



Quantitative Analysis of TEF 2023 Outcomes Relative to Dataset Evidence

Professor Claire V.S. Pike, Pro Vice-Chancellor
(Education Enhancement), Anglia Ruskin University



Introduction

With respect to quantitative evidence publicly available on the [TEF data dashboard](#) - NSS results for the Student Experience aspect; continuation, completion and progression results for the Student Outcomes aspect - the TEF 2023 guidance stated: *'The indicators should contribute no more than half of the evidence of very high quality or outstanding features, for each aspect as a whole'*.

Taking the Office for Students' starting point that benchmark values in the UK higher education sector are consistent with 'very high quality' provision, together with the medal-like rating structure of the TEF, it is logical that dashboard evidence materially above benchmark is consistent with a Gold rating, dashboard evidence broadly in line with benchmark is consistent with a Silver rating, and dashboard evidence materially below benchmark is consistent with either a Bronze or Requires Improvement rating, depending upon how far below benchmark it falls. To use the terminology of the TEF exercises prior to 2023, one might consider that the high-level dashboard data forms an 'initial hypothesis' for a provider's TEF outcome, which may or may not have been upheld once the dashboard findings had been considered together with additional evidence brought forth in the provider and student narrative submissions.

This analysis asks the question of whether or not - across the TEF 2023 outcomes dataset as a whole and by its subdivisions - such 'initial hypotheses' were upheld. In other words, to what extent did the evidence submitted in narrative submissions appear to have a material, potentially transformational, effect upon provider outcomes, and were such effects - positive or negative - equally distributed among provider types and geographies?

Methods

TEF 2023 dashboard data was coded at whole-institution level for each participating provider, for each of the five Student Experience and three Student Outcomes measures. Each of the eight data points was coded as materially above, broadly in line with, or materially below, benchmark. A modal (that is, the most common) code for each aspect was recorded.

Using the relationship between data position to benchmark and 'initial hypothesis' for TEF 2023 outcome outlined above, modal codes for each provider were compared with the TEF 2023 rating awarded to the provider in question.

For each provider, it was then recorded whether the TEF 2023 rating was **more positive** than, **in line with**, or **more negative** than, the 'initial hypothesis' indicated by the dashboard dataset. (Where data was materially below benchmark, judgement was used as to whether the data in question were consistent with a Bronze or Requires Improvement outcome for the 'initial hypothesis'.) For example, if a provider's dashboard data was reported as broadly in line with benchmark for 4/5 Student Experience measures and 2/3 Student Outcomes measures, and yet the provider's TEF 2023 rating was Gold, it would count as a **'more positive'** in this analysis.

Subpopulation analysis of providers was performed using designations on the [TEF 2023 ratings dashboard](#) for TEF 2023 result, provider type, previous TEF outcome, and region of England; and on the [Complete University Guide](#) website for mission group. (Where an institution is a member of two mission groups, they were counted in both categories.)

Results

Overall (see Figure 1), 21% of providers received a TEF 2023 rating that exceeded the 'initial hypothesis' from the dashboard data, 62% received a TEF 2023 rating in line with the 'initial hypothesis', and 17% of providers received a dashboard rating that fell short of the 'initial hypothesis'.

Figure 1: TEF 2023 outcomes relative to dataset evidence

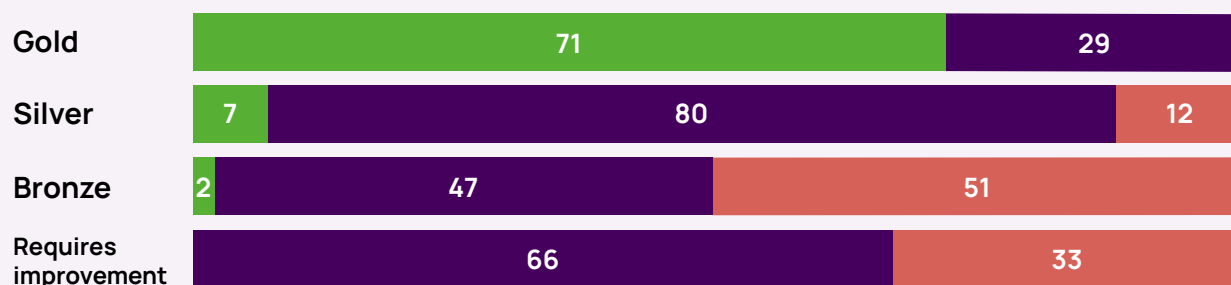


Numbers indicate percentages of all providers.

