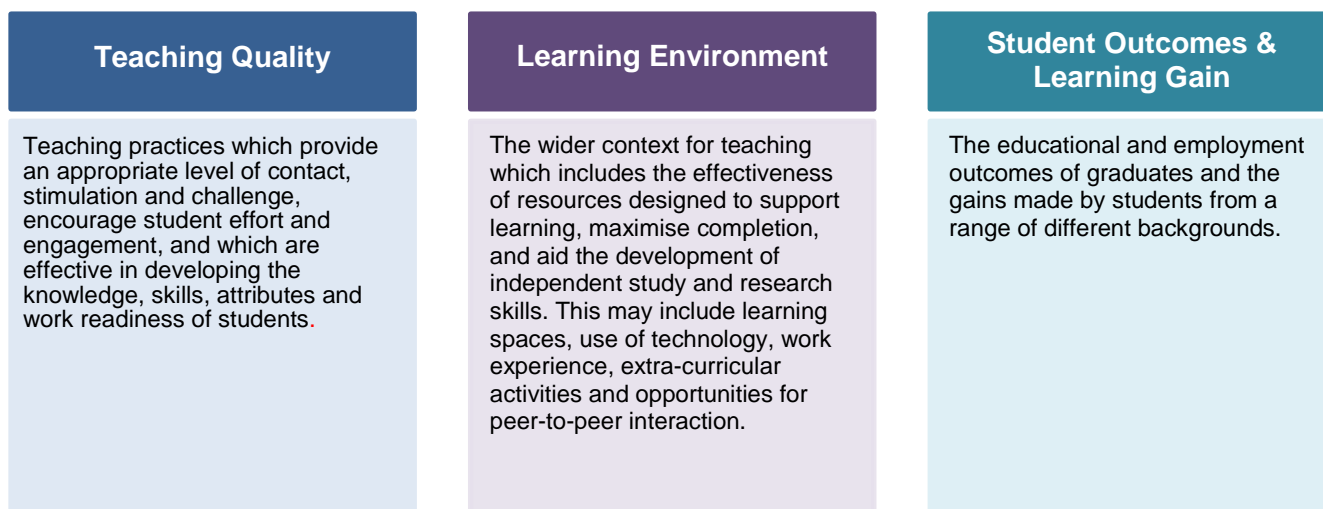
## 24. Figure 2: The assessment framework – conceptual model

<b>Aspect of quality</b> <i>Areas of teaching and learning quality</i>	<b>Teaching Quality</b>	<b>Learning Environment</b>	<b>Student Outcomes and Learning Gain</b>
<b>Criteria</b> <i>Statements that identify what assessors will be looking for</i>	Teaching Quality criteria	Learning Environment criteria	Student Outcomes and Learning Gain criteria
<b>Evidence</b> <i>The evidence base that will be used to form a judgement against the criteria, made up of core metrics and additional evidence</i>	<b>Core metrics</b>		
	National Student Survey (Q 1-4 – teaching on course; Q 5-9 – assessment and feedback)	National Student Survey (Q 10-12 – academic support) Non-continuation (HESA)	Employment/destination (DLHE) Potential highly-skilled jobs metric
	<b>Additional evidence (provider submission)</b>		
<b>Statement of findings</b> <i>Description of performance in each aspect</i>	<b>Teaching Quality statement of findings</b>	<b>Learning Environment statement of findings</b>	<b>Student Outcomes and Learning Gain statement of findings</b>
	<b>Possible Commendations</b>		
<b>Overall outcome</b> <i>TEF rating</i>	<b>TEF Rating</b>		

### Aspects of quality

25. Teaching quality is best considered in the context of student's learning. The outcomes of a student's learning are determined not only by the quality of teaching they experience but also by the additional support for learning that is available and what the students themselves put into their studies, supported and facilitated by the provider.
26. The Green Paper proposed that the TEF would consider teaching and learning excellence across three main aspects: Teaching Quality, Learning Environment, and Student Outcomes and Learning Gain. These three aspects met with broad support and form the starting point for the assessment framework presented in this chapter (Figure 2 above).
27. The aspects are defined in Figure 3 and further expanded in the text.

## 28. Figure 3: Defining aspects of quality



29. The TEF conceives of teaching broadly, which means that the **teaching quality** aspect includes a variety of different forms that can involve teachers and academic support staff. This includes, but is not limited to: seminars, tutorials, project time, laboratory sessions, studio time, placements, supervised on-line learning, workshops, fieldwork and site visits. The effectiveness of course design and assessment and feedback are also considered under this aspect.
30. The **wider environment** for learning will include the effectiveness of resources such as libraries, laboratories or design studios, work experience, opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction and extra-curricular activities. It also considers the extent to which beneficial linkages are made for students between teaching and learning, and scholarship, research or professional practice (one or more of these).
31. **Positive outcomes** may include successfully meeting the requirements of a chosen qualification, acquisition of attributes such as lifelong learning skills and others that allow a graduate to make a strong contribution to society, economy and the environment, progression to further study, acquisition of knowledge, skills and experience necessary to compete for a graduate level job and successfully securing graduate-level employment. As new measures of learning gain become available, we anticipate that these will also feed into the TEF in future years<sup>5</sup>.
32. Supporting the development, progression and attainment of students from disadvantaged backgrounds is a mark of effectiveness and therefore a key focus of the TEF. Assessment will therefore look in particular at how the needs of disadvantaged students are met through teaching and the wider environment for learning and how effective a provider is at achieving the best outcomes for all students, including identifying and addressing any differences in the outcomes achieved by specific groups.

<sup>5</sup> HEFCE learning gain pilots. Available at: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/lg/>

## Assessment criteria

33. The criteria we propose should form the basis of the assessment across the three main aspects of quality are in **Figure 4**. The table includes an indication of what a TEF assessor<sup>6</sup> may be looking for as evidence that the criteria have been met but the evidence base is covered in greater detail in **Chapter 3**.
34. The proposed criteria are intended to capture excellence in teaching and learning over and above good practice demonstrated through broader quality assurance arrangements. They have been designed to allow assessors to make a clear judgement based on core metrics and additional evidence put forward by a provider (see **Chapter 3: Evidence**).
35. Whatever the final form of the criteria, we are clear that we want assessment to:
- Look at the extent to which the criteria apply across **all modes of delivery**, creating conditions for a high-quality experience and high-quality outcomes for all students irrespective of whether they are studying full-time, part-time, at a distance, in the workplace, or any combination of methods.
  - Focus across the criteria on **how effective a provider is at meeting the needs of students from different backgrounds**, including monitoring and addressing any gaps in the development, attainment and progression of disadvantaged students.
36. **Figure 4: TEF assessment criteria**

Aspect	Criteria	Comments (to be reflected in Panel member guidance)
	<b>The extent to which...</b>	
Teaching Quality	Teaching provides effective stimulation and challenge and encourages students to engage	Panel members will be looking for evidence that students report high levels of satisfaction with teaching and are sufficiently challenged and engaged.  Evidence might include results of student satisfaction and engagement surveys (beyond the core metrics), collection and use of students' feedback, and teaching observation schemes. How effectively a provider uses innovative or creative approaches could also be a feature.
	Institutional culture recognises and rewards excellent teaching	Panel members will be looking for evidence that the leadership, strategy and ethos promotes and values teaching excellence.  Evidence might include initial and continuing professional development for teaching and academic support staff, reward and

<sup>6</sup> The terms 'Panel member' and 'assessor' are used interchangeably in this document but the exact role of the TEF Panel and TEF assessors is defined in Figure 8 in Chapter 4: The Assessment Process.

Aspect	Criteria The extent to which...	Comments (to be reflected in Panel member guidance)
		recognition, promotion and progression opportunities, and the level of experience and contractual status of staff involved in teaching.
	Course design, development, standards and assessment are effective in stretching students to develop knowledge, skills and attributes that reflect their full potential	<p>Panel members will be looking for evidence that course design and development presents a sufficient degree of challenge and allows for the development of knowledge, skills and attributes at a high level.</p> <p>Evidence might include results of student satisfaction surveys (beyond the core metrics), feedback from external examiners and professional accreditation. It may also include evidence of appropriate levels of contact time and independent study, and weighted measures of teaching class size, as well as how the institution is monitoring and, where appropriate, addressing grade inflation.</p>
	Assessment and feedback are used effectively in supporting students' development, progression and attainment	<p>Panel members will be looking for evidence that all students receive feedback on assessed work which is effective in enhancing their learning.</p> <p>Evidence may include the impact and effectiveness of assessment and feedback practices on students' progression and attainment, which is likely to reflect factors such as timeliness and accessibility.</p>

Aspect	Criteria The extent to which...	Comments (to be reflected in Panel member guidance)
<b>Learning Environment</b>	The effectiveness of resources designed to support students' learning and aid the development of independent study and research skills	<p>Panel members will be looking for evidence that resources (both physical and virtual, and in-curricular and extra-curricular) are effective in supporting students' learning.</p> <p>Evidence may include use of student feedback to identify initiatives and interventions that have been found to be effective and student feedback on the quality of the facilities (both virtual and physical).</p>
	The learning environment is enriched by linkages between teaching and scholarship, research or professional practice	<p>Panel members will be looking for evidence that the provider identifies and makes use of links between teaching and scholarship, research or professional practice (one or more) in a way that impacts positively on students' academic experiences.</p> <p>Evidence may include course validation and review that reflects the latest developments in one or more of the domains identified, use of external consultants from business, industry or the professions, work placements or work experience, involvement of staff who teach in research, scholarship or professional practice, and involvement of students in real research projects.</p>
	Students' academic experiences are tailored to the individual, maximising rates of retention	<p>Panel members will be looking for evidence that the environment and support provided allows all students to feel that their individual learning needs are recognised, understood and met, reflected in rates of retention. This may be characterised by mutually beneficial interaction between students and teaching or academic support staff.</p> <p>Evidence may include effective use of academic induction, individualised feedback on assessed work, opportunities for student to student interaction, use of learner analytics, and use of personal development planning.</p>

