Teaching Excellence Framework

Year two additional guidance

This document supplements the Department for Education's publication 'Teaching Excellence Framework: year two specification' (September 2016). It provides additional guidance for UK higher education providers on how to participate, and sets out additional procedures for the TEF panel members and assessors.

The deadline for applications is noon on 26 January 2017.
The outcomes will be published in May 2017.

October 2016/32

TEF Teaching Excellence Framework

About this guide

The Government has introduced the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) to recognise and reward excellent teaching in UK higher education (HE) providers.

In September 2016, the Department for Education (DfE) published 'Teaching Excellence Framework: year two specification'.[1] It sets out the assessment framework and specifies the criteria, evidence and process for the TEF in Year Two.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), working with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), is responsible for implementing the TEF Year Two according to the DfE's specification.

Structure of this document

This document comprises:

The DfE's specification for TEF Year Two, as published in September 2016. While it includes the DfE's glossary at Annex A, the other annexes included in the TEF specification are available to download alongside this document at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/201632.

Additional guidance for HE providers on how to participate in the Year Two TEF, and additional procedural guidance for panel members and assessors in conducting the assessment. These have a blue strip in the margin and are titled Additional guidance.

Note that although the DfE specification is unchanged from the original published in September, footnote and page numbering differ in this publication.

Use of icons

For ease of reference, the following icons appear alongside content that is particularly relevant to specific providers, as follows:

For providers in Scotland

For providers in Wales

For providers in Northern Ireland

For providers that do not have suitable metrics and may be eligible for a provisional TEF award.

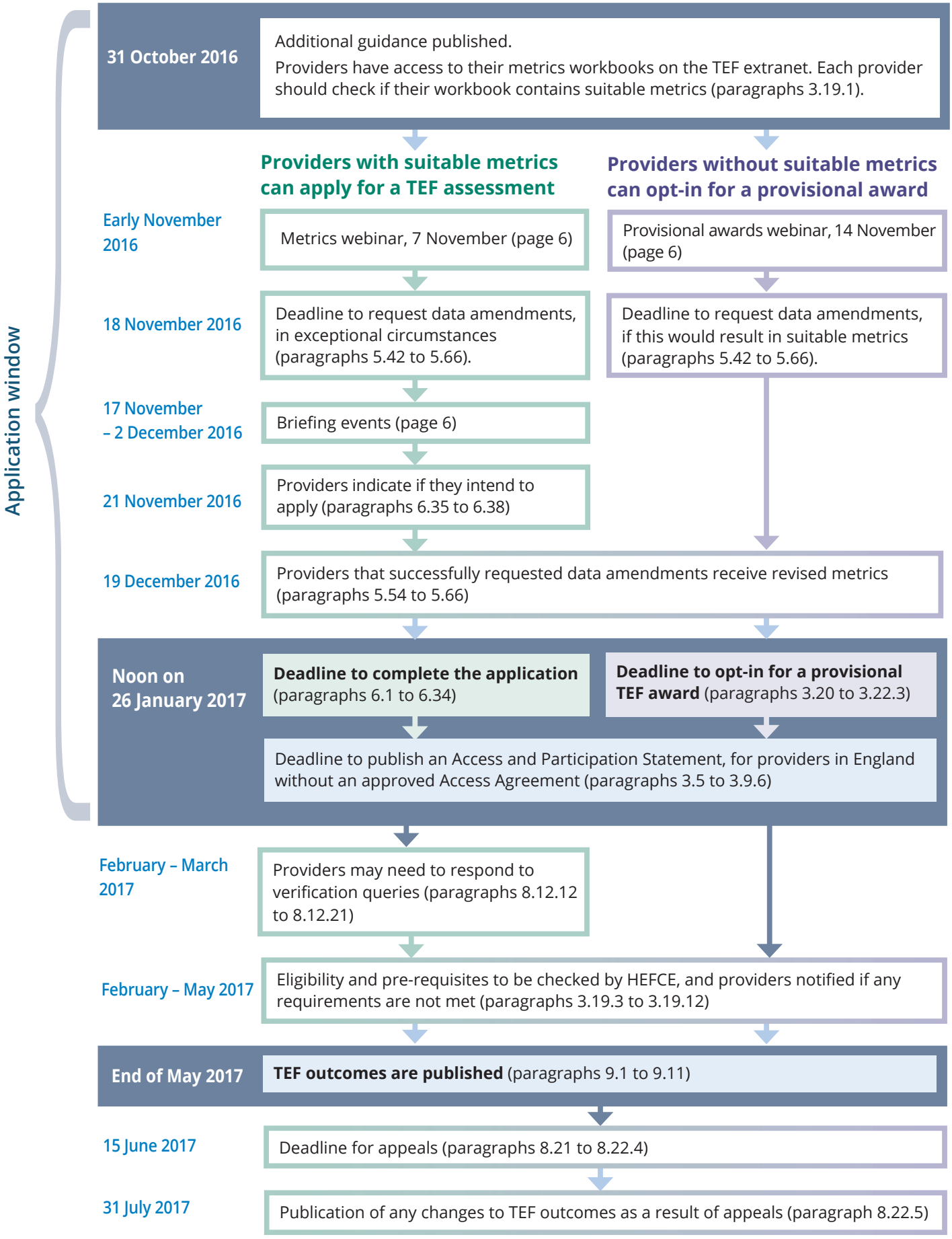

In addition, this icon appears alongside content in the DfE specification that is clarified in the additional guidance.

1 The DfE specification is available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/teaching-excellence-framework

Contents

Text in blue strip indicates whole sections that are supplementary to the DfE specification. Other additional guidance is inserted into sections of the specification.

Timeline and actions required



Enquiries and further information

Enquiries about participation in TEF Year Two: Contact HEFCE

Contact TEF@hefce.ac.uk for enquiries about participating in TEF Year Two, including:

- briefing events and webinars
- eligibility and pre-requisites
- submission requirements
- the survey of application intentions
- provisional awards
- publication of TEF outcomes
- appeals.

Contact TEFmetrics@hefce.ac.uk for enquiries about TEF Year Two metrics, including:

- metrics workbooks
- data amendment requests
- access to and use of the TEF extranet.

Enquiries about TEF policy and future development: Contact DfE

Contact tef.queries@bis.gsi.gov.uk for enquiries about:

- the TEF in Year One
- the DfE specification for TEF Year Two (if not concerning participation in Year Two)
- future TEF developments, including the subject-level pilots and taught postgraduate level TEF
- fee and loan uplifts associated with TEF outcomes in England.