Key:	Color	Description
	Green	Provider TEF 2023 outcome is more positive than 'initial hypothesis'
	Purple	Provider TEF 2023 outcome is in line with 'initial hypothesis'
	Red	Provider TEF 2023 outcome is more negative than 'initial hypothesis'

Subdivision by TEF 2023 rating (see Figure 2) is striking. The majority (71%) of providers who received a Gold rating in TEF 2023 did so with a dashboard dataset that suggested an initial hypothesis lower than Gold. Silver-rated providers largely (80%) achieved this rating consistent with their dashboard dataset. The majority (51%) of Bronze-rated providers received this rating despite dashboard data that was consistent with an outcome more positive than Bronze. Only three providers have a Requires Improvement TEF 2023 rating - of these, the dashboard data for two was considered consistent with Requires Improvement.

Figure 2: TEF 2023 outcomes relative to dataset evidence, by TEF 2023 rating

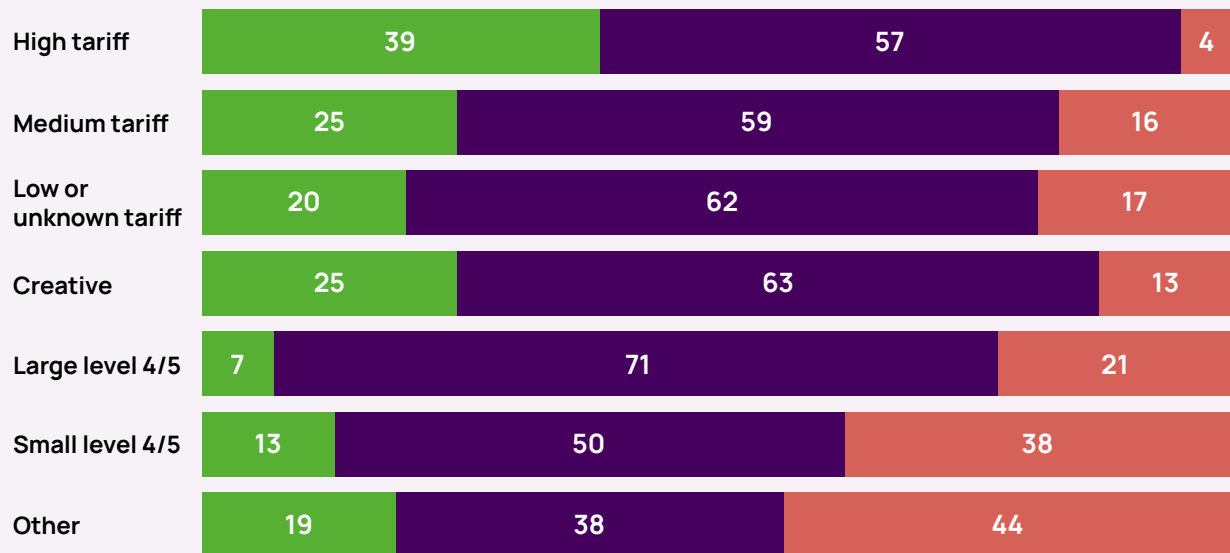


Numbers indicate percentages of all providers.

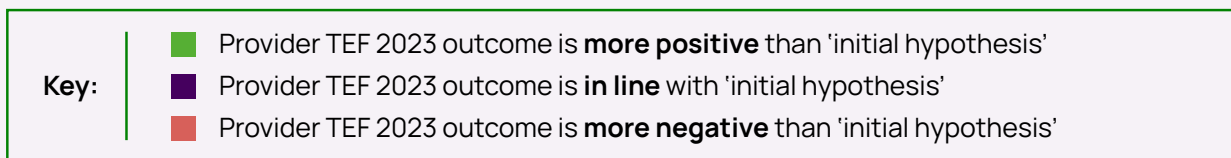
Key:	Color	Description
	Green	Provider TEF 2023 outcome is more positive than 'initial hypothesis'
	Purple	Provider TEF 2023 outcome is in line with 'initial hypothesis'
	Red	Provider TEF 2023 outcome is more negative than 'initial hypothesis'