Aspect	Criteria The extent to which...	Comments (to be reflected in Panel member guidance)
<b>Student Outcomes and Learning Gain</b>	Students achieve their educational and professional goals, including progression to further study or employment	<p>Panel members will be looking for evidence that graduates are equipped with the sorts of knowledge, skills and attributes that allow them to progress successfully to further study or employment (particularly highly skilled employment).</p> <p>Evidence is likely to include employment outcomes and progression to further study.</p>
	Students acquire knowledge, skills and attributes that prepare them for their personal and professional lives	<p>Panel members will be looking for evidence of broader educational and professional outcomes.</p> <p>Evidence may include input measures such as employer engagement in the curriculum, course accreditation by professional regulatory or statutory bodies and extra-curricular activities designed to enhance employability and transferable skills. Evidence may also include the impact of using methods such as Grade Point Average (GPA) to record students' achievement.</p>
	Positive outcomes are achieved for students from all backgrounds, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who are at greater risk of not achieving positive outcomes	<p>Panel members will be looking for evidence that the provider actively monitors and addresses differences between different groups of students in their development, attainment and progression.</p> <p>Evidence may include approaches and interventions that have been shown to be effective at maximising outcomes for all students and tackling evidence of any differential outcomes.</p>

**Q1: Do you agree with the criteria proposed in Figure 4? Please outline your reasons and suggest any alternatives or additions. Question 8 asks about the type of evidence that will be used to assess the criteria so please put forward your comments on the evidence base in response to that question.**



## 2. Eligibility and Pre-requisites

37. **The White Paper presents the scope of the TEF and the requirements that need to be met in order for a provider to take part.**
38. **This section highlights the particular eligibility requirements for Year Two, for ease of reference.**
39. The TEF is intended to be open to as many higher education providers as possible in order to realise its objectives of providing information for students on teaching quality to inform their choices around what, where and how to study.
40. The eligibility requirements also reflect our ambition to integrate a commitment to widening participation, and that the TEF should build on quality and standards assured through broader arrangements, providing the first rating in the new framework.

### Level of provision

41. In Year Two, all providers that deliver undergraduate provision, including at levels 4 and 5<sup>7</sup> will be eligible for the TEF provided they meet the additional requirements below. As set out in the White Paper, we will not be assessing postgraduate provision in the second year of the TEF, therefore all providers that offer solely postgraduate awards will not be eligible to receive a TEF rating.

### Meeting the requirements of the broader quality assurance system

42. A provider must meet the quality requirements set out in **Annex A** of the White Paper before it can apply to be assessed for a higher TEF rating in Year Two. As noted in the Annex, we will confirm the cut-off date for eligibility for Year Two in the Government's response to the Technical Consultation in the Autumn.

### Commitment to widening participation and fair access

43. To participate in the TEF, a provider will need to demonstrate its commitment to widening participation and fair access. Providers with existing Access Agreement will be able to submit these as proof of their commitment, as we do not wish the TEF to duplicate existing access arrangements.
44. A provider without an Access Agreement that wishes to take part in the TEF must demonstrate what it is doing to widen participation into higher education through submitting a statement capturing its activity in this area. The TEF provider application guidance will provide further detail on the access statements and what they could contain. Alongside this statement, a provider will be expected to publish data on application, acceptance and progression rates of students broken down by gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background.

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<sup>7</sup> Of the current Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Available at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2843>

45. The alternative access statements, as with existing Access Agreements, will be published but the alternative access statements will not require approval by the Director of Fair Access.

### Suitable metrics

46. Given the key role that core metrics have in informing TEF assessments, providers will not be able to apply for a TEF rating higher than Meets Expectations if they do not have a **minimum set of reportable metrics** (reportable metrics are defined in **Chapter 3a: Evidence – Metrics**).
47. The minimum set of metrics are at least one reportable metric for each of the three areas from which core metrics are derived (student satisfaction, non-continuation and employment/destinations).
48. We propose in **Chapter 4: The Assessment Process** that where a provider does not have the full three years of data for any of the metrics, the duration of the TEF award will be reduced to reflect the number of complete years of data they can provide (i.e. if the provider only has one year of complete data, then it will receive an award that is valid for one year and if it has two years of complete data, it will receive an award that is valid for two years) and they will need to reapply if they wish to maintain their award.
49. We recognise that this means that some providers, including a substantial number of Alternative Providers and some Further Education Colleges will be unable to apply in Year Two for higher ratings. However, we think it is important to ensure that assessments take into account common factors via the core metrics in order to enable comparable judgments to be made.
50. Providers that opt to apply to the TEF, who meet the eligibility requirements for a rating of Meets Expectations but are unable to demonstrate suitable metrics and therefore apply for a higher rating, will receive a rating of Meets Expectations with an acknowledgement that they are unable to apply for higher TEF ratings on procedural grounds.
51. This reflects that they will have met the eligibility criteria, including demonstrating a valid quality assurance review but are unable to apply to be assessed for a higher rating. A rating of Meets Expectations on procedural grounds mitigates the reputational impact that this may have on some providers.
52. Finally, to minimise burdens at the outset, we do not intend to include a demonstration of compliance with Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance on student information as a pre-requisite for Year Two. We have set out further detail on our expectations about future CMA compliance in Year Three onwards in the White Paper.

### 3a. Evidence – Metrics

53. The TEF will draw on currently available, nationally collected data, to provide assessors with a common set of metrics that relate to each of the aspects of teaching excellence. These metrics will be considered by assessors alongside the evidence contained in a provider submission (see Chapter 3b: Evidence – provider submission) to inform their judgements.
54. For Year Two, the core metrics will be:
- Student views on ‘The teaching on my course’, ‘Assessment and feedback’, and ‘Academic support’ (drawn from the NSS);
  - Non-continuation rates (drawn from HESA and the Individualised Learner Record (ILR));
  - Rates of employment or further study, six months after graduation (drawn from the DLHE).
55. We have noted in the White Paper that, in collaboration with HEFCE, we will be doing further development work on the metrics for Year Three onwards, including developing a methodology to measure teaching intensity and incorporating the Longitudinal Education Outcomes dataset<sup>8</sup> with a view to trialling its inclusion in the disciplinary pilots in Year Three. All development for TEF Year Three is out of scope for this consultation.
56. We think the metrics should:
- Be benchmarked to take account of differences in student characteristics and the mixture of subjects taught at different providers.
  - Cover a three year period, be reported separately for full-time and part-time students at each provider, and differences between key student groups within the provider should also be reported.
57. This section identifies how the metrics will be defined and benchmarked, and how they would be generated and reported to the assessors. The way in which assessors use the metrics alongside other evidence in making judgements is addressed in **Chapter 4: The Assessment Process**.
58. In developing proposals for the metrics, we have considered advice and analysis from HEFCE, and drawn on the approach used in the production of the UK Performance Indicators (UK PIs) by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)<sup>9</sup>. The UK PIs are well established, have been developed and refined over many years, and are broadly accepted by the sector as robust. Any proposals that diverge from the UK PI approach are made specifically to ensure the metrics are fit for the particular purpose of the TEF. A

<sup>8</sup> The Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act (2015) enables the government, for the first time, to link all education and tax data to better chart the transition of learners from school, further education and higher education into employment. A Longitudinal Education Outcomes dataset is being developed making use of information held by BIS, DfE, DWP and HMRC. See section 78 of the Act, available at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/26/contents/enacted/data.htm>

<sup>9</sup> Background on UK PIs is available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis>

summary of the similarities and differences between the UK PIs and the TEF metrics is at **Annex C**.

59. The Department commissioned the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to provide an independent and expert assessment of the quality and robustness of the sources of information we are proposing to use in the TEF assessment process from Year Two onwards<sup>10</sup>. The ONS looked at the NSS, the DLHE and HESA's student record data.
60. The Government would like to thank the ONS for its work and welcomes its recommendations. These will be considered in the context of the Government's commitment to continuous improvement of the TEF assessment process, including making best use of relevant evidence and data as these develop and improve over time. In particular, it will consider these in the context of ongoing technical reviews into both the DLHE<sup>11</sup> and the NSS<sup>12</sup>.
61. A key recommendation for the TEF is that statistical techniques should be developed to take account of the possibility that non-respondents may possess different characteristics to respondents. HEFCE and HESA have agreed to develop their methodology to include non-response weighting for TEF Year Three assessments. Waiting for the outcome of these reviews and their consultation process would allow the TEF metrics to develop along the same lines as other uses of the survey data. Given that the NSS and DLHE have high response rates (71%<sup>13</sup> and 79%<sup>14</sup>) and that the 2015-16 data collection is already underway, we intend to use the current measures for Year Two. This is consistent with our Year Two approach of proposing to use the current UKPI measures as far as possible. All providers will have the opportunity to review their metrics before assessment begins.
62. The Government will also work with HESA, HEFCE and the ONS to review the benchmarking approach taken within the TEF assessment process to ensure that it remains robust as TEF develops and the data sources it uses evolve.

### Defining the metrics

63. Definitions for each of the metrics are below. Each metric will comprise:
  - i. The **indicator** (the percentage achieved by the provider).
  - ii. A **benchmark** (the sector average of the indicator, adjusted to take account of the particular subject mix and student characteristics of the provider).
  - iii. A **flag** to show whether the difference between the indicator and the benchmark is significant (to allow further differentiation, a measure of that difference will be included).

<sup>10</sup> Teaching Excellence Framework: Review of Data Sources (interim report)

<sup>11</sup> DLHE review available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/3041/209/>

<sup>12</sup> NSS review available at: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/it/nss/future/>

<sup>13</sup> NSS 2015 overview available at: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/it/nss>

<sup>14</sup> DLHE 2013/14 overview available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/sfr217>

## Student satisfaction with teaching and learning

64. Through the NSS, final year undergraduate students provide feedback on various aspects of their courses. For the TEF, we intend to construct metrics from those groups of NSS questions ('scales') which relate most directly to the quality of teaching and learning. These are:
- i. **The teaching on my course** (NSS questions 1-4)
  - ii. **Assessment and feedback** (NSS questions 5-9)
  - iii. **Academic support** (NSS questions 10-12)
65. For each of the three scales, **the metric will indicate the extent to which each student agrees<sup>15</sup> with the statements in that scale, averaged across all students at the provider.**
66. We do not intend to use learning resources (NSS questions 16-18) as these questions are currently under review and, in their current form, the direct relationship to the aspects of quality within the TEF assessment framework (**Chapter 1: The Assessment Framework**) appears weaker. Providers will, if they wish to, have an opportunity to present evidence as to the impact of their learning resources and facilities as part of the provider submission (**Chapter 3b: Evidence – provider submission**).