Further information

HEFCE's TEF webpages: www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/tef/

DfE's TEF webpages: www.gov.uk/government/collections/teaching-excellence-framework

Any updates, clarifications or FAQs will be published on the above websites. TEF contacts will be informed when new information is published.

TEF contacts

Enquiries from members of staff at a provider should be sent, where possible, via a designated TEF contact.

Each provider's TEF contact is listed at www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/tef/.

The role of the TEF contact is to:

- act as the primary contact for correspondence with the TEF team, regarding the provider's participation in the TEF
- as far as is practicable, channel queries from other members of staff at the provider, to the TEF team

- respond to clarification and verification queries from the TEF team, during the assessment stage (February to March 2017)
- liaise with student representatives at the provider, as appropriate, regarding the TEF application.

Providers have also been invited to nominate a TEF metrics contact to act as the primary contact for correspondence with the TEF team regarding the TEF metrics.

Briefing events and webinars

Briefing events are being held throughout the UK in November and December, to discuss and clarify the guidance and procedures for participating in TEF Year Two. All main TEF contacts from providers that are potentially eligible to apply for a TEF assessment have been invited to register one staff member and one student to attend.

A webinar will be available on 7 November aimed at TEF metrics contacts, to explain the contents of the metrics workbook and the data amendment process. All providers with metrics have been invited.

A webinar will be available on 14 November to explain the provisional award process. All main TEF contacts at providers that do not have suitable metrics and may be eligible for a provisional award have been invited.

The webinars will also be available to view online after these dates.

As mentioned in 'About this guide' at the start of this document, what follows is the DfE specification for the TEF Year Two that was originally published in September.

Additional guidance sections with a blue strip in the margin are provided by HEFCE.

Introduction

1.1 This document provides a specification for the TEF in Year Two of its operation. It reflects the decisions made by the Government in response to the Technical Consultation. A related document is available which summarises responses received to the questions asked in the consultation. A Glossary of technical terms used in this document is in Annex A.

Purpose of the TEF

1.2 The Government has introduced the TEF as a way of:

a. Better informing students' choices about what and where to study

b. Raising esteem for teaching

c. Recognising and rewarding excellent teaching

d. Better meeting the needs of employers, business, industry and the professions

Implementation

1.3 The Department for Education (DfE) has asked the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), working with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), to implement Year Two of the TEF.

1.4 Applications for Year Two are due in by the end of January 2017 (delivery timetable in **Annex B**). Outcomes will be announced in spring 2017 in time to inform the decisions of students applying in the same year. Any fee uplift will apply from autumn 2018. This, and the operative timings for the TEF in years one to four, are outlined in **table one below**. As noted in the Government's White Paper, the TEF Year Two award will be valid for up to three years (with a few notable exceptions – for further information, see the **Eligibility, pre-requisites and provisional TEF awards section** and the **Outcomes section**).

Table 1 **TEF timings**

TEF Year	Assessment results announced	To inform students applying in...	...and entering in ...	Affects fees from...
1	2016	Autumn 2016	Autumn 2017	Autumn 2017
2	2017	Autumn 2017	Autumn 2018	Autumn 2018
3	2018	Autumn 2018	Autumn 2019	Autumn 2019
4	2019	Autumn 2019	Autumn 2020	Autumn 2020

Additional guidance

Implementation responsibilities

1.4.1 **The Department for Education (DfE) is responsible for determining the framework and specification for the TEF assessment, and for deciding the fee and loan uplifts associated with TEF outcomes in England. The Scottish Government, Welsh Government and the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland are responsible for regulating fees in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively.**

1.4.2 **HEFCE is responsible for implementing the TEF in Year Two, in accordance with the DfE specification. Implementation of the TEF Year Two is undertaken by the TEF team, which is composed of HEFCE and QAA staff, working under the direction of the HEFCE TEF manager. The TEF team's implementation of the Year Two TEF is overseen by the TEF Project Board which reports to the HEFCE chief executive.[2] The HEFCE chief executive will be responsible for key operational decisions, for example with regard to providers' eligibility to participate in Year Two TEF and to data amendments.**

1.4.3 **The TEF Panel is responsible for deciding the outcomes of the assessment, based on advice and recommendations from the TEF assessors. (For more information on their roles see paragraphs 8.23 to 8.25.3)**

Funding applications

1.5 No provider will be required to pay a fee to enter the TEF.

Future development

1.6 Outcomes in Year Two will not be associated with differential fee uplifts for providers in England – rather, all those achieving a rating of Bronze, Silver and Gold will receive the full inflationary uplift (see the **TEF descriptors section** for more information about the different ratings). However, these awards will be used from Year Three onwards to inform differentiated fees, unless a provider chooses to re-enter TEF in Year Three or future years to obtain a new award, in which case the latest TEF award will be used (see the **Beyond Year Two** section for further information). We will conduct a lessons learned exercise at the end of Year Two activity (see **Lessons learned section**).

1.7 The results of the lessons learned exercise will inform the implementation of Year Three, which will be a further opportunity for providers to apply before the TEF moves to subject level in Year Four.

1.8 The move to subject level will be informed by a series of pilots in Year Three to test the assessment framework and process at subject level. The assessment framework and process will be designed using a collaborative approach involving the Department for Education working with stakeholder groups and the existing TEF Delivery Group, taking the current approach as the starting point. As outlined later in the document, the devolved nations will be invited to participate in this development activity.

1.9 As outlined in the White Paper, postgraduate taught provision will be included in the TEF from Year Four at the earliest. As outlined below, we will also work with the Scottish Government and stakeholder bodies as the quality system in Scotland evolves to consider the relationship between the Quality Enhancement Framework and the TEF.

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2 Terms of reference for the TEF Project Board are available on the HEFCE TEF website: www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/tef/

Relationship between quality assessment and the TEF

1.10 Quality assessment and the TEF form a coherent system but play distinctive roles. Quality assessment provides a foundation that ensures providers offer a high-quality student academic experience, deliver good student outcomes, and protect the interests of their students. It also delivers assurances about the integrity of degree standards to ensure that the value and reputation of UK degrees is safeguarded.

1.11 The TEF will incentivise excellent teaching and provide better information for students to support them in making informed choices. Quality assessment and the TEF will therefore work together to promote, support and reward continuous improvement and better student outcomes (see **figure one** for a simplified diagram).