By provider type (see Figure 3), 'high tariff', 'medium tariff', and 'creative' providers appear particularly to have received TEF 2023 ratings that exceed dashboard 'initial hypotheses', with 39%, 25% and 25% of providers in each of those groups performing more strongly than starting data might suggest. In contrast, 38% of 'small Level 4/5' and 44% of 'other' providers received a TEF 2023 rating that was weaker than dashboard data might have suggested.

Figure 3: TEF 2023 outcomes relative to dataset evidence, by provider type

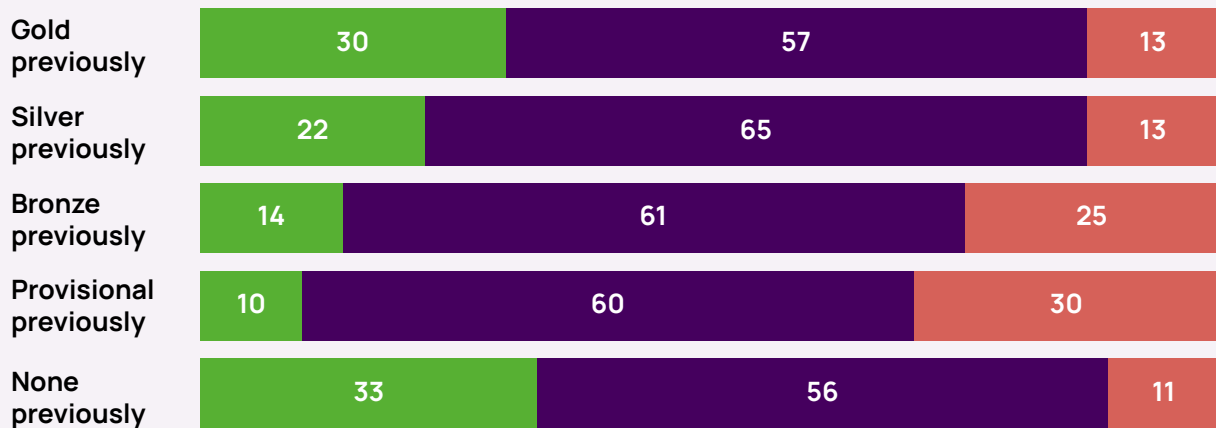


Numbers indicate percentages of all providers.



Subdivision by previous TEF rating (see Figure 4) largely echoes the breakdown by TEF 2023 rating: providers previously rated Gold performed more strongly than indicated by the dashboard dataset in 30% of cases - in contrast to 14% of providers previously rated Bronze. 33% of providers with no previous TEF rating exceeded their respective 'initial hypotheses', whereas 30% of providers previously rated as 'provisional' fell short of their respective dashboard data indications.