## Non-continuation

67. We intend to use the definition of non-continuation used in the UK PIs<sup>16</sup>. This considers students who start their course in a particular year and indicates **the percentage that are no longer in higher education (whether at the same or a different provider) one year later (for full-time students) or two years later (for part-time students)**. The duration for both full and part time students means that they have had the opportunity to undertake a material part of their provision.
68. We recognise that the ability to switch course part-way through, within the same or a different provider, is important to student choice. As set out in the White Paper, we are launching a call for evidence on credit transfer, which can play an important part in supporting students to switch course. In assessing retention rates, the TEF will not disadvantage providers whose students have left part-way through a course to continue their studies elsewhere. Students who leave part-way through their course to study at a different provider are not counted as dropping out provided they begin their new course the following year after leaving (for full-time students) or in either of the following two years after leaving (for part-time students).

## Employment/destinations

69. We intend to use an adapted version of the UK PI employment indicator which **measures the proportion of the provider's graduates who are working or studying (or both) six months after graduation<sup>17</sup>, as a percentage of all graduates**. This covers a wide range of positive outcomes, including those who are self-employed, freelancing or doing

<sup>15</sup> 'Agree' means a response of either 'mostly agree' or 'definitely agree' on a 5-point Likert scale.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/noncontech>

<sup>17</sup> We are not proposing to use the longer term DLHE measure, taken at 40 months, as it is a relatively small sample reported at national level and not designed to be representative of any specific provider.

unpaid or voluntary work. It differs from the UK PI definition in that it includes in the denominator those who are retired, in ill health, looking after the home or family, or taking time out to travel or similar. The proposed definition thus indicates the level of employment or further study across the whole cohort, which is consistent with the internationally agreed definition used in official measures of employment<sup>18</sup>.

70. We recognise that, while the current employment indicator has value as a broad measure of outcomes, it does not fully capture whether or not that employment utilises the skills gained through higher education. Therefore we are considering an additional metric that measures the proportion of graduates who are studying or working in highly skilled employment and are consulting here on how we might define and use this measure.
71. Having explored a number of options for defining highly skilled employment, we propose using the ONS Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) groups 1-3<sup>19</sup>, as used by HEFCE and HESA and published in UniStats. Since research<sup>20</sup> suggests that not all occupations contained within SOC groups 1 and 3 are necessarily high value 'graduate jobs', we considered using a more refined measure. But as there is no universally accepted list of such jobs, we believe that using an easily interpreted, widely used and readily available definition may be the most suitable approach.
72. While in principle a measure of highly skilled employment is one of the principal outcomes on which teaching excellence should be assessed, we acknowledge a number of difficulties inherent in the highly skilled job metric. At present, occupation can only be measured six months after graduation through the DLHE survey. This may distort results if students with particular characteristics take longer to transition into long-term career occupations than others, and these characteristics are not taken account of in the benchmarks. Furthermore, analysis of the proposed metric suggests that the distribution of providers' performance based on this measure differs from some of the other metrics. This may be a valid reflection of teaching quality or it may be driven by the presence of other factors not accounted for in the benchmarks, such as the provider's reputation and location.
73. We will continue to explore these issues during the consultation period, reflecting on the responses to this consultation, in order to inform a final decision on whether or not a highly skilled employment measure should be included as one of the TEF metrics for Year Two.
74. At the same time, we are exploring options for developing a better measure of higher skilled employment for use in TEF Year Three and future years. This is likely to take into

<sup>18</sup> ONS Employment rates with definitions

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes>

<sup>19</sup> ONS Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Hierarchy. Available

at: [http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/dev3/ONS\\_SOC\\_hierarchy\\_view.html](http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/dev3/ONS_SOC_hierarchy_view.html)

<sup>20</sup> Green, F. and Henseke, G., 2014. The changing graduate labour market: Analysis using a new indication of graduate jobs. LLAKES Research Paper, 50. Available at:

<http://www.llakes.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/50.-Green-and-Henseke.pdf> and Purcell, K. and Elias, P. 2013. Classifying graduate occupations for the knowledge society. Available at:

[https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/futuretrack/findings/elias\\_purcell\\_soche\\_final.pdf](https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/futuretrack/findings/elias_purcell_soche_final.pdf)



account any outcomes from the 2016 ONS review of the SOC as well as the development of the Longitudinal Education Outcomes dataset, which will provide us with a greater understanding of student's employment outcomes.

**Q2:**

**A) How should we include a highly skilled employment metric as part of the TEF?**

**B) If included as a core metric, should we adopt employment in Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) groups 1-3 as a measure of graduates entering highly skilled jobs?**

**C) Do you agree with our proposal to include all graduates in the calculation of the employment/destination metrics?**

**Please outline your reasons and suggest any alternatives.**

## Benchmarking

75. The quality of teaching is not the only factor that affects how satisfied students are and rates of non-continuation, and employment/destination. We need to take account of other factors that have an effect but which are not under the control of a provider, specifically students' characteristics and the subjects they study. We believe this is best accomplished through the use of benchmarks. Benchmarks take the sector average for a particular indicator and adjust it for each provider to account for the differing proportions of students with certain characteristics (including subject studied) at each provider.<sup>21</sup>
76. The method of benchmarking in the UK PIs is well-established, having identified the key factors that affect performance and developed a methodology for taking them into account.
77. **Figure 5** summarises the factors we propose to use in benchmarking the TEF metrics. The factors are the same as those used in the UKPI benchmarks; a factor has been excluded if it is considered that the provider should be taking action to overcome the differentiation (for example, POLAR quintiles<sup>22</sup> are not taken into account). HESA is currently chairing a review<sup>23</sup> of these benchmarks.
78. **Figure 5: Factors that will be used in benchmarking TEF metric**

Factor	Student satisfaction	Non-continuation	Employment/destinations <sup>24</sup>
Subject of study	✓	✓	✓
Entry qualifications		✓	✓
Age on entry	✓	✓	✓

<sup>21</sup> For a fuller explanation see [www.hesa.ac.uk/pjs/benchmarks](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/pjs/benchmarks).

<sup>22</sup> POLAR (the Participation of Local Areas classification) looks at how likely young people are to participate in higher education across the UK and shows how this varies by area. For further information see <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/POLAR/>

<sup>23</sup> UKPISG review [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2015/CL\\_172015/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2015/CL_172015/)

<sup>24</sup> There is not currently a separate benchmark set for the highly skilled jobs metric. We propose applying the factors currently used for the employment/destinations metric.

Factor	Student satisfaction	Non-continuation	Employment/destinations <sup>24</sup>
Ethnicity	✓		✓
Sex	✓		✓
Disability	✓		

### Significance flags

79. To assist TEF assessors, where there is a significant difference between an indicator and the benchmark, this will be **flagged**. We propose that significant variation from the benchmark should require the difference between an indicator and the benchmark to be statistically significant (to 2 standard deviations<sup>25</sup>) and to be at least 2 percentage points. This will allow TEF assessors to see readily where performance is significantly and materially above or below what might be expected. This will provide greater differentiation between providers than the UK PI approach, which uses 3 standard deviations and 3 percentage points, whilst still retaining an appropriate level of statistical rigour.
80. We recognise that this is a different approach to that used in the UK PIs. However, adopting the proposed threshold will provide greater differentiation between providers: our preliminary analyses indicate that the number of significance flags generated will almost double, whilst the likelihood of a false flag (i.e. a difference exceeding the thresholds purely as a result of random variation) will increase - but to no more than 5% for any individual metric. Given that assessors will not be making a judgement based on metrics alone, but will also be considering additional evidence submitted by the provider, we consider that this approach retains an appropriate level of statistical rigour, and that the substantial advantage in identifying additional areas of significant and material difference between providers outweighs the disadvantage of accepting a small number of false flags. The data provided to assessors will also show the z-score (which is the actual measure of standard deviations from the expected level), which enables extra caution when considering scores that are close to the threshold.

#### Q3:

**A) Do you agree with the proposed approach for setting benchmarks?**

**B) Do you agree with the proposed approach for flagging significant differences between indicator and benchmark (where differences exceed 2 standard deviations and 2 percentage points)?**

**Please outline your reasons if you disagree.**

<sup>25</sup> We are proposing to use 1.96 standard deviations, which we round to 2 in this description.



## Coverage and timescales

81. For all the metrics we want to include, as far as practicable, all undergraduate students that are taught by the provider.<sup>26</sup> In order to recognise the importance of the environment within which the teaching occurs this would mean that students registered at one provider but taught at another would not contribute to the metrics of the registering institution. For the reasons outlined in **Annex C**, there would be some exceptions to this, which are consistent with the coverage of the UK PIs:
- The non-continuation and employment/destination metrics would include only UK domiciled students.
  - The non-continuation metric for part-time students would include only those on ‘high intensity’<sup>27</sup> first degree level programmes.
82. In developing the proposals, we considered whether the metrics should be reported on an annual basis (as in the UK PIs) or averaged over multiple years. There are clear advantages to using multiple years’ data. This reduces the number of student cohorts that are too small to report on, increases the statistical significance of variances from the benchmarks and provides a more stable view of the provider’s performance over a period of time than would a single year’s data. We therefore propose that metrics will be averaged over the **last three years of** available data.
83. In addition to the three year averages, we propose to report the flags for individual years within the period. This will provide further granularity to assessors where scores are close to the margins but the direction of any changes over time will not itself form the basis of the assessment, rather performance based on the three-year average.
84. **Annex C** includes further details of the advantages of averaging over three years, and indicates which cohorts will be covered by each of the metrics
85. We propose in **Chapter 4: The Assessment Process** that where a provider does not have the full three years data for any of the metrics, the duration of the TEF award will be reduced (**Question 11**).
86. All metrics used in TEF will be subject to appropriate reporting thresholds and minimum coverage checks to ensure data are statistically robust and meet data protection standards.

**Q4: Do you agree that TEF metrics should be averaged over the most recent three years of available data? Please outline your reasons and suggest alternatives.**

<sup>26</sup> The UK PIs include all students that are registered at, rather than taught by the provider.

<sup>27</sup> For the purpose of the non-continuation indicators, part-time entrants only includes those students whose intensity of study in their first year is at least 30 per cent of a full-time student. Part-time entrants are not included in the calculations if they leave the programme of study within 50 days of commencement. See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/noncontech> for further details.

## Taking account of the diversity of students

87. For each provider, there should be separate metrics for their full-time and part-time students. Within each of these groups, metrics covering all undergraduate students at a provider may mask differences between student groups which would be of interest to the TEF assessors. We propose that in addition to the metrics covering all full-time and all part-time undergraduate students, the metrics should be broken down or 'split' by key student characteristics and types of provision. This is intended to help the assessors understand what contributes to the overall metric, and to take account of any significant differences in the quality of teaching and learning experienced by different student groups within the provider. Each of the splits will be benchmarked against other students in the sector with the same characteristics.
88. In 'splitting' the metrics, we aim to strike a balance between highlighting important differences, and maintaining large enough student cohorts to produce robust metrics. To achieve this balance, we propose that the full-time and part-time metrics will each be split by the following:
- **Level of study:** split between first degree and other undergraduate qualifications
  - **Age:** split between young and mature students
  - **Participation groups:** split between POLAR quintiles 1-2 and POLAR quintiles 3-5
  - **Disability:** split between students who have and have not declared a disability
  - **Ethnicity:** split between students with a white background and a Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) background. In addition, where there are significant differences (i.e. different flags) within the BME group, these will also be reported
  - **Domicile** (for the NSS-based metrics only): split between UK; other EU; and non-EU students.
89. **Annex C** provides some further information about the splits and the level of detail to be reported to the assessors.

**Q5: Do you agree the metrics should be split by the characteristics proposed above? Please outline your reasons and suggest alternatives.**

## Generating and reporting the metrics

90. Before formally submitting their application, providers will have the opportunity to review their metrics (see **Annex B** for key dates). Where there is evidence of significant inaccuracy in the data, providers should request amendments to particular metrics, to be resolved with HEFCE during the application window.<sup>28</sup>
91. At the end of the application window (and after any necessary amendments have been made), HEFCE will generate the final metrics for the TEF assessors, in a standard format.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> To support the process of quality assuring the metrics, HEFCE will – during this current consultation – also make available to providers a set of metrics based on the consultation proposals. This will allow providers to make an early start in understanding how the proposed metrics would be constructed and identify any potential data quality issues.

<sup>29</sup> There is a mock-up of the information that will be provided to the Panel in **Annex C**.

## Contextual information to support TEF assessments

92. Assessors will be supplied with contextual information on each provider, to aid the interpretation of common metrics. The contextual information that we propose will be used to support TEF assessments is in **Table 1**.
93. Providers will be free to include additional context in their submissions, such as details about their mission.
94. Contextual information is intended to help inform initial assessment of performance against the metrics by allowing assessors to take into account the composition of a provider's student population and information relating to geographical location. This means that assessment is contextualised - for example, considering employment/destination outcomes in the context of employment statistics for the geographical area or widening participation metrics in the context of the student population studying at the provider.
95. **Table 1: Proposed contextual information to aid interpretation of the core metrics**

Contextual Information
<p><b>A. Student population characteristics data:</b> The number and proportion of full-time and part-time undergraduate students studying at the provider, averaged over the last three years and broken down into the following categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Level (first degree and other UG)</li> <li>b. Age (young and mature)</li> <li>c. Polar quintiles (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)<sup>30</sup></li> <li>d. Ethnicity (White, Black, Asian, Other and Unknown)</li> <li>e. Sex (male and female)</li> <li>f. Disability (disabled and not disabled)</li> <li>g. Entry qualifications (high, medium or low tariff)</li> <li>h. Subject of study (the 18 subject areas used for benchmarking)</li> </ol> <p>Domicile (UK, other EU, non-EU)</p>
<p><b>B. Data maps:</b> Data maps will support interpretation of employment/destination metrics. A map will show employment rates and further maps for a provider will show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• where students who study at the provider grew up</li> <li>• where students who studied at the provider found employment</li> </ul>

**Q6: Do you agree with the contextual information that will be used to support TEF assessments proposed above? Please outline your reasons and suggest any alternatives or additions.**

<sup>30</sup> As POLAR applies only to students up to the age of 21, older students will be excluded from this split.

### 3b. Evidence – Provider submission

96. Responses to the Green Paper strongly supported the Government’s proposal that assessments should be holistic – using both the core metrics and additional evidence put forward by a provider.
97. However, the Government is also committed to ensuring the TEF is light-touch and non-bureaucratic, and that it avoids becoming a burdensome or ‘tick-box’ exercise. The provider submission should be an opportunity for a provider to present additional evidence as to how its teaching is excellent rather than to present information already considered as part of broader quality assurance arrangements.
98. This section sets out proposals for the provider submission, including the evidence that a provider may wish to put forward to support its case for excellence.

#### Purpose and nature of the provider submission

99. The provider submission should put forward any additional evidence (additional to the core metrics) that a provider feels best supports its case against the criteria. This evidence can be qualitative and/or quantitative. **Chapter 4: The Assessment Process** sets out how this additional evidence will combine with the core metrics in the assessment process.
100. The submission may refer to and build upon evidence explored as part of broader quality assurance arrangements but should not duplicate it. The emphasis in the provider submission should be on demonstrating the **impact** and **effectiveness** of teaching and its outcomes. Copies of, or links to, primary evidence – for example, strategy documents, policies or committee minutes - should not be included. Assessors will be free to seek clarification and verification of the information and evidence covered in the submission, (through TEF officers) but will not otherwise engage with the provider. All applications will be published.
101. Assessors will be looking for evidence of how far a provider demonstrates teaching and learning excellence across its entire provision. The submission should therefore avoid focusing on successful but highly localised practices that affect a relatively small number of students studying on particular courses or in particular departments.
102. As well as presenting additional evidence that demonstrates excellence, the submission may provide contextual information, including any mitigating factors that explains performance against the core metrics (see section on decision-making in **Chapter 4: The Assessment Process**).
103. Providers will be expected to address the criteria in their submission but not to use these as a checklist, recognising that criteria can and will be met in different ways.

104. Technical guidance on preparing the submission will be made available before the applications window opens.

### Size of the submission

105. To avoid the TEF becoming overly burdensome and in the interests of fairness to avoid one provider submitting considerably more information than another, we propose setting a **15 page maximum** on the length of a provider submission. Technical guidance will set out font size, margin widths and other details to ensure the limit is applied fairly. There will be no minimum page limit and no mandatory questions.

**Q7:**

**A) Do you agree with the proposed approach for the provider submission?**

**B) Do you agree with the proposed 15 page limit?**

**Please explain your reasons and outline any alternative suggestion**

### Types of additional evidence

106. In **Figure 6**, we have included examples of the types of additional evidence a provider may wish to include in their submission.

107. The list in **Figure 6** is not exhaustive and the examples are intended to be indicative rather than prescriptive. A provider will not be expected or encouraged to submit all of this evidence – the range of examples is intended to reflect the diversity of the sector rather than to imply that every provider can or should submit each one. Providers will, instead, be expected to judge for themselves how best to make their case using their own choice of indicators of impact and effectiveness.

108. **Figure 6: Indicative list of additional evidence**

Aspect	Possible examples of evidence
<b>Teaching Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact and effectiveness of involving students in teaching evaluation e.g. collecting and acting on their feedback</li> <li>• Impact and effectiveness of schemes focused on monitoring and maximising students' engagement with their studies e.g. the UK Engagement Survey (UKES) and other mechanisms</li> <li>• Recognition of courses by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)</li> <li>• How the provider is successfully identifying,</li> </ul>

Aspect	Possible examples of evidence
	<p>addressing and preventing grade inflation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative information on teaching intensity, such as weighted contact hours<sup>31</sup></li> <li>• Impact and effectiveness of external examining</li> <li>• Impact and effectiveness of teaching observation schemes</li> <li>• Impact and effectiveness of innovative approaches, new technology or educational research</li> <li>• Recognition and reward schemes, including progression and promotion opportunities for staff based on teaching commitment and performance</li> <li>• Quantitative information relating to the qualification, experience and contractual basis of staff who teach</li> <li>• Impact and effectiveness of feedback initiatives aimed at supporting students' development, progression and achievement</li> </ul>
<b>Learning Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact and effectiveness of initiatives aimed at supporting the transition into and through a higher education course</li> <li>• Quantitative information demonstrating proportional investment in teaching and learning infrastructure</li> <li>• Use and effectiveness of learner analytics in tracking and monitoring progress and development</li> <li>• Extent, nature and impact of employer engagement in course design and/or delivery</li> <li>• Extent and impact of student involvement in or exposure to the latest developments in research, scholarship or professional practice (one or more)</li> </ul>
<b>Student Outcomes and Learning Gain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact and effectiveness of initiatives aimed at understanding, assessing and improving retention and completion</li> <li>• Learning gain and distance-travelled by students</li> <li>• Evidence of longer-term employment outcomes and progression of graduates including into highly-skilled employment</li> <li>• Evidence and impact of initiatives aimed at maximising graduate employability</li> <li>• Extent of student involvement in enterprise and entrepreneurship</li> <li>• Use and effectiveness of initiatives used to help</li> </ul>

<sup>31</sup> A weighted contact hours measure allows comparison between providers that deliver courses in different ways – for example, those that have high amounts of contact time with large class sizes and those that offer lower contact time and smaller class sizes.

Aspect	Possible examples of evidence
	<p>measure and record student progress, such as Grade Point Average (GPA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of initiatives aimed at closing gaps in development, attainment and progression for students from different backgrounds, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who are at greater risk of not achieving positive outcomes.</li> </ul>

**Q8: Without the list becoming exhaustive or prescriptive, we are keen to ensure that the examples of additional evidence included in Figure 6 reflect a diversity of approaches to delivery. Do you agree with the examples? Please outline your reasons and suggest any additions or alternatives.**

### The student voice

109. In recognition of the central importance of students in the TEF, technical guidance issued before the applications window opens will make clear that, where feasible, students should be involved in preparing the submission and will identify some potential mechanisms for so doing. A provider will be expected to outline how students have been involved in its submission, working, for example, with students or their representatives, though there will be no presumption that any particular mechanism or bodies should be used or involved.
110. No provider will be disadvantaged in the event of non-cooperation by their students or Student Union.



## 4. Assessment – The Assessment Process

111. **We were clear in the Green Paper that judgements about teaching and learning quality should be made by individuals with appropriate experience and expertise who are independent of Government and the provider being assessed. It is vital that those doing the assessing and the process of assessment itself can command the confidence of higher education providers, students, employers and other stakeholders, in the UK and internationally.**
112. **The assessment process we propose here reflects the need for academic judgement. However, it also includes a number of checks and balances to ensure consistency and fairness. This chapter presents proposals for how the assessment process will operate and the decision-making process that results in a judgement on the TEF rating a provider is awarded.**

### Decision making against the framework

113. The TEF Panel will make a decision on each provider's rating based on their performance against the core metrics and the extent to which they have met the criteria (**Chapter 1: Assessment Framework**). We have assigned equal weighting across all three aspects (Teaching Quality, Learning Environment and Student Outcomes and Learning Gain) in recognition that each plays an important role in contributing to teaching excellence.
114. Reflecting the fact that in order to enter the TEF a provider must first be meeting the high baseline standards for quality in the sector, assessors will not be looking for evidence of the fundamental quality expectations and processes that are assessed during the QA process. Panel members will carry out their assessment with the assurance that these are in place and will instead focus on identifying evidence of excellence above the baseline. This will ensure that QA and the TEF work as a single system and minimise the bureaucracy for the sector.
115. Assessors will make a holistic assessment based on both core metrics and additional evidence. To determine a provider's performance against the core metrics, HEFCE analysts will compare the performance of each provider against the benchmark and flag those which are either significantly above or below the benchmark. These significance flags highlight where performance is strong or weak (**Chapter 3a: Evidence - Metrics** explains how benchmarks and significance flags operate).
116. Where a provider is significantly above or below the benchmark for all or most metrics, the decision is likely to be straightforward unless contextual information and additional evidence present compelling mitigating factors. However, for most providers, the metrics will present a more complex picture. In general, the more marginal (against the metrics) or unusual in terms of delivery or circumstance a provider's situation, the more assessors will need to rely on the additional evidence presented in the provider submission.
117. Two metrics (depending on whether we have a highly skilled jobs metric – see **Chapter 3a: Evidence – Metrics**) are currently aligned with each aspect (see **Chapter 1: The**



**Assessment Framework**). A provider is flagged as ‘positive’ in this aspect if it is significantly above benchmark on either of the metrics associated with that aspect. It is flagged as ‘negative’ if it is significantly below the benchmark on either of the metrics. In cases where, for one aspect, a provider is positive on one metric and negative on the other, it will be classified as ‘split’ for that aspect. A metric will similarly be classified as ‘split’ where the flags for widening participation groups within the metric are positive or negative and the institutional level flag is the opposite.

118. Assessors will be expected to review any additional evidence in the provider’s submission to determine whether performance against the metrics is mitigated and whether the submission presents evidence to show that teaching and learning are nonetheless excellent.
119. Based on the relative performance of providers against the core metrics, we anticipate providers will fall into a bell-shaped distribution of performance across the ratings. We would expect that approximately 20% would receive a rating of Meets Expectations<sup>32</sup>. We would also expect that approximately 20-30% would receive an Outstanding rating and the remaining 50-60% would receive an Excellent rating. We expect this to be reflected in technical guidance for assessors but that assessors themselves would not be obligated to check or ensure that the awards follow this distribution, only that they have followed the guidance.

## Commendations

120. A number of responses to the Green Paper suggested that the TEF could recognise providers who excel in particular areas through awarding commendations. This additional differentiation would allow a provider to showcase its particular distinctiveness to students and other stakeholders.
121. Commendations would be intended to be relatively rare, highlighting that providers who achieve one are amongst the top-performing in that particular area. We would expect technical guidance to reflect that only 5-10% of providers would be likely to receive a commendation in any given area, without imposing a forced distribution or quota for assessors to follow.
122. Assessors would consider whether a provider merited a commendation as they judge performance within each aspect (i.e. Teaching Quality, Learning Environment and Student Outcomes).
123. We anticipate that it would be possible for providers at all levels to receive a commendation, although it would be likely to be unusual for those rated as Meets Expectations. Given the high bar for achieving a commendation, it would also be likely to be unusual for a provider to receive multiple commendations, although not impossible.

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<sup>32</sup> Not including those that receive a rating of “Meets Expectations” on procedural grounds due to a lack of suitable metrics (see Chapter 2: Eligibility and Pre-requisites)

124. We are interested in your views on the value of commendations in particular areas and what those areas might be. We propose that commendations could be made to indicate excellence in the following areas, which relate implicitly to the criteria meaning that no separate or additional evidence would be required:
- Excellence in research-led teaching
  - Excellence in business engagement
  - Excellence in achieving positive outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds
  - Excellence in innovative teaching methods
  - Excellence in delivering part-time and/or distance learning
  - Excellence in the support, reward and recognition available for teaching staff

**Q9:**

**A) Do you think the TEF should issue commendations?**

**B) If so, do you agree with the areas identified above?**

**Please indicate if you have any additional or alternative suggestions for areas that might be covered by commendations.**

### The TEF Panel

125. The role of the **TEF Panel** is to reach a collective decision about the level of excellence demonstrated by a provider using the framework for assessment (see **Chapter 1: The Assessment Framework**). The work of the TEF Panel will be facilitated by TEF officers who will not take part in assessment decisions, and supported by recommendations from a wider group of **TEF assessors**.
126. The TEF Panel will be composed of individuals with experience and expertise in teaching and learning within a higher education setting, and students. There will also be specialist input from employer representatives and individuals with widening participation expertise.
127. Appointment of TEF Panel members and TEF assessors will begin shortly after the publication of this consultation (see **Annex B: Timetable – Key dates for providers**). HEFCE will invite applications, with details of the roles, including the person specification and essential criteria. The level of expertise and experience expected of TEF assessors and TEF Panel members will reflect our ambition for the TEF to be able to command the respect of providers, students and other stakeholders in the UK and internationally.
128. As outlined in the White Paper, the TEF Panel Chair in Year Two will be an appointment made jointly by the Secretary of State and HEFCE.

### The assessment process

129. We propose an assessment process which is in three stages, summarised in **Figure 7**. A role description for each of the different actors involved in the process is in **Figure 8**.
130. **Figure 7: The proposed assessment process**

<b>Stage 1: Individual assessment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessors receive a set of applications for individual assessment</li> <li>Facilitated and supported by TEF officers</li> <li>Opportunity to seek clarification or verification from provider</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 2: Assessors agree recommendations for the TEF Panel</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessors agree provisional outcomes</li> <li>Facilitated and supported by TEF officers</li> <li>Specialist input from widening participation experts and employer representatives</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 3: Confirmation of outcomes by the TEF Panel</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TEF Panel moderates and confirms outcomes</li> <li>Facilitated and supported by TEF officers</li> <li>Specialists are members of the TEF Panel</li> </ul>

131. **Figure 8: The role played by each actor in the proposed assessment process**

Actor	Description of role
<b>TEF assessor</b>	TEF assessors are experts in teaching and learning in a higher education setting. TEF assessors also include students. Their role is to assess TEF applications and agree provisional outcomes.
<b>TEF officer</b>	TEF officers are staff from QAA. Their role is to ensure the process runs smoothly and that technical guidance for assessors is followed correctly but not to take part in actual assessment.
<b>Specialist</b>	Specialists are individuals with expertise in particular areas. This may include in widening participation or employer perspectives. Their role is to provide specialist input to the assessment process, further to that which may already be available through existing expertise of assessors.
<b>Analyst</b>	Analysts are staff from HEFCE. Their role is to provide technical assistance to assessors to aid assessors' interpretation of the metrics but not to take part in actual assessment.
<b>TEF Panel</b>	The TEF Panel is the decision-making body, led by the TEF Chair. Its members will be made up of assessors and specialists. The role of the TEF Panel is to moderate and confirm provisional outcomes recommended by assessors. Not all assessors will be members of the TEF Panel but all Panel members will be assessors.

### Consistency and fairness

132. The assessment process proposed above has been designed to ensure that final outcomes are consistent and that the decision-making process is fair.

133. The process of ensuring consistency and fairness begins with the selection and recruitment of assessors against a set of criteria designed to ensure that those doing the assessing have an appropriate level of experience and expertise.
134. Assessors would each receive guidance and training. Any conflicts of interest (real or perceived) between assessors and the provider being assessed would be appropriately managed. A calibration exercise would be carried out prior to the first assessments to help to establish consistent standards of judgement between assessors.
135. The assessment process itself would be deliberative, where individuals could share insights and discuss any issues as part of reaching a consensus view on the provisional judgement. When provisional judgements are passed to the TEF Panel for moderation and confirmation, there would be an opportunity for Panel members to raise concerns and reach a consensus view on the overall outcome.
136. TEF officers would ensure that the guidance issued to providers and assessors has been followed correctly throughout the assessment process.

**Q10: Do you agree with the assessment process proposed above? Please outline your reasons and any alternative suggestions. The proposed process is set within a relatively tight timescale, reflected in the key dates included in Annex B. Responses should be framed within this context.**

### Assessment outcomes

137. The outcome of assessment will include the **overall rating** and a **brief statement of findings** within each of the three aspects. We intend that both would be published as part of the TEF award. If commendations were to be included (**Question 9**), these would also be published.
138. TEF outcomes will be included in official sources of information for students (see **Chapter 5: Communicating TEF outcomes** to students and other stakeholders). We intend that a copy of a provider's core metrics and their submission will also be published.

### Appealing a TEF outcome

139. For Year Two, the decision of the TEF Panel will be final and providers cannot appeal their TEF outcome. The lessons learned exercise for Year Two (see **Implementation and next steps**) will include a review of this element of the process.

### Duration of a TEF award

140. A TEF rating of Meets Expectations, Excellent or Outstanding given in Year Two will be valid for **three years**, unless a provider does not have the requisite three years' core metrics to inform the assessment (below).
141. In the case of a provider that only has one or two years of core metrics, we propose the duration of the award will reflect the number of complete years of data the provider can demonstrate (i.e. if a provider has one year of complete data the award will last for one year and if they have two years of complete data, their award will last for two years).

These providers would therefore need to reapply if they wish to maintain their award. We invite your feedback on this proposal below.

**Q11: Do you agree that in the case of providers with less than three years of core metrics, the duration of the award should reflect the number of years of core metrics available? Please outline your reasons.**

142. A provider can reapply in Year Three if they wish to be considered for a higher rating or to be assessed for the first time as Excellent or Outstanding if they previously did not meet the eligibility requirements (see **Chapter 2: Eligibility and Pre-requisites**).

### **Conditions for withdrawal of a TEF award**

143. A TEF award of any level will be withdrawn if a provider ceases to meet the quality requirements set out in Annex A of the White Paper.
144. Once a TEF award ceases to be valid, or should it be withdrawn, a provider will no longer be able to claim that it holds the award.
145. In the case of an award being withdrawn, the financial incentives associated with the award will also be withdrawn.

## 5. Communicating TEF outcomes to students and other stakeholders

146. To ensure that the TEF successfully meets its objectives, TEF outcomes will need to be easily understood by multiple audiences and provide students and employers with clear information, allowing them to distinguish between providers based on the quality of teaching and learning.
147. This section puts forward our proposal for naming of TEF ratings and where TEF outcomes will feature.

### Descriptions of TEF ratings

148. We propose the following descriptions of TEF ratings in Year Two. A short 'high level' description will be available for use alongside a longer description when more detail is required.

#### 149. Figure 9: Descriptions of TEF ratings

##### **Meets Expectations**

**A Meets Expectations rating means that a higher education provider meets national expectations for quality and standards**

**If more detail is required:**

**A Meets Expectations rating means that a higher education provider meets national expectations in the following key areas, reflecting the areas covered in a quality review:**

- **the academic standard of the qualifications it offers;**
- **the quality of teaching, resources and other educational opportunities available to students;**
- **the approach it takes to continuous improvement of the above;**
- **the accessibility and reliability of the information it makes available to students and the public about its educational opportunities, resources and support.**

##### **Excellent**

**An Excellent rating means that a higher education provider demonstrates excellent teaching, learning and student outcomes, building on national expectations for quality and standards.**

**If more detail is required:**

**An Excellent rating means that a higher education provider's teaching and learning is excellent in three key areas:**

- **Teaching quality**
- **The learning environment**
- **Student outcomes and learning gain**

**Judgements are made by a panel of experts based on common criteria across the areas above.**

**Outstanding**

An Outstanding rating means that a higher education provider demonstrates outstanding teaching, learning and student outcomes, building on national expectations for quality and standards.

If more detail is required:

An Outstanding rating means that a higher education provider's teaching and learning is outstanding in three key areas:

- Teaching quality
- The learning environment
- Student outcomes and learning gain

Judgements are made by a panel of experts based on common criteria across the areas above.

**Q12 Do you agree with the descriptions of the different TEF ratings proposed in Figure 9? Please outline your reasons and any alternative suggestions.**

### Publishing TEF outcomes

150. We intend for TEF outcomes to be included in official sources of information aimed at prospective students. This will include Unistats<sup>33</sup> and the UCAS website.
151. As outlined in **Chapter 4: The Assessment Process**, published outcomes will include the rating, any commendations (should these be a feature of the TEF in Year Two) and a brief statement of the TEF Panel's findings within each aspect of quality. A link to a provider's metrics and a copy of their submission will also be published.
152. A provider's TEF rating will also be included on the Register of Higher Education Providers, currently maintained by HEFCE<sup>34</sup>. The Register contains information about how providers of higher education are regulated in England. It is not aimed specifically at prospective students but it is of interest to them and of interest to regulators and Government agencies, in the UK and internationally.
153. Higher education providers will also be able to use their TEF rating in their own marketing, such as via websites, prospectuses and during Open Days.

<sup>33</sup> The Unistats website: <https://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>

<sup>34</sup> The Register of Higher Education providers: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reg/register/>

## Implementation and next steps

### Timetable for implementation of Year Two

154. Key dates for providers are in **Annex B** which includes an indication of when the applications window opens and closes. Shortly after this consultation is published, HEFCE will invite providers to nominate a key point of contact in accordance with the timetable.

### Sharing good practice from Year Two

155. As outlined in **Chapter 4: The Assessment Framework**, we intend that all provider submissions will be published so that good practice can be shared.

### Lessons learned exercise from Year Two

156. The development of future iterations of the TEF will draw upon lessons learned from Year Two. **We plan to carry out a lessons-learned exercise that will inform the development of Year Three.**



## Annex A: Glossary of Terms

### **Aspects of quality**

Areas of teaching and learning quality in which criteria are articulated against which providers will be assessed.

### **Assessment framework**

The assessment framework sets out how judgements about excellence will be made. It refers to the aspects of quality, the criteria, and how the evidence will be used, across the ratings.

### **Core metrics**

Measures deriving from national surveys and data returns which have been defined, benchmarked and reported to support TEF assessments.

### **Criteria**

Statements that identify what assessors will be looking for within each aspect of quality when they are assessing excellence.

### **Learning Environment**

A term to describe the aspect of the TEF that relates to the wider context for teaching.

### **Pre-requisites**

The conditions that have to be met in order for a provider to be assessed under the TEF.

### **Provider submission**

A provider submission contains the additional evidence that will be used to support an application alongside core metrics. Providers prepare and submit their provider submission against the published criteria. The evidence in the provider submission can be qualitative or quantitative.

### **Specialist**

An individual with expertise in a particular area such as widening participation or employer perspectives.

### **Student Outcomes and Learning Gain**

A term to describe the aspect of the TEF that relates to the educational and employment outcomes of graduates and the gains made by students from a range of different backgrounds.

### **Teaching Quality**

A term to describe the aspect of the TEF that considers teaching practices.

### **TEF assessor**

An individual who has experience of or expertise in teaching and learning. This is likely to be institutional staff whose responsibilities include teaching and learning, and students.

### **TEF award**

A TEF award refers to a successful outcome i.e. any level of excellence within the TEF.

**TEF officer**

A member of staff from a delivery agency that facilitates the TEF assessment process.

**TEF Panel**

The TEF Panel is the decision making body for TEF assessments. It will be responsible for reviewing the decisions made by TEF assessors and confirming the final rating a provider will receive.

**TEF ratings**

A TEF rating is the level of excellence achieved by a provider under the TEF. There are three possible ratings: Meets Expectations, Excellent and Outstanding.

## Annex B: Provisional timetable for Year Two

### Key dates for providers

Activity	Date
Technical consultation opens	May 2016
Providers are invited to nominate key contact	May 2016
Technical consultation closes	July 2016
Providers are invited to submit an initial expression of interest in applying	July 2016
Response to technical consultation is published	Sept 2016
Technical guidance for providers is published	Mid-Oct 2016
Providers' core metrics are made available for them to preview	Mid-Oct 2016
Applications window opens	Mid-Oct 2016
Provider briefing events	Mid-late Oct 2016
Deadline for completing any requested amendments to providers' core metrics	Late Nov 2016
Application window closes	Dec 2016
Assessment takes place	Jan-March 2017
TEF ratings are announced	April 2017
Lessons-learned exercise	May –June 2017

## Key dates for appointment of TEF assessors and TEF Panel

Activity	Date
Applications for TEF assessors and TEF Panel members sought	May 2016 (shortly after publication of technical consultation)
TEF Panel members are appointed	July – Aug 2016 (shortly after technical consultation closes)
Technical guidance for TEF assessors and TEF Panel members is published	Mid-Oct 2016
TEF Panel membership is published	Mid-Oct 2016
Training for TEF assessors and TEF Panel members	Mid-Nov 2016
TEF assessors are confirmed	Late Nov 2016

## Annex C: Core metrics – further information

157. This Annex provides further details about the proposed metrics and should be read in conjunction with **Chapter 3a: Evidence - Metrics**.

### TEF metrics and the UK PIs – key similarities and differences in approach

158. The proposals draw on the approach taken in the context of the UK PIs and, where relevant, the way in which NSS results are currently published. In summary, **we propose to adopt the same approach for the following:**

- The definitions of non-continuation and employment/destinations
- The method of benchmarking
- The response rate thresholds for the NSS and DHLE
- The minimum number of students to be reported (this is the same as the NSS rather than the UK PIs)
- Production of separate metrics for full-time and part-time students
- Inclusion of UK students in the non-continuation and employment/destination metrics; inclusion of UK, other EU and non-EU students in the NSS-based metrics
- For the part-time, non-continuation metric, inclusion of only ‘high intensity’, first degree students.

159. We propose the following differences in approach from the **UK PIs** or publication of **NSS results**, to ensure the metrics are fit for the particular purpose of the TEF:

- The employment/destinations metric to include graduates whose activity is classified as “other” in the denominator of the calculation
- Metrics based on NSS scales, rather than individual NSS questions
- Metrics averaged over three years, as well as for individual years
- A different approach to splitting the metrics and additional splits based on WP characteristics (this is explained further below)
- Students to be associated with the teaching institution rather than the registering institution
- In identifying significant differences from a benchmark, we propose to flag all differences that are at least 2 standard deviations and 2 percentage points from the benchmark.
- Benchmarks based on all providers for which data are available to take part in the TEF.

### Coverage of student cohorts and providers

160. The table below outlines **which sources of data the metrics will be drawn from, and the student cohorts covered by the most recently-available three years’ data for each metric.**

161. **Table 2: Data sources and student cohort coverage**

Metric	Data Source	Student cohorts
The teaching on my course; Assessment and feedback; and Academic support	NSS (all types of providers)	Final year students in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16
Non-continuation	HESA student records (for HEIs and APs)	Full-time entrants in 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14
	HESA and/or ILR student records (for FECs)	Part-time first degree entrants in 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13
Employment/destination	DLHE (all types of providers)	Leavers in 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15

162. All HEIs in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and FECs in England with HE provision have participated in these data collections for all relevant years. A small number of APs in England have participated in them for some or all of the relevant years. Many more APs have recently started to participate in the relevant data collections.

### Levels of reporting and significance

163. In developing the proposals, HEFCE provided analysis to show how using single or multiple years would affect:

- The extent to which metrics would meet the reporting thresholds
- The extent to which differences between the indicators and benchmarks would be significant.

164. The analysis showed that averaging the metrics over three years substantially improves the proportion of metrics that meet the reporting threshold, and also increases the proportion of metrics where the variations from a benchmark is significant. Figure 10 below provides a summary, using the proposed reporting thresholds and definition of significant difference from a benchmark.

165. For FECs, the proportion of metrics that are reportable and that are significant are both considerably lower than for HEIs. This is due to typically smaller student cohorts.

### Splitting the metrics

166. Two main approaches to splitting the metrics were considered. The first involved a 'hierarchy' of splits, similar to the way UKPIs are reported. With this approach the metrics were split by mode, then level of study, then age on entry, then other student characteristics. This would enable assessors to consider metrics for detailed sub-populations of students, for example, full-time young first degree disabled students. However, analysis showed that the sizes of these sub-populations were very often too small to meet the reporting thresholds, or to produce metrics where variances from the benchmarks were statistically significant.

167. With the second approach, the whole full-time or part-time population was split by one variable at a time. This would enable the assessors to consider metrics for all full-time or all part-time students, split by one particular characteristic (as indicated in Figure 11 below). We propose to follow this approach, as analysis showed that these splits more often met the reporting thresholds and produced statistically significant results.
168. We propose to split the metrics by variables that are established in the reporting of the UK PIs (mode, level of study and age on entry), by key WP-related characteristics (POLAR groups, ethnicity and disability), and by domicile (for the NSS-based). Particular consideration was given to how to split by ethnicity, and find an appropriate balance between highlighting differences between particular ethnic groups, while also maintaining large enough sample sizes. To achieve this balance we propose to split the metrics in the first instance between students with a white background and a BME background. In addition, where there are significant differences (i.e. different flags) between students with Black, Asian and Other backgrounds, these will also be reported.

### Metrics information for assessors

169. Figure 10 outlines key metrics information we propose should be provided to assessors. In addition, we propose to report further details about the years and the splits, so that assessors can understand any significant variations in more detail. This would include the actual percentage, the benchmark percentage, the difference between the two and the z-score for each year and each split.

### Treatment of franchised activity

170. In recognition of the importance of the learning environment at which students are taught, for a franchised provider that meets the eligibility requirements set out in **Chapter 2: Eligibility and Pre-requisites** students will be associated with the provider at which they are taught. In some cases, students are taught by more than one provider as part of their course; rather than have such students associated with different providers for different metrics, we intend that they will be associated with the provider where they spend the majority of their first year.



171. **Figure 10: Proportion of provider metrics that are reportable, and with significant differences from the benchmark**<sup>35 36</sup>

	HEIs and FECs						HEIs only						FECs only					
	No. of possible metrics		% reportable		% significant		No. of possible metrics		% reportable		% significant		No. of possible metrics		% reportable		% significant	
	3 year average	1 year	3 year average	1 year	3 year average	1 year	3 year average	1 year	3 year average	1 year	3 year average	1 year	3 year average	1 year	3 year average	1 year	3 year average	1 year
<b>The teaching on my course</b>																		
<b>Full-time students</b>	352	336	91%	88%	27%	23%	125	122	98%	99%	40%	36%	227	214	86%	82%	20%	15%
<b>Splits for full-time students</b>	4,576	4,368	74%	66%	18%	14%	1,625	1,586	95%	93%	32%	26%	2,951	2,782	62%	51%	10%	7%
<b>Part-time students</b>	315	253	69%	55%	9%	6%	108	95	69%	62%	7%	1%	207	158	69%	51%	10%	9%
<b>Splits for part-time students</b>	4,095	3,289	43%	30%	4%	3%	1,404	1,235	50%	40%	4%	1%	2,691	2,054	39%	24%	4%	4%
<b>Assessment and feedback</b>																		
<b>Full-time students</b>	352	336	91%	88%	35%	28%	125	122	98%	99%	50%	52%	227	214	86%	82%	26%	15%
<b>Splits for full-time students</b>	4,576	4,368	74%	66%	23%	17%	1,625	1,586	95%	93%	41%	35%	2,951	2,782	62%	51%	13%	7%

<sup>35</sup> Proportion based on the number of providers with at least one student in the relevant population for the time period studied.

<sup>36</sup> Non-continuation data for FECs is not available for publication in the consultation as it requires further work to join HESA and ILR data correctly.

<b>Part-time students</b>	315	253	69%	55%	15%	8%	108	95	69%	62%	16%	4%	207	158	69%	51%	14%	10%
<b>Splits for part-time students</b>	4,095	3,289	43%	30%	7%	4%	1,404	1,235	50%	40%	9%	3%	2,691	2,054	39%	24%	7%	4%
<b>Academic support</b>																		
<b>Full-time students</b>	352	336	91%	88%	32%	27%	125	122	98%	99%	46%	43%	227	214	86%	82%	25%	18%
<b>Splits for full-time students</b>	4,576	4,368	74%	66%	21%	16%	1,625	1,586	94%	93%	38%	30%	2,951	2,782	62%	51%	12%	8%
<b>Part-time students</b>	315	253	69%	55%	13%	6%	108	95	69%	62%	14%	3%	207	158	69%	51%	12%	8%
<b>Splits for part-time students</b>	4,095	3,289	43%	30%	7%	3%	1,404	1,235	50%	40%	8%	3%	2,691	2,054	39%	24%	6%	4%
<b>Non-continuation</b>																		
<b>Full-time students</b>							135	128	97%	98%	19%	20%						
<b>Splits for full-time students</b>							1,350	1,280	93%	93%	22%	19%						
<b>Part-time students</b>							130	130	73%	65%	43%	32%						
<b>Splits for part-time students</b>							1,040	1,040	62%	50%	31%	23%						

<b>Employment or further study</b>																		
<b>Full-time students</b>	368	339	89%	77%	26%	14%	126	124	98%	98%	37%	28%	242	215	84%	65%	20%	6%
<b>Splits for full-time students</b>	3,680	3,390	74%	62%	20%	12%	1,260	1,240	94%	91%	33%	24%	2,420	2,150	64%	45%	13%	5%
<b>Part-time students</b>	381	330	87%	75%	15%	11%	115	108	90%	85%	37%	26%	266	222	86%	70%	6%	3%
<b>Splits for part-time students</b>	3,810	3,300	66%	51%	10%	6%	1,150	1,080	80%	69%	25%	16%	2,660	2,220	60%	43%	4%	2%
<b>Highly skilled jobs or further study</b>																		
<b>Full-time students</b>	368	339	89%	77%	45%	36%	126	124	98%	98%	74%	60%	242	215	84%	65%	31%	22%
<b>Splits for full-time students</b>	3,680	3,390	74%	61%	34%	24%	1,260	1,240	94%	91%	59%	43%	2,420	2,150	64%	44%	20%	13%
<b>Part-time students</b>	380	330	87%	74%	31%	20%	115	108	90%	85%	50%	37%	265	222	86%	69%	23%	12%
<b>Splits for part-time students</b>	3,800	3,300	66%	51%	21%	12%	1,150	1,080	79%	69%	35%	23%	2,650	2,220	60%	42%	14%	7%

172. Figure 11: Illustrative example of the type of key metrics information available to assessors

	Actual (a) %	Bench -mark (b) %	(a) -(b)	Z-score <sup>37</sup>	Flag	Years			Level		Age		POLAR		Ethnicity		Disabled		Domicile		
						1	2	3	First Degree	Other UG	Young	Mature	1-2	3-5	White	BME	Yes	No	UK	Other EU	Non-EU
<b>Full-time students</b>																					
The teaching on my course	90.7	86.5	4.2	5.9	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+		+
Assessment and feedback	75.6	73.8	1.8	2.2																	
Academic support	85.0	82.4	2.6	4.9	+		+	+	+		+		+					+	+		
Non-continuation	6.1	6.9	0.8	1.9																	
Employment or further study	93.6	92.2	1.4	1.6									+								
Highly skilled employment	76.0	71.0	5.0	1.3									+								
<b>Part-time students</b>																					
The teaching on my course	84.7	85.2	-0.5	-0.2																	
Assessment and feedback	66.7	71.7	-5.1	-2.1	-																
Academic support	79.2	80.5	-1.3	-0.6																	
Non-continuation	8.9	7.2	-1.7	-1.1			-														
Employment or further study	92.9	91.1	1.8	0.8			n											n			
Highly skilled employment	73.0	70.2	2.2	2.1	+		n											n			

## Key

- + The indicator for that year or split is significantly above benchmark
- The indicator for that year or split is significantly below benchmark
- n Not reportable (fewer than 10 students or the response rate is too low)
- Not applicable

<sup>37</sup> The z-score is the number of standard deviations from the benchmark, scores are flagged when this number is greater than 2 or less than -2 and the difference (a-b) is greater than 2 percentage points

## Annex D: Summary of potential unintended consequences on TEF metrics and proposed mitigations

173. The **BIS Select Committee** highlighted their concerns in their report: The Teaching Excellence Framework: Assessing quality in Higher Education<sup>38</sup> that “there could be unintended consequences, which could arise from an institution seeking to optimise its score on each metric.” It requested that BIS include an assessment of the unintended consequences and proposed mitigations in the Technical Consultation. The following table responds to their request:

174. **Table 3: Mitigations for the metrics for the TEF in Year Two**

Data Source	Metric(s)	Associated risk of unintended consequence	Proposed mitigations
<b>National Student Survey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teaching on my course</li> <li>Assessment and feedback</li> <li>Academic support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Risk</u> that the scores rely on student assessment, which is subjective</li> <li><u>Possible unintended consequence</u> that students may undermine the validity or “game” the NSS by reporting high/low scores with different aims in mind.</li> <li><u>Possible unintended consequence</u> that students may boycott the NSS as a way of trying to stop the TEF.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providers will be able to offer additional evidence of teaching quality in their submission to support their case.</li> <li>The NSS is overseen by HEFCE and Ipsos Mori and has the confidence of the sector. The measures are already well established as UKPIs which influence the reputation of a provider so the TEF may not give much additional impetus to gaming.</li> </ul>
<b>Non-continuation rates (drawn from HESA and</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-continuation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Risk</u> that scores can be influenced by other factors besides teaching quality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have recognised that retention can be influenced by lots of different factors, which is why we have opted to link it to the Learning Environment, to reflect the</li> </ul>

<sup>38</sup> BIS Select Committee report (February 2016). Available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/business-innovation-and-skills/news-parliament-2015/quality-of-higher-education-report-published-15-16/>

Data Source	Metric(s)	Associated risk of unintended consequence	Proposed mitigations
ILR student records)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Possible unintended consequence</u> that institutions wishing to improve retention can make courses less demanding, undermining efforts to improve quality.</li> </ul>	<p>breadth of different influences on this metric. The metric will also be benchmarked for student characteristics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a separate strand of work looking at how the sector can ensure that standards remain high across courses.</li> </ul>
Rates of employment or further study, six months after graduation (drawn from the DLHE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment or further study</li> <li>• Highly skilled jobs or further study (proposed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Risk</u> that the DLHE measures employment outcomes too early.</li> <li>• <u>Possible unintended consequence</u> that this may favour providers specialising in disciplines that tend to lead to higher salaries or encourage them to change student recruitment profile (eg taking fewer women, BME students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The metrics will be benchmarked by subject, which should provide a strong mitigation against any unintended consequences for providers favouring subjects that tend to lead to higher salaries.</li> <li>• We recognise that there are some types of subjects where it may take longer than 6 months for graduates to find employment and providers will be able to provide longer term destination data in their submission, if they feel that this demonstrates a better success rate.</li> <li>• The potential for a provider to change their student recruitment profile is an issue that caused deep concern in the Green Paper response. The benchmarking process will mean that there is no advantage to specific student types. Providers must have an access agreement in place in order to participate in TEF.</li> <li>• To further mitigate any risk that providers are changing their student recruitment profile, the Minister will be writing to the Director for Fair Access and asking him to remain alert to any risk of these behaviours.</li> </ul>

## Annex E: Summary of questions

**Q1:** Do you agree with the criteria proposed in Figure 4? Please outline your reasons and suggest any alternatives or additions.

**Q2: A)** How should we include a highly skilled employment metric as part of the TEF?; **B)** If included as a core metric, should we adopt employment in Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) groups 1-3 as a measure of graduates entering highly skilled jobs?; **C)** Do you agree with our proposal to include all graduates in the calculation of the employment/destination metrics? Please outline your reasons and suggest any alternatives.

**Q3: A)** Do you agree with the proposed approach for setting benchmarks?; **B)** Do you agree with the proposed approach for flagging significant differences between indicator and benchmark (where differences exceed 2 standard deviations and 2 percentage points)? Please outline your reasons if you disagree.

**Q4:** Do you agree that TEF metrics should be averaged over the most recent three years of available data? Please outline your reasons and suggest alternatives.

**Q5:** Do you agree the metrics should be split by the characteristics proposed above? Please outline your reasons and suggest alternatives.

**Q6:** Do you agree with the contextual information that will be used to support TEF assessments proposed above? Please outline your reasons and suggest any alternatives or additions.

**Q7: A)** Do you agree with the proposed approach for the provider submission?; **B)** Do you agree with the proposed 15 page limit? Please explain your reasons and outline any alternative suggestions.

**Q8:** Without the list becoming exhaustive or prescriptive, we are keen to ensure that the examples of additional evidence included in Figure 6 reflect a diversity of approaches to delivery. Do you agree with the examples? Please outline your reasons and suggest any additions or alternatives.

**Q9: A)** Do you think the TEF should issue commendations?; **B)** If so, do you agree with the areas identified above? Please indicate if you have any additional or alternative suggestions for areas that might be covered by commendations.

**Q10:** Do you agree with the assessment process proposed above? Please outline your reasons and any alternative suggestions. The proposed process is set within a relatively tight timescale, reflected in the key dates included in Annex B. Responses should be framed within this context

**Q11:** Do you agree that in the case of providers with less than three years of core metrics, the duration of the award should reflect the number of years of core metrics available? Please outline your reasons.

**Q12** Do you agree with the descriptions of the different TEF ratings proposed in Figure 9? Please outline your reasons and any alternative suggestions.



## Annex F: Consultation principles

The principles that government departments and other public bodies should adopt for engaging stakeholders when developing policy and legislation are set out in the consultation principles:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance)

### Comments or complaints on the conduct of this consultation

If you wish to comment on the conduct of this consultation or make a complaint about the way this consultation has been conducted, please write to:

Angela Rabess  
BIS Consultation Co-ordinator  
1 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0ET

Email: [angela.rabess@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:angela.rabess@bis.gsi.gov.uk)

However if you wish to comment on the specific policy proposals you should contact the TEF Technical Consultation mailbox.

## Annex G: Technical Consultation – How to respond and confidentiality/data protection

### How to respond

When responding please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents by selecting the appropriate interest group on the consultation response form and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.

You can reply to this consultation online at <https://bisgovuk.citizenspace.com/he/tef-technical-consultation-year-2>. The consultation response form is available electronically on the consultation page.

### Responses can be submitted online, by email or by letter to:

Adam Gray  
Higher Education  
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills  
Level 5, 1 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0ET

**Email:** [TEF.techconsultation@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:TEF.techconsultation@bis.gsi.gov.uk)

**The closing date for responses is:** 12/07/2016

You may make printed copies of this document without seeking permission. Other versions of the document in Braille, other languages or audio-cassette are available on request. If you require a printed copy of the consultation document, you can request one using the contact details above.

### Confidentiality and data protection

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or release to other parties or to disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004). There is also a statutory Code of Practice issued under section 45 of the FOIA with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence.

If you want information, including personal data, that you provide to be treated in confidence, please explain to us what information you would like to be treated as confidential and why you regard the information as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the department.

## Annex H: TEF Technical Consultation – Response Form

**Name/Organisation:**

**Please tick the box that best describes you as a respondent to this consultation:**

	<b>Respondent type</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Alternative higher education provider (with designated courses)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Alternative higher education provider (no designated courses)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Awarding organisation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Business/Employer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Central government
<input type="checkbox"/>	Charity or social enterprise
<input type="checkbox"/>	Further Education College
<input type="checkbox"/>	Higher Education Institution
<input type="checkbox"/>	Individual (Please describe any particular relevant interest; parent, student, teaching staff etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Legal representative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Government
<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional Body
<input type="checkbox"/>	Representative Body
<input type="checkbox"/>	Research Council
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade Union or staff association
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please describe)

**Question 1 (Chapter 1)**

Do you agree with the criteria proposed in Figure 4?

Yes       No       Not sure

Please outline your reasons and suggest any alternatives or additions.

**Question 2 (Chapter 3)**

A) How should we include a highly skilled employment metric as part of the TEF?

B) If included as a core metric, should we adopt employment in Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) groups 1-3 as a measure of graduates entering highly skilled jobs?

Yes       No       Not sure

C) Do you agree with our proposal to include all graduates in the calculation of the employment/destination metrics?

Yes       No       Not sure

Please outline your reasons and suggest any alternatives.

**Question 3 (Chapter 3)**

A) Do you agree with the proposed approach for setting benchmarks?

Yes       No       Not sure

B) Do you agree with the proposed approach for flagging significant differences between indicator and benchmark (where differences exceed 2 standard deviations and 2 percentage points)?

Yes       No       Not sure

Please outline your reasons if you disagree.

**Question 4 (Chapter 3)**

Do you agree that TEF metrics should be averaged over the most recent three years of available data?

Yes       No       Not sure

Please outline your reasons and suggest alternatives.

**Question 5 (Chapter 3)**

Do you agree the metrics should be split by the characteristics proposed above?

Yes       No       Not sure

Please outline your reasons and suggest alternatives.

**Question 6 (Chapter 3)**

Do you agree with the contextual information that will be used to support TEF assessments proposed above?

Yes       No       Not sure

Please outline your reasons and suggest any alternatives or additions.

**Question 7 (Chapter 3)**

**A)** Do you agree with the proposed approach for the provider submission?

Yes       No       Not sure

**B)** Do you agree with the proposed 15 page limit?

Yes       No       Not sure

Please explain your reasons and outline any alternative suggestions.

**Question 8 (Chapter 3)**

Without the list becoming exhaustive or prescriptive, we are keen to ensure that the examples of additional evidence included in Figure 6 reflect a diversity of approaches to delivery. Do you agree with the examples?

Yes       No       Not sure

Please outline your reasons and suggest any additions or alternatives?

**Question 9 (Chapter 4)**

A) Do you think the TEF should issue commendations?

Yes       No       Not sure

B) If so, do you agree with the areas identified above?

Yes       No       Not sure

Please indicate if you have any additional or alternative suggestions for areas that might be covered by commendations.

**Question 10 (Chapter 4)**

Do you agree with the assessment process proposed?

Yes       No       Not sure

Please outline your reasons and any alternative suggestions. The proposed process is set within a relatively tight timescale, reflected in the key dates included in Annex B. Responses should be framed within this context.

**Question 11 (Chapter 4)**

Do you agree that in the case of providers with less than three years of core metrics, the duration of the award should reflect the number of years of core metrics available?

Yes       No       Not sure

Please outline your reasons.

**Question 12 (Chapter 5)**

Do you agree with the descriptions of the different TEF ratings proposed in Figure 9?

Yes       No       Not sure

Please outline your reasons and any alternative suggestions.

**Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views.**

We do not intend to acknowledge receipt of individual responses unless you tick the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply

At BIS we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would you be happy for us to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

No

## Annex I: Acknowledgements

In developing this set of proposals for the TEF, BIS worked with a TEF Delivery Group comprised of the leaders of the following organisations, and an allied TEF Working Group comprised of senior staff from each organisation:

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)  
The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)  
The Higher Education Academy (HEA)  
The Office for Fair Access (OFFA)  
The Student Loans Company (SLC)

We are very grateful to the organisations and their staff for their input. We are also grateful to those organisations which had observer status on the TEF Delivery Group:

Universities UK (UUK)  
GuildHE

We would also like to acknowledge and thank the wide range of individuals and organisations who offered insight and input into the development of the proposals in this via the Green Paper consultation. This included participation in expert and advisory groups, roundtable events, and via the online consultation.





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