1.12 There is currently a common understanding across the UK of the baseline quality required of higher education provision, defined by the Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications[3]. However, implementation of the new approach to quality assessment will vary in different parts of the UK. In England and Northern Ireland, Annual Provider Review (APR) will be the primary mechanism for assuring quality for higher education institutions and further education colleges that receive direct and indirect funding from HEFCE or Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland (DfE –NI). All providers in England and Northern Ireland will transition to the APR arrangements[4] in 2016/17. For Year Two, a small number of providers will not have transitioned to the APR system. In their case, their previous quality assessment review will determine their eligibility for TEF.

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See paragraph 3.15.1

1.13 Alternative providers in England, who do not receive funding directly from a funding council are reviewed by the QAA and are currently transitioning to Higher Education Review (HER APs)[5].

1.14 In Scotland, providers take part in Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR), which forms part of an overarching Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF). ELIR includes an emphasis on enhancement alongside assurance – it includes a review visit where peers engage directly with the institution being reviewed[6].

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1.15 Wales has a quality assurance framework that aligns with England and Northern Ireland. For Year Two, in the majority of cases, providers' previous quality assessment review will determine their eligibility for TEF. However, some providers may be assessed under the new external quality assessment review process.[7]

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1.16 In all cases, quality assessment provides a pre-requisite for the TEF. Quality assessment reviews (whether in the form of APR, ELIR, HER AP or an earlier form of review) typically look at a broader range of areas than solely teaching quality. While they can, and do, recognise achievement above the baseline, they are primarily aimed at ensuring quality and standards meet common thresholds.

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3 For more information on the Quality Code including the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications, see the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

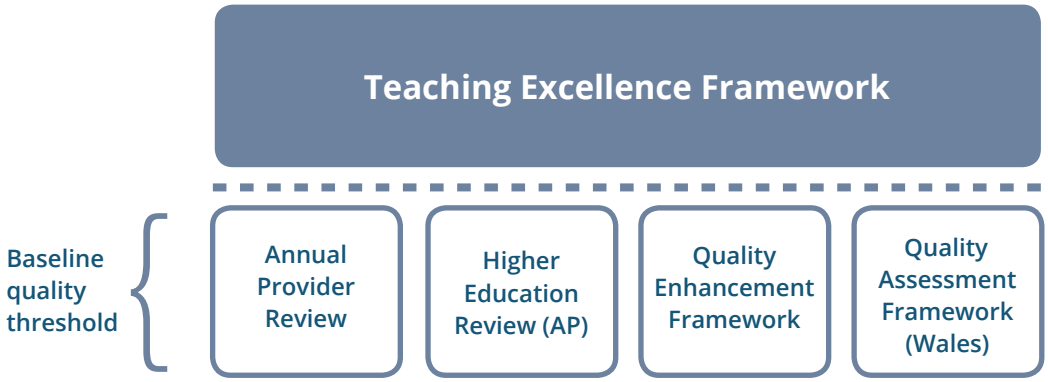
4 For more information on APR, see the Review of Quality Assessment.

5 For more information on HER (AP), see the Education Oversight Reviews documentation.

6 For more information on ELIR and the Quality Enhancement Framework, see the Enhancement Themes webpage.

7 For more information on the external quality assessment review process, see the Outcomes of the consultation carried out on the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

Figure 1 **Relationship between TEF & Quality**



1.17 The TEF will build on this, providing an additional judgement on performance above the baseline, in the area of teaching and learning quality. Teaching excellence is defined broadly to include teaching quality, the learning environment, and student outcomes and learning gain.

1.18 For providers in England undergoing APR, some of the same data that will be used to monitor quality as part of the APR process will be used to assess performance in the TEF. As these data sets are collected centrally, providers taking part in the TEF will not need to complete additional returns, thus reducing the administrative burden on institutions.

1.19 TEF assessors will not retest providers against baseline quality and standards. Rather, they will focus on performance above the baseline. A concern or risk to quality and standards identified through quality assessment has the potential to impact on a provider's TEF award. Should a concern be substantiated, a provider may lose its award (see **Outcomes section**).

1.20 In England, quality assessment and TEF outcomes will feature on the Register of HE Providers and in official sources of information for students.

Scope

Level of provision and mode of study

2.1 In Year Two, the TEF will cover undergraduate provision at levels 4, 5 and/or 6[8], which includes higher and degree apprenticeships. In Scotland, higher education institutions offering awards at levels 7, 8, 9 and 10 are in scope.

Additional guidance

Level of provision

2.1.1 **The following provision is also in scope:**

- **primary qualifications (or first degrees) in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science**
- **integrated masters degrees**
- **Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas at levels 4 and 5**

2.1.2 **Higher and Degree level apprenticeships are in scope if they include a qualification within the UK Framework for HE Qualifications.**

2.2 All **modes of** delivery, including full and part-time and distance, work-based and blended learning are in scope for the TEF.

2.3 Postgraduate provision will not be in scope for the TEF until Year Four at the earliest.

The devolved administrations

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2.4 Higher education providers across the UK took part in the TEF in Year One. The Devolved Administrations have confirmed they are content for providers in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland to take part in Year Two, should they wish to do so.

2.5 We have made a number of changes to ensure that providers in these nations can be assessed fairly and on a level playing field with providers in England. These variations are summarised below and reflected in relevant parts of the document.

2.6 First, guidance and support for the TEF Panel and assessors, both of which will include representation from the devolved nations, will include:

- training on the operating context of higher education in each nation, including Welsh medium provision in Wales; and
- a brief statement setting out the national context for assessors to review (produced by the respective funding bodies for England, Wales and Scotland or the Northern Ireland Executive, in consultation with their sector bodies).

2.7 This will allow assessors to understand the operating context for higher education as they assess TEF applications from each nation.

2.8 Second, we have adapted the TEF eligibility requirements to recognise different approaches to quality assessment and access and participation across the UK:

- the TEF will recognise Fee and Access Plans in Wales, Widening Access and Participation Plans in Northern Ireland, and Outcome Agreements in Scotland as equivalent to Access Agreements in England for TEF purposes;

8 The Framework for HE Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies.

- all higher education providers will be able to use excerpts from their quality assessment review findings within the TEF provider submission, to support their case for teaching excellence (if they feel it is appropriate to do so), thereby minimising any additional burden. Any findings included in the TEF provider submission should be timely, demonstrate performance above the baseline and be clearly related to the TEF assessment criteria;
- when assessing institutional performance for specific student groups, particularly disadvantaged students, we will split TEF core metrics by the different Indices of Multiple Deprivation used in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland;
- guidance to Panel members and assessors will explicitly set out that where providers in Wales are delivering Welsh-medium provision, this should be considered as positive evidence towards the TEF assessment criterion concerned with students' academic experiences (LE3)[9]; and
- guidance will also explicitly recognise that providers in Scotland typically have slightly lower retention rates, due to different structure, and that this should be taken into account by assessors in judging performance against the core and split metrics.

