

SENATE**Title of paper:**

National Student Survey results 2025 in the context of the future of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

Main purpose of the paper: For information

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Purpose of the paper

To update Senate on the published consultation on the future of the Teaching Excellence Framework and its potential impact on the University in the context of the NSS 2025 results.

Relation to strategy and values

Education Strategy

Recommendations:

Senate is asked to note and discuss the update.

Consultation to date (including any previous committee consideration and its outcome):

N/A

National Student Survey results 2025 in the context of the future of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

Office for Students (OfS) TEF Consultation

1. Following the [Behan review](#), the OfS had committed to review its approach to quality management and had signalled to the sector its intention to bring the TEF together with its oversight of compliance with the other [B conditions of Registration](#) into a single integrated quality system. This new approach was [published for consultation](#) on the 18 September 2025. A summary outcome is expected in Autumn 2026, with the planned new cycle of TEF starting in 2027-28.
2. Key aspects of the proposal:
 - TEF would move from a periodic whole sector exercise to a rolling cycle of all registered providers (previously TEF did not cover providers with fewer than 500 students).
 - The cadence of an individual HEIs TEF cycle would be determined by its outcome: Gold = 5 years, Silver = 4 years, Bronze = 3 years.
 - Bronze also has a new meaning – ‘meets minimum expectations’ rather than the ‘high quality’ in TEF 2023.
 - Newcastle may go in the first round of the new TEF in 2027-28 due to its Bronze Student Experience outcome in the 2023 TEF.
 - Even greater emphasis on the need for consistency to achieve Silver or Gold – experience and outcomes must be excellent for all students: by subject and by student characteristic splits.
 - The exercise would remain desk-based, panel judged and would retain a student submission.
 - The overall outcome will be determined automatically by the lowest of the two outcomes, rather than judged by a panel (e.g. Newcastle would be Bronze overall if that rule had been in place for 2023).
 - NSS student experience metrics would be retained and expanded to include Learning Opportunities.
 - Student outcomes (continuation, completion and progression) would now only be judged on metrics, not on information on the provider’s submission.
 - The student outcomes ‘progression’ metric would expand beyond the key graduate outcomes survey question to include one or more further questions, and to include [LEO data](#).
 - TEF would expand to cover PGT and modular provision in its second cycle (2030-31) – requiring the introduction of a PGT NSS.
 - There may be a realignment of the division between TEF and the Access and Participation Plan – to bring on course and graduate equity into TEF rather than APP.
3. The most significant change is to tie TEF outcomes to specific consequences in for HEIs that do not achieve Silver or Gold, in addition to more frequent assessment, with restrictions on:
 - Access to certain types of funding

- Fee limits
 - Student number caps
4. The [Skills White Paper](#) announced the intention to bring in an annual inflationary uplift in Home UG tuition fees. It also clarified that this uplift would be 'conditional on the OfS quality regime' – connecting with the 'fee limits' provision in the TEF consultation for. Rather than the current regime which merely requires participation in the TEF in order to benefit from any inflationary uplift, it appears likely that only a Silver or Gold overall will be required. This reinforces the realignment of Bronze as not indicating excellence above the baseline but merely meeting the minimum quality expectations of the B conditions.

What the NSS 2025 tells us

5. Overall, our performance is declining (or not improving) relative to the sector [benchmark](#) (our 'expected' performance). across key NSS themes that feed into the TEF: Teaching on my course, Learning Opportunities, Assessment and Feedback and Student Voice (**Annex A**). Our performance in other areas relating to the student experience are stronger trending just below or above benchmark.
2. Focusing in to question level for subjects, as most of student's experience is driven by their programme, for the 60 programme 'quota groups' there are 1620 question data points (27 questions in the survey). More than half (871) are below benchmark. Even more worrying is that 43% (703) are more than 2.5% below benchmark, which would potentially indicate a 'requires improvement' rating in TEF. This tells us that poor performance is widespread across academic units.
3. With regards to teaching and assessment, our weakest themes, there is huge variation between and within academic units, and variations in performance across questions even within themes. These variations are hidden if results are viewed only at theme and academic unit level.
4. The [NSS Dashboards](#) that have been developed over the last two years empower **all** stakeholders to review and understand their data.

A long-term problem, a long-term solution

5. While there was a change in the NSS questionnaire in 2023, we can compare data at theme level with reasonable reliability over the long duration. The graph below shows the change in the University's full-service sector ranking for each theme (out of 108-114 institutions up to 2022, out of 144 institutions 2023 onwards).



6. We must recognise that we have experienced a long term decline in student satisfaction in key areas of the student education experience. This is a fundamental reason why the University has committed to the Education for Life Strategy 2030+, and in particular the development of the Leading Edge Curriculum (LEC) to address student satisfaction with teaching, learning and assessment. Six programmes (3 UG and 3 PGT) will be going through LEC review and redesign process in Spring 2026, with all UG programmes being reviewed and redesigned in 2026-27 and PGT programmes in 2027-28.
7. The poor NSS scores and student feedback were used to help frame the strategy, with the goal of enhancing student experience across all our programmes. This is a commitment for the **long term**, the first undergraduates from the pilot phase will complete the NSS in spring of 2030, with the majority of the 2031 graduating class being on redesigned programmes (2032 for integrated masters). It will take investment in our Leading Edge curriculum and our people to see sustained change.
8. However, in the light of the potential financial impact of the next TEF we have already taken and will continue to take actions that support change in the student experience alongside the roll out of the LEC.

Actions taken and planned

9. TEF Scorecards and Student Experience Monitoring Group – the VC has established a new group to scrutinise performance of Schools and their quota groups against TEF expectations, hosting conversations with the Faculty PVCs along with the PVC Education and Dean of Students to understand actions being taken at a local level and identify actions that may be beneficial at an institutional level.
10. Assessment and Feedback: institutional - some of the key policy requirements of the Leading Edge Curriculum, relating to the operation of assessment (e.g. assessment briefs, communicating feedback opportunities etc.) have been implemented early to have an impact from 2025-26. Academic units are asked to monitor compliance to allow Heads of Academic Units to take action if expectations are not being met. This is an institutional change in culture.

11. Student voice: local - all academic units are now required to ensure that a space is available in Canvas/VLE to share student feedback received, and a response from the unit recorded so students will know that they have been listened to.
12. Student voice and experience: institutional - Executive Board have agreed to establish a University task and finish group during 2025-26 to address key weaknesses in student voice and support for the student experience with an initial focus on engaging students with feedback mechanisms and closing the feedback loop, through supporting response rates and engaging with student representatives and NUSU, and to identify the actions and resourcing needed for a longer term plan for change. The University and NUSU have jointly commissioned an external review of student representation, which has completed the discovery phase and is now moving on to identify recommendations for change.
13. Module evaluation - a pilot of end of module evaluation will be implemented in Semester 2 in three Schools, which can be rolled out as part of LEC review and redesign in AY 2026/27.
14. The Pro Vice Chancellor, Education is also working closely with the Faculty Deans of Education and Education Cross-Cutting Deans, to identify actions that could be practically taken for 2026-27 to support a step-change in the overall student experience e.g. simplifying systems students use, enforcing existing expectations around the Canvas Baseline etc.
15. The Education Strategy's Educator Accelerator Project, which had been temporarily scaled back to allow progress of the Leading Edge Curriculum and Student Launchpad, will now be brought back to full Project status and be seeking funding for a new operating model to support teaching effectiveness.

Annex A

Teaching on my course

		Ind value (%)	Bchmk (%)	Diff (ppt)
3 year avg		83.7%	86.0%	-2.3%
2 'TEF years' avg		84.1%	86.3%	-2.3%
Year 0	2023	83.1%	85.4%	-2.3%
Year 1 (earliest)	2024	84.0%	85.6%	-1.6%
Year 2	2025	84.1%	87.0%	-2.9%
Year 3	2026			
Year 4 (most recent)	2027			

Assessment and Feedback

		Ind value (%)	Bchmk (%)	Diff (ppt)
3 year avg		70.3%	75.7%	-5.4%
2 'TEF years' avg		70.8%	76.2%	-5.5%
Year 0	2023	69.5%	74.7%	-5.2%
Year 1 (earliest)	2024	70.2%	74.7%	-4.6%
Year 2	2025	71.3%	77.7%	-6.4%
Year 3	2026			
Year 4 (most recent)	2027			

Academic Support

		Ind value (%)	Bchmk (%)	Diff (ppt)
3 year avg		86.0%	86.1%	-0.2%
2 'TEF years' avg		87.3%	87.1%	0.2%
Year 0	2023	83.3%	84.2%	-0.9%
Year 1 (earliest)	2024	86.1%	85.9%	0.2%
Year 2	2025	88.5%	88.3%	0.1%
Year 3	2026			
Year 4 (most recent)	2027			

Learning opportunities

		Ind value (%)	Bchmk (%)	Diff (ppt)
3 year avg		78.9%	82.0%	-3.1%
2 'TEF years' avg		79.6%	82.6%	-3.0%
Year 0	2023	77.6%	80.9%	-3.3%
Year 1 (earliest)	2024	79.4%	81.7%	-2.3%
Year 2	2025	79.7%	83.4%	-3.7%
Year 3	2026			
Year 4 (most recent)	2027			

Learning resources

		Ind value (%)	Bchmk (%)	Diff (ppt)
3 year avg		88.6%	87.3%	1.3%
2 'TEF years' avg		89.2%	87.7%	1.7%
Year 0	2023	87.3%	86.7%	0.5%
Year 1 (earliest)	2024	89.0%	87.0%	2.1%
Year 2	2025	89.4%	88.3%	1.2%
Year 3	2026			
Year 4 (most recent)	2027			

Student Voice

		Ind value (%)	Bchmk (%)	Diff (ppt)
3 year avg		70.7%	73.1%	-2.4%
2 'TEF years' avg		70.3%	73.5%	-3.2%
Year 0	2023	71.5%	72.4%	-0.9%
Year 1 (earliest)	2024	68.9%	70.7%	-1.8%
Year 2	2025	71.7%	76.3%	-4.6%
Year 3	2026			
Year 4 (most recent)	2027			