

Response ID ANON-TWMW-TNTB-7

Submitted to **Independent Review of TEF: Call for views.**

Submitted on **2019-03-01 20:21:39**

Who are you?

1 What is your name?

Name:

Ashley Lenihan

2 What is your role/position (if relevant)?

What is your role/position (if relevant)? :

Head of Policy & Engagement, British Academy of Management

3 What is your email address?

Email:

policy@bam.ac.uk

4 In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?

Other (please state)

If other, please specify below:

Learned Society

5 Are you responding on behalf of an organisation (eg. higher education provider, student union or representative group)?

Yes

a. If yes, what is the name of your organisation?:

British Academy of Management

No

6 Have you been involved preparing for or writing a TEF or subject TEF submission?

No

7 Have you been involved as a TEF assessor or panel member (for provider TEF or in the subject pilots)?

No

8 Would you like us to keep your responses confidential?

No

If yes, what is the reason for confidentiality?:

9 Please indicate which UK country/other country you are responding from.

Please indicate which UK country/other country you are responding for. :

England

If you are responding from a country outside of the UK, please write this in below.:

Why have TEF?

10 Do you support the aim of assessing the quality of teaching excellence and student outcomes across providers of higher education?

Yes

Please explain why:

The British Academy of Management (BAM) is the leading authority on the academic field of management in the UK, supporting the community of scholars in this field and engaging our international peers. We have over 2000 members, more than three-quarters of whom are based in British institutions.

We welcome the TEF and its goals to inform student choice, recognise/reward excellent teaching, and raise the 'esteem for teaching' within the broader context of

higher education. Yet, we believe that some changes will be needed to ensure that the TEF fully succeeds in its original intent to both raise the profile of teaching vis-à-vis research, and to become a suitable vehicle to inform students' choices about where to study.

Why have TEF?

11 These purposes fall into two main areas: providing information, and enhancing the provision of higher education.

Enhancing provision

b. Please outline below the reasons for your answers :

Providing information to help incoming students make good choices about what and where to study is a laudable goal, but students already have a range of means to help them make these choices, and will take into account many other factors in the decisions they make – as the Chartered Association of Business Schools also points out in its submission to this review. Moreover, it has also been determined that many students remain unaware of the TEF, which continues to be 'complicated for them to understand or to use ... effectively.'

We thus feel that the most important role of the TEF is to ensure that teaching provision is enhanced for students over time. For this reason, and as with any good assessment or evaluation exercise, we believe the TEF should include elements of 'feed-forward' feedback, providing useful information that institutions can use to improve their teaching provision in future. As currently formulated, however, the TEF rating system (of Gold, Silver, Bronze, Provisional) acts as an end point in and of itself, rather than as a set of information that provides the basis for improvement. Current TEF ratings also appear to offer only a simple 'absolutist' measure for end-users, rather than one that is open to interpretation, or which includes easily accessible explanations of the factors that may have influenced an institution's final 'rating.' However, given the breadth and depth of the exercise, the TEF accumulates a wealth of information that could be used more thoughtfully to improve the way information is communicated to different audiences, including providers (in relation to how they can improve) and students (in relation to where they choose to study).

* Source: Universities UK (February 2019). The future of the TEF: report to the independent reviewer.
<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/future-of-the-tef.aspx>.

12 Should there be any other purposes for TEF?

Should there be any other purposes for TEF? :

The TEF offers an invaluable opportunity for examples of best practice to be shared, and we believe that this should be included among its goals. This would help to ensure that the TEF measures are not purely outcome driven, and that the TEF has an impact on future practice.

What is TEF?

How does TEF work?

13 Are the criteria used in TEF (see Figure 1 for a list of the criteria) appropriate?

No

If not, what criteria would be more appropriate? :

The criteria currently used in TEF are based on a model that assumes teaching quality can, at least in part, be objectively measured by looking at student employment outcomes. But the reality is far more complicated, as so much of a student's trajectory in this regard is affected by other factors – from their experiences before they reach university, to where they live,* and even the responsibilities that they may have after graduation (such as caring for a child or elderly parent). The current TEF criteria may, therefore, be seen as placing too high an emphasis on student outcomes.

Moreover, in addition to the current pillar on Learning Environment (LE), the TEF should also include an examination of an institution's 'Teaching Environment' – just as research environment is assessed in the REF. This could look at the institutional support given to teaching, pedagogy and curriculum innovation, and could even examine the role of teaching in widening participation and shaping inclusivity in providers.

Source: Simon Baker (January 21, 2019). TEF metric on graduate earnings 'reflects distance from London'. Times Higher Education.
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/tef-metric-graduate-earnings-reflects-distance-london>.

14 There is no direct measurement of teaching quality currently available. As a result, the TEF uses existing data as indirect measures of teaching quality. These measures are known as "proxies".

No

b. If you answered no, what metrics would be more suitable proxies? :

Current TEF metrics for assessing Teaching Quality and Learning Environment characterise teaching as a one-way affair, relying heavily on metrics from the National Student Survey (NSS). But learning and teaching is a process that involves the interaction of multiple parties, rather than an being an 'event' that can be assessed from just a student perspective. For example, learning does involve the engagement of learners (as per TQ1 of the criteria), but a true measurement of this would mean the inclusion of metrics that account for other factors, such as students' level of commitment to their courses or the amount preparatory work undertaken for classes.