2.9 Third, devolved nations will have greater involvement in the design and implementation of the TEF:

- Devolved Administrations will be invited to sit on the DfE-chaired TEF Delivery Group, which oversees the future design of the TEF;
- Devolved Funding Councils (or a nominated body) will be invited to sit on the HEFCE-chaired TEF Project Board, which oversees implementation and will ensure they are fully integrated into the lessons-learned exercise that will review year two of TEF;
- A provider from each devolved nation will be invited to sit on the DfE-chaired TEF User Group, which provides a 'user' perspective on how the TEF will work in practice, thus allowing Government to work through policy problems and proposals in collaboration with the sector;
- Providers from the devolved nations will be invited to take part in the Year Three pilots that we will use to test our approach to TEF assessments at subject level; and
- We will work with the Scottish Government, funding council, representative bodies and providers as the quality system in Scotland evolves – in particular to see whether, should a future iteration of ELIR or the broader Quality Enhancement Framework within which it sits provide genuinely differentiated results, there could be a direct mapping between ELIR and the TEF.

Franchised provision

2.10 For the purpose of TEF, the quality of provision will be assessed at the provider that delivers the teaching. This may not be the provider that awards the qualification or registers the student. Franchised provision taught by a partner of a degree-awarding body will be included in the teaching provider's TEF assessment, not in the degree-awarding body's TEF assessment, because we want to assess teaching where it takes place. A provider offering **franchised provision** on behalf of a degree-awarding body will be in scope for the TEF provided it is quality-assured in its own right and meets the additional eligibility requirements set out in the next section.

9 See the **Assessment Criteria** section for further detail

Additional guidance

Franchised provision

2.10.1 For the purpose of the Year Two TEF, franchised provision is defined as an agreement between a lead HE provider (the registering provider) and another higher education provider (usually a further education college or an alternative provider) to teach all or part of a programme on behalf of the lead provider.

2.10.2 Franchised students (those registered at one provider but taught at another) will contribute only to the metrics of the provider where the students are taught. Franchised students will not be included in the metrics of the registering provider. Where the student is taught for part of a qualification by both providers, the provider where the student spends the majority of their first year (or 2009-10, whichever is the latest) will be considered the teaching provider.

2.10.3 Where the student completes a qualification at one provider (for example a Foundation Degree) and then goes on to study a separate additional qualification at another provider (for example a 'top-up' degree) they will be included in any applicable metrics for both providers. (In the example given, the student would be included in all the metrics for the Foundation Degree at the first provider, but only the employment and non-continuation metrics for the 'top-up' degree at the second provider, as courses of one year's duration are not included in the NSS-based metrics.)

2.10.4 For the purposes of the TEF, franchised provision refers specifically to arrangements between the registering and the teaching provider. This distinction determines how franchised students are included in providers' metrics, as described above. While the relationship between the registering and the teaching provider may often be related to validation relationships, validation relationships between providers do not in themselves affect a provider's eligibility or the way that students are included in providers' TEF metrics.

2.10.5 TEF awards are made in respect of the quality of provision at the provider that delivers the teaching. For franchised provision, however, the registering provider determines and ordinarily collects the student fee. It is, therefore, the TEF outcome of a registering provider in England that will determine fee and loan caps for franchised students taught at another provider.

Transnational education

2.11 Delivery of UK awards by overseas HE providers, or by overseas campuses of UK providers are outside the scope of the TEF in Year Two. The quality of transnational education is assured through the quality assessment system.

Additional guidance

International students

2.11.1 The teaching of overseas students studying in the UK is within the scope of the TEF. They are included in the NSS-based metrics, but not the non-continuation or employment or further study metrics for technical reasons. Providers should take this into account within their provider submission, where relevant.

Eligibility, pre-requisites and provisional TEF awards

3.1 Eligibility and pre-requisite requirements set out below reflect our ambition to **integrate a commitment to widening access and participation**, and that the **TEF should build on quality and standards** assured through broader arrangements.

Eligibility and pre-requisites

3.2 To be eligible for TEF Year Two, a provider must meet the following eligibility requirements set out in the chapter. A provider must also offer provision that meets the definition described above for the **Level of provision and modes of study in scope** for TEF.

Designation for student support

3.3 To receive a TEF rating a provider must deliver eligible HE provision that is designated for student support purposes. This includes:

A) Courses that are designated by the student support regulations[10] of the relevant administration, including those that are wholly provided by authority funded institutions.[11, 12]

OR

B) Providers that are defined as a 'fundable body' by the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 (as amended)

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OR

C) Courses that are specifically designated, that is:

- developed and delivered by an alternative provider (the teaching organisation) often in partnership/collaboration with another provider. These courses must be specifically designated for 2017/18 by the Secretary of State (or designated by the relevant devolved administration) and registered on the Student Loans Company HEI course database in the name of the teaching organisation.

3.4 Providers in Wales should note that the Welsh Government's requirements for both automatic and specific course designation are subject to change for 2017/18 academic year. Therefore, these providers should make themselves aware of the latest developments to ensure that they are in a position to meet the TEF designation requirements by 1st May 2017.

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10 Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011 (as amended); Education (Student Support) (no. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009, Education (Student Support) (Wales) Regulations 2015 (as amended).

11 'Authority-funded' means: (a) in relation to educational institutions in England, maintained or assisted by recurrent grants from the Higher Education Funding Council for England; (b) in relation to educational institutions in Wales, maintained or assisted by recurrent grants from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales; and (c) in relation to educational institutions in Northern Ireland, maintained or assisted by recurrent grants from the Department for the Economy or the Department of Agriculture, the Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland.

12 Further Education Colleges who are automatically designated as part of a franchise arrangement will be considered as eligible. We have made an exception for this particular group of providers because they already undergo additional financial monitoring checks.

Widening access and participation

3.5 Reflecting the Government's commitment to widening access and participation, **all providers wishing to take part in the TEF must have either an approved Access Agreement (or equivalent in Wales, Northern Ireland or Scotland – see below) or, for English providers, publish a short statement setting out their commitment to widening participation and fair access (referred to here as an Access and Participation Statement)**.

3.6 In the case of providers with an Access Agreement, the Agreement for 2017/18 will be used to determine eligibility for the TEF in Year Two. Providers required to publish an Access and Participation Statement will need to do so by the deadline for TEF applications in January 2017.

3.7 English providers must publish an Access and Participation Statement, if they do not have an approved Access Agreement, if they wish to be eligible to participate in the TEF. The content of this Statement will be at the provider's discretion; however we anticipate that it would comprise a brief statement stating what the provider is doing to widen participation. The provider will also be required to publish data on application, acceptance and progression rates of their students, broken down by gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background.

See paragraph 3.9.3

3.8 These statements will not need to be approved by the Director of Fair Access to Higher Education or by any other authority. They will however be a visible outward statement and will need to be published and available in the public domain by the time the application window for TEF Year Two closes. This ensures that all providers taking part in the TEF clearly demonstrate their commitment to widening access and participation. HEFCE will publish further guidance on how to produce and submit these statements and DfE will work with HEFCE for future TEF years as we continue to develop Access and Participation Statements.

3.9 We will recognise the following as equivalent to Access Agreements for TEF purposes:

- Fee and Access Plans for providers in Wales
- Widening Access and Participation Plans for providers in Northern Ireland
- Outcome Agreements for providers in Scotland.

Additional guidance

Providers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

3.9.1 **To be eligible for a TEF Year Two award, the most recently approved equivalent to an Access Agreement will be required, as follows:**

- **Fee and Access Plans for 2017-18, for providers in Wales**
- **Widening Access and Participation Plans for 2017-18, for providers in Northern Ireland**
- **Outcome Agreements for 2016-17, for providers in Scotland.**

Access and Participation Statements

3.9.2 **Providers in England applying or opting-in to TEF Year Two that do not have an approved Access Agreement for 2017-18, will need to publish a short Access and Participation Statement, by the TEF submission deadline of noon on 26 January 2017. Further guidance on the content of the Statement is set out below.**

3.9.3 **Alongside the publication of the Statement, providers are encouraged to publish data on application, acceptance and progression rates of their students, broken down by gender, ethnicity and socio-economic background. While providers are encouraged to publish this data to contextualise and evidence their widening participation outcomes, it will not be required to be eligible for TEF in Year Two. This supersedes the reference in paragraph 3.7 of the TEF specification to such a requirement. (A requirement for all providers in England to publish such data in future, also referred to as the 'Transparency Duty', is currently being considered as part of the Higher Education and Research Bill.)**

3.9.4 **Statements will vary between providers, and should be informed by the circumstances of the provider and the characteristics and needs of its students. Providers will want to focus their activity in order to achieve the greatest impact.**

3.9.5 **The Access and Participation Statement might include:**

- **an initial assessment of the provider's widening participation performance** across the student lifecycle, which covers access, student success and progression
- **the provider's approach** to access, student success and progression
- **examples of access activities**, including evidence where it is available
- **the desired outcomes of the work described** in the Access and Participation Statement.

3.9.6 **The Access and Participation Statement must be published on the provider's website by noon on 26 January 2017. When applying for a TEF assessment or opting-in for a provisional TEF award, the provider will need to supply the URL for the published statement. HEFCE will also publish these URLs in May 2017.**

Suitable metrics

3.10 Given the key role of metrics in informing TEF assessment, providers must have a minimum set of reportable metrics in order to apply for a TEF rating higher than Bronze. This is one year of reportable, benchmarked data for each of the core metrics, for either full or part-time students, whichever forms the majority taught at the provider (for further detail see **Contextual data and metrics section**).

See paragraphs 5.13.2 to 5.13.3

3.11 The minimum requirement to have a "full" set of metrics is three years of reportable, benchmarked data for each of the core metrics, for either full or part-time provision, whichever forms the majority. For a provider that has only one or two years of data for any of the core metrics, the duration of the TEF award will be reduced to reflect the number of complete years of data (i.e. if the provider only has one year of data, 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 – see **Outcomes section**).

See paragraph 5.13.4

3.12 A provider that does not possess suitable metrics can opt to receive a **provisional TEF award** (see below).

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Quality requirement

3.13 To receive a TEF rating, providers must meet the requirements of the quality assessment system in their home nation. For providers in England and Northern Ireland, reference will be made to the new arrangements for quality assessment put in place by HEFCE and DfE-NI, with the exception of those that will not yet have confirmed outcomes under the new arrangements at the point of determining eligibility.

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3.14 For providers in England and Northern Ireland that have confirmed outcomes under the new quality arrangements, we will take an outcome in the new Annual Provider Review (APR) of 'Meets requirements', 'Meets requirements with conditions' or 'Pending' as satisfying the quality requirement for the TEF[13]. Providers that are

[13] More detail on the outcomes of APR can be found on HEFCE's Revised Operating model for Quality Assessment.

subsequently investigated under the Unsatisfactory Quality Scheme and judged as having "serious issues found", will lose their TEF award (see **Withdrawal of a TEF award section** for further detail).

3.15 For alternative providers in England and for providers in England and Northern Ireland who do not have an APR outcome by May 2017, we will continue to use the most recent QAA review as the quality requirement for the TEF, as defined in **Annex C**.

See paragraph 3.15.1

Additional guidance

APR and TEF eligibility for providers in England

3.15.1 **In England, all higher education institutions and further education colleges that receive direct or indirect funding from HEFCE will be subject to APR. All such providers that receive an APR outcome by May 2017 of 'Meets requirements', 'Meets requirements with conditions' or 'Pending' will meet the TEF Year Two quality requirement at this point. The most recent QAA review will not be used to determine TEF eligibility for any providers in England that are subject to APR. This guidance supersedes the references in paragraphs 1.12 and 3.15 to using the most recent QAA review for providers in England who will not have transitioned to the APR system or do not have an APR outcome by May 2017.**

3.15.2 **Although providers in England with an APR outcome of 'Pending' will meet the quality requirement in May 2017, their ability to retain a TEF Year Two award will be subject to resolving the 'Pending' APR outcome. If further investigation leads to an outcome of 'Does not meet requirements' the TEF award will be withdrawn.**

3.15.3 **Further information about APR is available at www.hefce.ac.uk/reg/QualityAssessment/Whatdo**

3.15.4 **Alternative providers in England are not subject to APR, and the most recent QAA review will be used as the quality requirement for the TEF, as defined in Annex C of the DfE specification.**

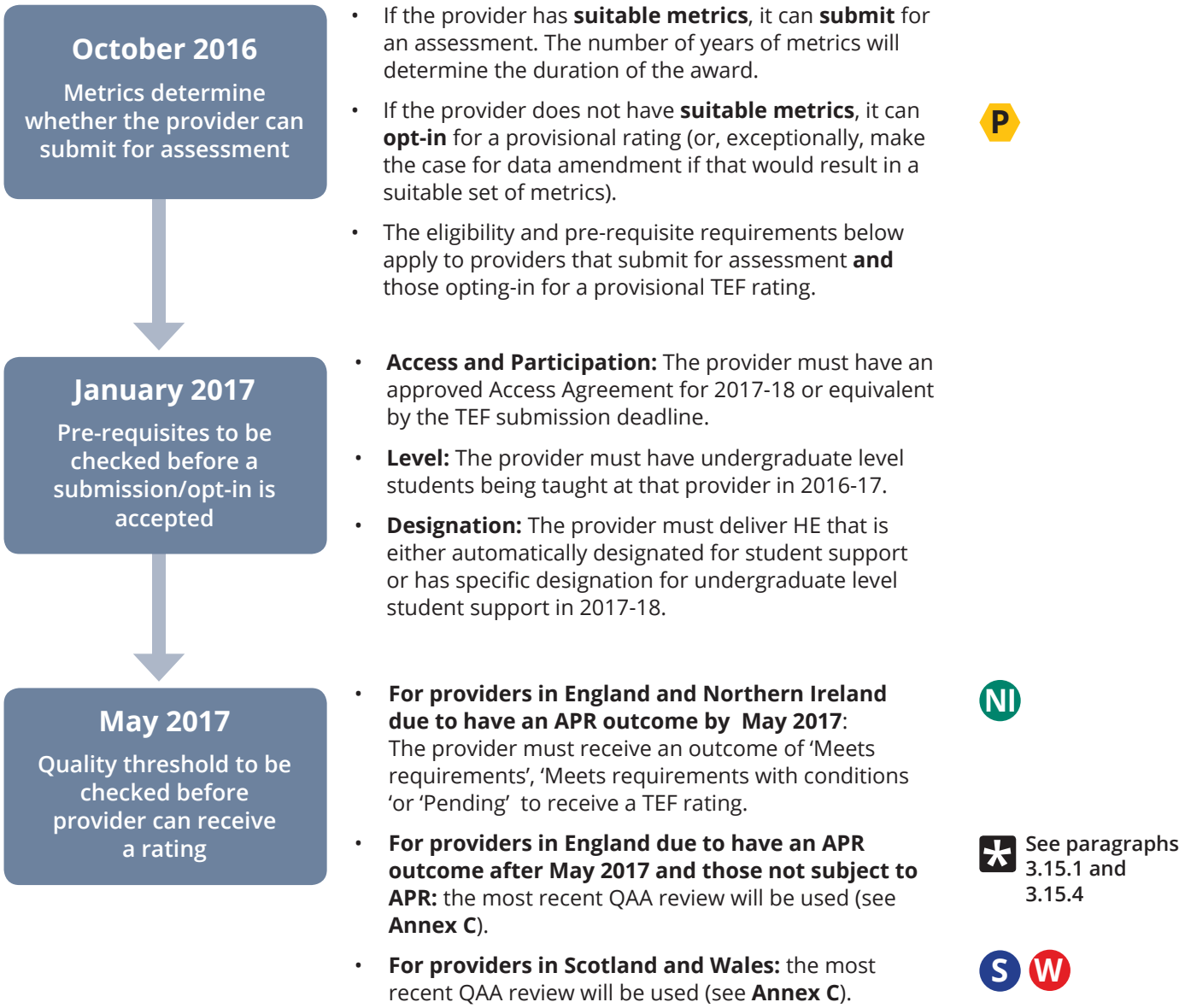
3.16 For providers in Wales, which will not yet have transitioned to new arrangements in 2016/17, we will continue to use the most recent QAA review as the quality requirement for the TEF, as defined in **Annex C**.

3.17 For providers in Scotland, we will continue to use the most recent QAA review as the quality requirement for the TEF, as defined in **Annex C**.

3.18 In all cases, the provider must meet the relevant quality requirements in its own right.

3.19 Eligibility and pre-requisites checks are depicted diagrammatically in **figure two.**

Figure 2 **TEF Eligibility and pre-requisite checks**



Additional guidance

Process for confirming eligibility and pre-requisites

From October 2016: Availability of metrics determine whether the provider can apply for a TEF assessment, or opt-in for a provisional award

3.19.1 HEFCE has released metrics workbooks and supporting data to all providers that have any available TEF Year Two metrics data. The workbooks were released on the same day as publication of this guidance (see paragraphs 5.37 to 5.41). Each provider's workbook is populated with TEF Year Two metrics and contextual data for the provider. Each provider should check its metrics workbook to see if it contains suitable metrics, as follows:

- **Providers with suitable metrics**: If the workbook indicates the definition of 'suitable metrics' has been met, the provider can apply for a TEF assessment and will need to meet the remaining eligibility requirements to receive a TEF award. The number of years of suitable metrics determines the maximum duration of the TEF award.
- **Providers without suitable metrics**: If there is no workbook available for the provider, or the provider does not have suitable metrics, then it may not apply for a TEF assessment. The provider may be eligible for a provisional TEF award, subject to meeting the remaining eligibility requirements.

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3.19.2 Exceptionally, a provider that has a workbook which does not contain suitable metrics ('0' years of suitable metrics), may request data amendments if these would result in suitable metrics. If such amendments are accepted, the provider may apply for an assessment. Such amendments will need to be requested by noon on 18 November 2016, according to the criteria and process set out in paragraphs 5.42 to 5.66.

From January 2017: Pre-requisites to be checked after the application deadline

3.19.3 Providers must complete their applications for a TEF assessment or opt-in for a provisional TEF award by the deadline of noon on 26 January 2017. In doing so, providers should ensure that they meet the pre-requisites set out in the TEF technical specification.

Access and participation

3.19.4 Providers in England that do not have an approved Access Agreement for 2017-18 are required to:

- publish an Access and Participation Statement by the TEF submission deadline of noon 26 January 2017, on its own website
- supply the TEF team with the URL to its Access and Participation Statement, at the point of applying or opting-in to the TEF. This URL must be included in the authorisation letter from the accountable officer (see paragraphs 6.33 to 6.34).

3.19.5 After the application deadline the TEF team will check that each provider either has

- an approved Access Agreement for 2017-18 or equivalent for institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

or

- for providers in England without an approved Access Agreement, that the URL included in the authorisation letter links to a publicly accessible Access and Participation Statement on the provider's website.

Provision that is in scope

3.19.6 To be eligible for a TEF Year Two award, the provider must have undergraduate students (as defined in paragraph 2.1 to 2.1.2) being taught at that provider in 2016-17. After the application deadline the TEF team will check that undergraduate students have been recorded as taught at that provider in 2016-17, according to providers' in-year aggregate student data returns to the relevant UK funding body.

Designation

3.19.7 After the application deadline the TEF team will check that each provider meets the designation requirement defined at paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4. In the case of specific course designation (paragraph 3.3. C), this must be current designation for new students entering in 2017-18. Providers that are on 'teach out' or that do not have current designation for new entrants in 2017-18, will be deemed ineligible to receive a TEF Year Two award.

Confirmation of pre-requisites

3.19.8 If a provider that has applied for a TEF assessment or opted-in for a provisional TEF award is found not to meet one or more of the above pre-requisites, the TEF team will inform the accountable officer and TEF contact at the provider, by 28 February 2017.

3.19.9 Where the provider is awaiting a decision on course designation for 2017-18, the final cut-off date by which course designation must be granted is 1 May 2017 in order for the provider to be eligible for TEF Year Two.

May 2017: Quality threshold to be checked before the provider can receive a TEF award

3.19.10 The TEF team will check that, as at 1 May 2017, each provider meets the quality requirement defined at paragraphs 3.13 to 3.18 and Annex D of the TEF technical specification. Providers that do not meet the quality requirement, as at 1 May 2017, will be deemed ineligible to receive a TEF Year Two award, and the TEF team will inform the accountable officer and TEF contact of this by mid-May 2017.

Decisions on eligibility, pre-requisites and duration of award

3.19.11 **All decisions on pre-requisites, eligibility, suitable metrics and the duration of awards will be taken by the HEFCE chief executive. Recommendations on suitable metrics and the duration of awards will be made to the chief executive by the TEF Data Panel (see paragraphs 5.54 to 5.63). Recommendations on the other pre-requisites and eligibility requirements will be made to the chief executive by the TEF manager, having consulted relevant sources of information and advice, including but not limited to OFFA, the QAA, the HEFCE Register of HE providers and the funding bodies for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as appropriate. Where the information that is available to confirm a pre-requisite or eligibility requirement is incomplete or unclear, the TEF team may contact the provider's TEF contact to seek further information before making the recommendation.**

3.19.12 **Where a provider is deemed not to meet one or more of the eligibility or pre-requisite requirements, the accountable officer and TEF contact will be notified with a statement clarifying which of the condition(s) were not met, the source of evidence used and the reason for the decision.**

Provisional TEF awards

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3.20 Higher education providers that do not have **suitable metrics** to inform the assessment and which are therefore prevented from achieving a rating above the first level on procedural grounds can opt to receive a **provisional TEF award**.

3.21 The provisional TEF award will make clear that the provider has met the baseline quality expectations required for TEF eligibility, but is unable to apply for TEF assessment (and therefore the higher ratings) on procedural grounds. Provisional TEF awards are not available to providers that have suitable metrics.

3.22 A provider wishing to receive a provisional TEF award does not need to prepare a submission but must meet the Access and Participation requirements for TEF and must opt in to HEFCE by the TEF application deadline. **Provisional TEF awards will last for one year**.

Additional guidance

How to opt-in for a provisional award

3.22.1 **HEFCE will inform the main TEF contact at all providers that do not have suitable metrics, that they may be eligible for a provisional TEF award. To receive a provisional TEF award they will need to:**

- **ensure that they satisfy the pre-requisite and eligibility requirements as outlined above**
- **where applicable, publish an Access and Participation Statement, by 26 January 2017 (this applies to providers in England that do not have an approved Access Agreement for 2017-18) (See paragraphs 3.9.2 to 3.9.6)**
- **complete and upload the authorisation letter by 26 January 2017. A template for the letter is available on the TEF extranet. (See paragraphs 6.24 to 6.34)**

3.22.2 **Where a provider opts-in for a provisional award, they will be notified of the outcome by the end of May 2017. Provisional TEF awards will be published alongside other TEF awards, as outlined in paragraphs 9.2 to 9.11.**

3.22.3 **A webinar will be available on 14 November 2016 for TEF contacts at providers that may be eligible for a provisional TEF award. The webinar will explain the process and steps they must take in order to opt-in for the award. The webinar will also be available to view after this date.**

Mergers and divisions

3.23 Providers who are merging or de-merging can still apply for TEF. A merged provider will receive a single TEF award, where deemed eligible. De-merged providers will receive separate awards, where each is deemed eligible.

3.24 Where a provider has merged **before** the submission deadline, the newly formed provider should if possible make a single submission, and will need to meet the eligibility criteria set out above and in **Annex C**.

3.25 HEFCE guidance will set out how decisions on eligibility will be reached where a newly merged provider does make a single submission, or the merger takes place after the submission deadline[14]. The Government's principle is that, as with the eligibility criteria above, HEFCE must be satisfied that the newly formed provider meets the baseline quality assurance expectations and other eligibility requirements for TEF.

HEFCE will follow the same principles described above for providers who de-merge.