Figure 4: TEF 2023 outcomes relative to dataset evidence, by previous TEF rating

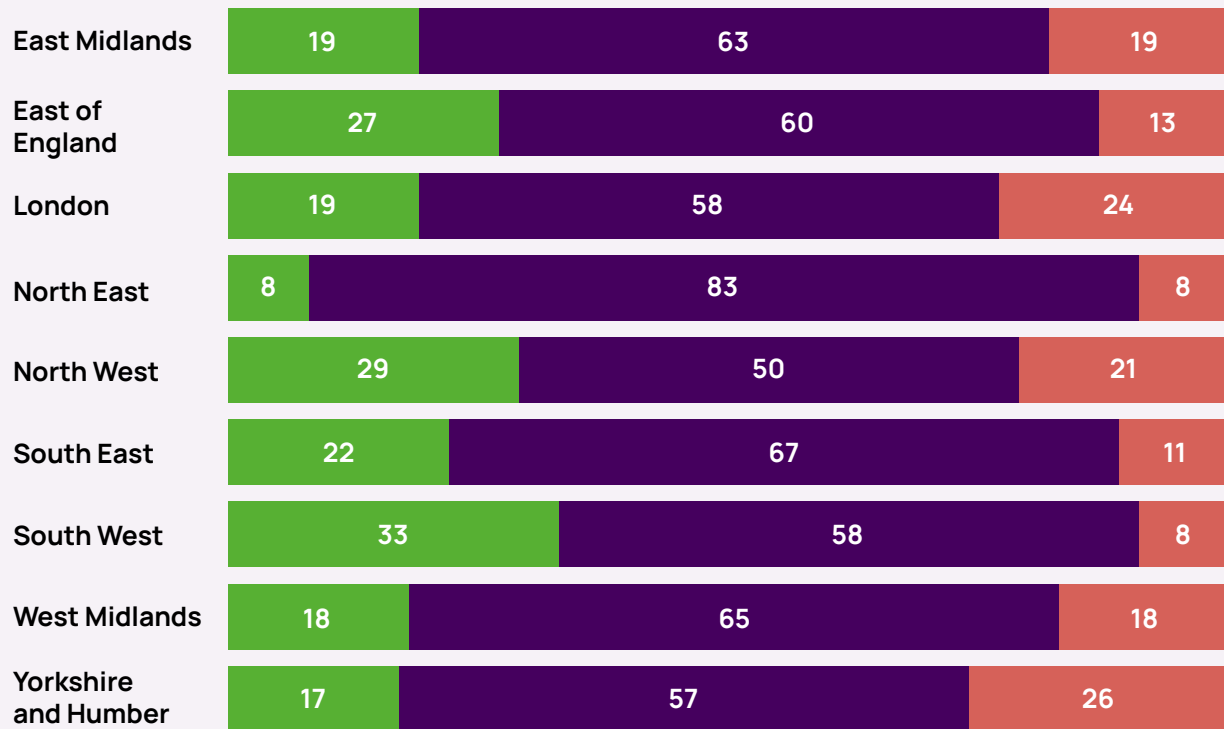


Numbers indicate percentages of all providers.

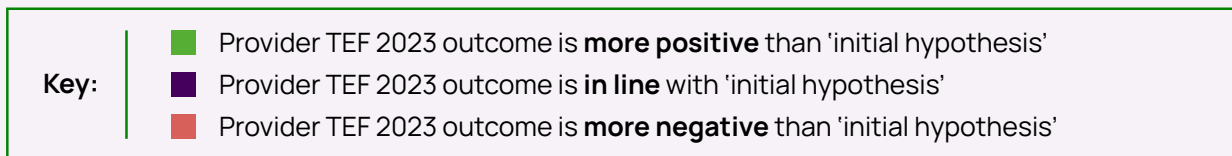
Key:	■ Provider TEF 2023 outcome is more positive than 'initial hypothesis'
	■ Provider TEF 2023 outcome is in line with 'initial hypothesis'
	■ Provider TEF 2023 outcome is more negative than 'initial hypothesis'

Some diversity is present in TEF 2023 outcomes relative to data dashboard evidence by region of England (see Figure 5). The greatest concentration of providers who out-performed their starting dataset is in the South West, and the lowest concentration in the North East.