Per our answer to question 13, we also note that there are no metrics for assessing curriculum and pedagogical innovation. This is important, because innovation

involves measured risk-taking to further enhance students' learning, and can improve the teaching quality and provision over time.

A broader set of metrics, and information, from different sources are thus necessary to gain a more well-rounded and comprehensive view of the teaching quality. We believe that this should include more qualitative data from students, as well as from external examiners and peers.

15 The TEF metrics are benchmarked to account for factors such as the subject of study, prior attainment, ethnicity and educational disadvantage of the provider's student intake (see that 'What is TEF?' section for detail).

Not Answered

b. Does TEF benchmark for the right factors?:

16 The TEF process uses both quantitative evidence (for example, the core metrics) and qualitative evidence (for example, the written submission).

a. What are your views about the balance of quantitative and qualitative evidence considered in arriving at ratings?:

We believe that more qualitative evidence is needed, per the above statements.

b. Are there any other aspects of the process that you wish to comment on?:

Are the ratings right?

17 Are the purpose(s) of TEF met by:

Not Answered

Please explain your answer:

Not Answered

Please explain your answer :

No

Please explain your answer :

Per our answer to Question 1, we feel strongly that the Gold, Silver and Bronze rating system oversimplifies the picture of how learning and teaching happen in a university. This type of headline assessment encourages students making a judgement about where to study to 'read no further.' For institutions, it acts as an end point itself, rather than as a set of information providing the basis for future improvement. It is not open to interpretation, and does not include easily accessible explanations of factors that may have influenced an institution's final 'rating.'

However, given the breadth and depth of the TEF exercise, and the wealth of information accumulated during this process, we believe that an institution's overall rating and their ratings on the different criteria used to assess teaching excellence could be communicated more thoughtfully, and perhaps even in different ways to different audiences. For example, providers should be able to easily see and understand how they can improve their provision to students, and students should be given a more nuanced view of the different areas of strength and weakness within an institution and the reasons that might explain these.

18 If you answered no, what alternatives you would suggest.

a. For provider-level TEF?:

It would be perhaps best to combine an overall rating with a visual presentation of institutional ratings on different criteria.

In terms of overall ratings, one solution, for example, would be to adopt something along the lines of what the Chartered ABS has proposed, i.e. to provide overall institutional rating labels 'that are less value-laden and competitive' such as 'Outstanding, Exceeds, Meets.'*

This could then be combined with a visual presentation of an institution's differing ratings on different criteria in a spidergram, as has been proposed by the Academy of Social Sciences in stakeholder meetings surrounding this review.

All of this could also be accompanied by qualitative explanations/discussions of what might account for these strengths and weaknesses, and an indication of how institutions might improve provision in the future.

* Source: Please see the submission of the Chartered Association of Business Schools in response to this review.

b. For subject-level TEF?:

The same basic system could be used for the subject-level TEF, for subject-level ratings rather than institutional ratings.

c. If your previous response(s) reflected on the impact of the TEF on the international reputation of institutions and/or the UK as a whole, we would welcome any evidence or information you can provide that might support your view or help inform the independent review.:

Has TEF changed anything?

19 Has the introduction of TEF positively changed the educational experience of students (e.g. teaching and learning)?

Not Answered

If yes, how?:

20 Has the introduction of TEF negatively changed the educational experience of students (e.g. teaching and learning)?

Yes

If yes, how?:

There is some concern that TEF, as currently formulated, stifles innovation by not taking it into account, and pushes teachers towards following the least risky path. It is also important to understand that when staff time is spent focusing on how to improve on specific metrics, it does not always directly relate back to improved student experience.

21 Has the introduction of TEF impacted positively on research and/or knowledge transfer?

Not Answered

If yes, how?:

22 Has the introduction of TEF impacted negatively on research and/or knowledge transfer?

Not Answered

If yes, how? :

Is TEF worth it?

23 Does TEF help you as a student/provider/employer?

Not Answered

Please explain the reasons for your answer.:

The broad principle of providing information about teaching quality and provision is laudable. However, for the information to be truly helpful to both students and providers, it will need to be carefully presented, explained, and contextualised.

It is also important to understand that this kind of measurement regime uses resources in universities that are valuable, scarce, and difficult to replace. This must be carefully balanced against how these resources could be (in some cases better) used in supporting staff to develop good teaching and learning, and to improve courses and student experience.

24 Explaining your reasoning, what are the most significant costs of:

a. Provider-level TEF?:

b. Subject-level TEF?:

25 Explaining your reasoning, what are the most significant benefits of:

a. Provider-level TEF?:

b. Subject-level TEF?:

Is TEF fair?

26 Are there particular types of students, provision or providers that are disadvantaged by the current design of TEF, in a disproportionate way?

Yes

If so, what changes could be made to address this?:

Part-time students may have different needs and goals, that the TEF does not seek to capture. The varying needs of part-time students do not appear to be included in the TEF's current metrics, which focus on the experience of full-time students.

Universities that focus on widening participation, developing new curriculums, or 'risk-taking' for innovation, may also be disadvantaged under the current system.

27 Are there particular types of students, provision or providers that are advantaged by the current design of TEF, in a disproportionate way?

Not Answered

If so, what changes could be made to address this?: