

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

Submission Extracts

OVERVIEW

The University of Bristol welcomes the Government's ambition to further raise the standards of teaching and learning in the UK university system. We apply for an award under the TEF.

Our submission demonstrates that our education provision is of the highest standard, as measured using a range of data that reflects the diverse dimensions of quality in undergraduate education at our University. These include institutional reputation among prospective students, peers and employers, student retention, peer review of degree programmes and graduate quality, and graduate employability and further study. While we use student feedback to inform the delivery of teaching programmes and student support, we have concerns regarding any process that is principally based on metrics derived from surveys which were not designed to measure teaching quality, particularly in programmes which embody a high degree of rigour and stretch.

We contend that the distinctive strengths of our teaching are best captured by:

- (i) our international reputation in teaching and research as judged by academic peers in major league tables in which we consistently rank in the world top 100 and UK top 10;
- (ii) our national reputation for teaching excellence among students and their parents as judged by the number of applicants per place (~8:1) and high UCAS entry tariff (average 460, 3xA*) across all of our programmes;
- (iii) the outstanding reputation of our graduates among the UK's leading employers: we are currently 3rd among UK universities;
- (iv) the consistent acknowledgement of the excellence of our research-rich curriculum, learning environment and learning outcomes by leading academics and practitioners performing in-depth reviews of 111 (44%) of our teaching programmes on behalf of 28 accrediting professional bodies;
- (v) our very high retention rates; we are currently 10th in the UK;
- (vi) the very high percentage (86%) of our students awarded 1st Class and 2.1 honours degrees (currently 8th in UK), validated through rigorous assessment processes by world-class external examiners;
- (vii) our excellent Graduate Employability Ranking; we are currently 6th in the UK; and
- (viii) our outstanding graduate employability and earnings: over 98% of our graduates are employed in jobs that use the skills acquired during their degree within three years of graduation.

We expand on these holistic testaments to the distinctive excellence of teaching at the University of Bristol in this **Overview** section.

We have an exceptional, well-established international academic reputation manifest in peer recognition of the excellence of our graduates and the challenging research-rich education they have enjoyed. This is attested by our consistently high ranking among the top 100 universities in the world in all major global league tables.¹ (See Table 1)

¹ These performance measures cover all of the core missions of the universities concerned including teaching and research.

Table 1: International League Table	2014	2015	2016	Size of sector	Average world Rank
QS (Global Rank)	29	37	41	400+	36
Times Higher Education (Global Rank)	74	69	71	900+	71
Shanghai Jiao Tong – Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) (Global Rank)	63	66	57	400+	62

World class education

We offer an education that is prized by our students and externally recognised as being of the highest quality (see Table 2). Our students tell us they value highly the quality of our teaching: 92% of final year students who took part in the 2016 NSS reported that they found their course intellectually stimulating. We have achieved between 9th and 11th position in the Times Higher Education annual league table for teaching in the years covered by TEF.² This performance is matched by superb retention rates. Our non-continuation rate is 3% which places us in the top 10 HEIs nationally. According to the most recent UKPI,³ the number of students successfully graduating with an award is 91%; 86% gained a 1st or 2:1 degree.

Table 2: Education Measures	2014	2015	2016	Size of sector	Average UK Rank
NSS Q4 (Intellectually stimulating,% agree)	90	90	92	358	N/A
Teaching -Times Higher Education-UK Rank	9	11	10	91	10
First & 2:1s (Times & Sunday Times) Rank	10	7	6	128	8
	2012	2013	2014		
Non-Continuation (TEF Measure) %	2.8	2.2	2.7	185	10
UKPIs, T5, Projected Learning Outcomes (Degree), %	92	93	91	160+	12

Research-rich education

We provide a world-leading research-rich education in which maximising the benefits of our research strengths for our students' learning experience is an institutional priority. Our students are taught by researchers who are leaders in their fields and all our academic staff are expected to teach, including those on 'research-only' contracts. Our curriculum is infused with the latest research, scholarship and technological developments and our students learn by participating in research activities throughout their course. All of our programmes incorporate a challenging final year project that explicitly enables students' independent learning through development of research skills and critical thinking. The final year project offers students access to resources, facilities, programmes and academics in one of the most research-intensive universities in the UK: over 91% of eligible academic staff were included in our REF submission (Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014), top 5 for research intensity). The transformative nature of the learning experiences these projects afford is at the heart of Bristol education and the impact of this environment is regularly recognised by the Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) who accredit our programmes, as well as by External Examiners.

Professionally recognised education

We educate our students for successful professional careers, working with 28 PSRBs to accredit 111 undergraduate programmes. These account for 44% of our curricular offering and 58% of our student population. PSRB reports, based on external scrutiny by panels of senior academic and professional reviewers, offer consistent and frequent testament to the high quality of our education. The General Dental Council report (2014) for example noted the excellent support provided to all students and their praise for the regular and detailed feedback they receive. The Royal Society of Chemistry in the same year noted the exceptional high standard of practical sessions, the

² Unless otherwise noted, all such data covers the years mandated by the TEF specification.

³ UK Performance Indicator (PI) based on 2014/15 HESA data: projected learning outcome by HESA.

enthusiastic and well-trained demonstrators and the role of technology in preparing students for employment. A range of PSRBs⁴ in Engineering praise the impact of working in a research-rich, industrially well-connected environment on the quality of teaching and learning, as well as on students' employability. These in-depth external evaluations by experienced educators and practitioners reflect teaching quality and the richness of our learning environment in ways that are not reflected in NSS metrics.

Challenging and inclusive education

Because of our established national and international reputation for excellence in teaching and research, we attract the very brightest and most able students from all backgrounds who, in turn, stretch and challenge each other. For entry in October 2015, we received an average of eight home applications for every place and the average UCAS tariff score was 460, the equivalent of just over three A* grades at A Level. We structure our teaching to maximise opportunities for students to inspire each other through collaborative learning via small-group working.

We have a sector-leading track record of evidence-led innovation in providing access to university for students from widening participation backgrounds.⁵ This includes pioneering work on a contextual offer strategy introduced in 2006 and the newly launched Bristol Scholars scheme – described by the Secretary of State for Education as “*truly innovative*”.⁶ Our state school intake has increased from 61% in 2015-16 to 64% in 2016-17: 68% of our students now meet one or more widening participation (WP) indicator(s). We invest £1m *pa* in initiatives to support students from WP backgrounds, including peer-to-peer mentoring and peer-assisted study sessions (PASS). The impact of such schemes is impressive: 76% of those who took part in PASS reported that they felt more confident as a result, whilst 100% of PASS leaders reported that they believed that their involvement in the scheme had improved their own employability.

Outstanding graduate prospects

We have, for many years, been highly regarded among top employers for the quality of our graduates. We have just been adjudged the 3rd most targeted University by the Times Top 100 Employers (2017),⁷ and have consistently been in the top seven for the last six years. In recent global employability rankings⁸ we are deemed to be 39th in the world and 6th in the UK for graduate employability. Over the past three years we have performed strongly on both the HESA Employment Indicator (93-94%) and the Times and Sunday Times Graduate Prospects Score (79-80%).

Table 3: Employment Measures	2014	2015	2016	Size of sector	Average Rank
Universities targeted by Times Top 100 Employers	5	7	4	100	5
QS Employer Reputation Rank (Global)	26	35	43	400+	35
QS Employer Reputation Rank (UK)	9	9	11	73	10

We also consistently perform very strongly on longer term employment outcomes. The most recent longitudinal Destinations and Leavers Higher Education (DLHE) survey showed that three years after graduation only 2% of our graduates were unemployed, while 89% of our former students reported that their employment uses the skills they gained during their degree.

⁴ Institution of Mechanical Engineers (2016), Royal Aeronautical Society (2015), Joint Board of Moderators: Institution of Structural Engineers, Institute of Highway Engineers, Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation, Institution of Civil Engineers (2013), The Institution of Engineering and Technology (2013).

⁵ Prof Ebdon, Director of Fair Access to HE, <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2016/december/bristol-scholars.html>

⁶ The Rt Hon Justine Greening MP, Secretary of State for Education. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYqC3oQJTRo>

⁷ <http://www.highfliers.co.uk/>

⁸ The QS Graduate Employability Rankings 2017.

Our graduates perform strongly in longitudinal salary metrics. Yet the value of a Bristol degree cannot be captured in earnings alone: we nurture skilled, adaptable and resilient graduates who contribute to knowledge generation, flourish in a changing world and become active global citizens. Employers value the ethos that we instil in our graduates telling us that they have *“...something special. They care passionately about making society a better place for everyone and make the most of the amazing opportunities the university offers them to build their skills and experience throughout their courses.”*⁹ It is this context and our remarkable record in long-term employment that demonstrate that we are sector-leading in a way that is not fully reflected in the narrower DLHE data.

⁹ James Darley, Executive Director of Graduate Recruitment at Teach First, the UK’s largest graduate recruiter.