Figure 5: TEF 2023 outcomes relative to dataset evidence, by region of England

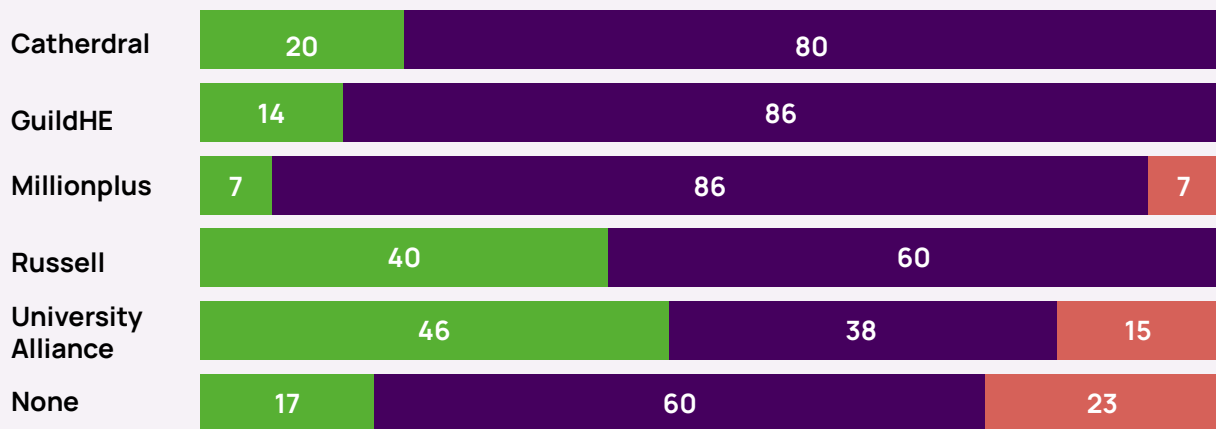


Numbers indicate percentages of all providers.

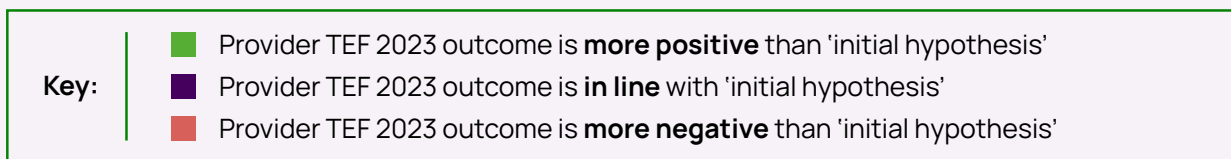


Subdivision by university mission group (see Figure 6) reveals interesting differences: 46% of University Alliance members received a TEF 2023 rating that exceeded the 'initial hypothesis' from their dashboard data, as did 40% of Russell Group members. A large majority of MillionPlus, GuildHE and Cathedral Group members (86%, 86% and 80%, respectively) received TEF 2023 ratings that are consistent with dashboard 'initial hypotheses'. The largest percentage of providers whose TEF 2023 outcome was lower than that suggested by dashboard data (23%) was found among those with no mission group affiliation.

Figure 6: TEF 2023 outcomes relative to dataset evidence, by region of England



Numbers indicate percentages of all providers.



Discussion

At overall level, the analysis presented here demonstrates that most providers received a TEF 2023 rating that is consistent with their benchmarked dashboard data - but the unequal distribution of providers whose TEF 2023 outcome differed from the dashboard 'initial hypothesis' is of interest.

It is clear that - especially for providers rated as 'outstanding' - the narrative submissions carried significant weight. Persuasive additional evidence seems to have been delivered particularly by 'high tariff', 'medium tariff' and 'creative' providers, and by members of the University Alliance and Russell mission groups. Qualitative analysis of narratives submitted by providers who were rated Gold in TEF 2023 despite dashboard data that is consistent with a lower overall rating may be especially informative, in terms of modelling good practice.

The results may be interpreted to suggest that where experience and/or resource to engage with the TEF is more limited - for example, in providers previously rated as 'provisional', small Level 4/5 providers, and providers without mission group affiliation - additional support in presenting effective narrative evidence for the TEF may be beneficial.

Related work



Blog - The power of the narrative? Intuiting the persuasive power of TEF 2023 submissions from a quantitative analysis of provider outcomes

In this [blog post](#), Professor Claire Pike discusses the background behind this report, including the initial aim to understand whether, using quantitative methods, it was possible to intuit the potential persuasive - or even, transformative - effect that additional evidence brought forth in narrative statements may or may not have had upon final outcomes.



Report - Evaluating Excellence: TEF 2023 Submission and Panel Statement Analysis

This [QAA report](#) presents a comprehensive qualitative analysis of provider submissions and panel statements, broken down by features of excellence. It is designed to demonstrate the extent of work happening within the sector, extracting key themes and areas of learning from what has been recognised as outstanding practice, to support the sector in preparing for the next iteration of the TEF and also the broader enhancement of their provision.



Blog - How the TEF can debunk the biggest myths about higher education

In this [blog post](#), QAA's Helena Vine discusses the Evaluating Evidence report and what we've learnt from the TEF 2023 submissions.

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