Additional guidance

Mergers

3.25.1 **A provider that has completed a merger will have received a single workbook of metrics, combining students from the previously separate providers. Where this is the case, the provider must make a single application.**

3.25.2 **Providers that are in the process of merging, and are confident they will complete the merger by 26 January 2017, may either arrange to make a single application, or may make separate applications. To arrange to make a single application, the lead provider should contact tefmetrics@hefce.ac.uk to request that HEFCE combine and re-issue the metrics. Requests to combine and re-issue the metrics must be made to tefmetrics@hefce.ac.uk by noon on 18 November 2016 at the latest, and must have the agreement of all affected providers that have metrics workbooks. The revised workbook will be available to the lead provider by 19 December 2016. The lead provider should make a single application.**

3.25.3 **Providers due to merge by 26 January 2017 that do not wish to make a single application, and providers due to merge after this date, may apply separately. In these cases, each provider involved in the merger wishing to participate in TEF Year Two may apply with its own metrics and provider submission.**

3.25.4 **Where the providers make separate applications, a single TEF award will be made to the merged provider only if:**

- **all the providers involved in the merger that teach a significant proportion of that group of providers' HE students have applied, and**
- **the merger completes before 1 May 2017, and**
- **the merged entity meets the eligibility and pre-requisite requirements. Further information on how HEFCE will consider a merged provider's position within the quality assessment framework, where the merger involves HEFCE-funded providers, is available at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/CL,282016/.**

3.25.5 **Depending on the timing of the merger's completion, the assessors may either consider the applications separately and then determine a single rating for the merged provider; or they may consider the applications together to form a single judgement. In either case, the assessors will take account of the relative number of students at each constituent provider, in determining a single TEF rating.**

3.25.6 **If the conditions in paragraph 3.25.4 are not met, each constituent provider making an application will be assessed separately. The TEF award for the merged provider will be determined according to the guidance at paragraph 9.15.1.**

14 Including where a provider mergers between applications closing in January and ratings being announced in May

The assessment framework

4.1 The assessment framework has been designed to enable **diverse 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 and split metrics supplemented by additional evidence, and carried out by peers comprised of experts in teaching and learning as well as student representatives, employer representatives and widening participation experts.

4.2 **Table two** provides a model of the assessment framework[15].

Table 2 **Assessment framework**

<table>
<tr><th>Aspect of Quality
Areas of teaching and learning quality</th><th>Teaching Quality (TQ)</th><th>Learning Environment (LE)</th><th>Student Outcomes and Learning Gain (SO)</th></tr>
<tr><td>Criteria
Statements against which assessors will make judgements</td><td>Teaching Quality criteria</td><td>Learning Environment criteria</td><td>Student Outcomes and Learning Gain criteria</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Evidence</td><td colspan="3">Core metrics</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Teaching on my course (NSS scale 1)
• Assessment and feedback (NSS scale 2)</td><td>• Academic support (NSS scale 3)
• Non-continuation (HESA)</td><td>• Employment/ further study (DLHE)
• Highly-skilled employment/ further study (DLHE)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Split metrics</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Additional evidence (provider submission)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Statement of findings
Why a particular rating was awarded</td><td colspan="3">Brief description of why a particular rating was awarded including particular strengths</td></tr>
<tr><td>Overall outcome
TEF rating</td><td colspan="3">The level awarded</td></tr>
</table>

15 In the TEF Year Two Technical Consultation we consulted on the proposal to include commendations as part of TEF awards. The allied response document outlines feedback received in response to this proposal and Government's decision not to include Commendations in Year Two of the TEF. We will keep this aspect of TEF design under review, with possible introduction of Commendations in a later year.

Aspects of quality

4.3 Teaching quality is **best considered in the context of students' learning**. The outcomes of students' learning are determined by the quality of teaching they experience, the additional support for learning that is available and what the students themselves put into their studies, supported and facilitated by the provider.

4.4 The assessment framework therefore considers teaching excellence across three main aspects: **Teaching Quality (TQ)**, **Learning Environment (LE)**, and **Student Outcomes and Learning Gain (SO)**. An explanation of each aspect of quality is set out below. Together the three aspects make up a balanced view of learning and teaching quality.

4.5 **Teaching Quality** includes different forms of structured learning that can involve teachers and academic or specialist support staff. This includes seminars, tutorials, project supervision, laboratory sessions, studio time, placements, supervised on-line learning, workshops, fieldwork and site visits. The emphasis is on teaching that provides an appropriate level of contact, stimulation and challenge, and which encourages student engagement and effort. The effectiveness of course design, and assessment and feedback, in developing students' knowledge, skills and understanding are also considered. The extent to which a provider recognises, encourages and rewards excellent teaching is also included within this aspect.

4.6 **Learning Environment** includes the effectiveness of resources such as libraries, laboratories and design studios, work experience, opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction and extra-curricular activities in supporting students' learning and the development of independent study and research skills. The emphasis is on a personalised academic experience which maximises retention, progression and attainment. 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) is also considered.

4.7 **Student Outcomes and Learning Gain** is focused on the achievement of positive outcomes. Positive outcomes are taken to include:

- 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 attributes necessary to compete for a graduate level job that requires the high level of skills arising from higher education

4.8 The extent to which positive outcomes are achieved for all students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is a key feature. The distance travelled by students ('learning gain') is included (see below).

4.9 Work across the sector to develop new measures of **learning gain** is in progress[16]. Until new measures become available and are robust and applicable for all types of providers and students, we anticipate providers will refer to their own approaches to identifying and assessing students' learning gain – this aspect is not prescriptive about what those measures might be.

16 For further information on HEFCE learning gain pilots, see HEFCE's learning gain site.

Assessment criteria

4.10 The **assessment criteria** are set out in table **three**. Assessors will use evidence from the core and split metrics, supplemented by additional evidence, to assess performance against the criteria to determine a provider's TEF rating. The criteria have been **designed to allow recognition of diverse forms of excellence** and to avoid constraining innovation.

Table 3 **TEF Assessment Criteria**

Aspect of Quality Areas of teaching and learning quality	**Reference**	**Criterion**
Teaching Quality	Student Engagement (TQ1)	Teaching provides effective stimulation, challenge and contact time that encourages students to engage and actively commit to their studies
	Valuing Teaching (TQ2)	Institutional culture facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching
	Rigour and Stretch (TQ3)	Course design, development, standards and assessment are effective in stretching students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential
	Feedback (TQ4)	Assessment and feedback are used effectively in supporting students' development, progression and attainment
Learning Environment	Resources (LE1)	Physical and digital resources are used effectively to aid students' learning and the development of independent study and research skills
	Scholarship, Research and Professional Practice (LE2)	The learning environment is enriched by student exposure to and involvement in provision at the forefront of scholarship, research and/or professional practice
	Personalised Learning (LE3)	Students' academic experiences are tailored to the individual, maximising rates of retention, attainment and progression
Student Outcomes and Learning Gain	Employment and Further Study (SO1)	Students achieve their educational and professional goals, in particular progression to further study or highly skilled employment
	Employability and Transferable Skills (SO2)	Students acquire knowledge, skills and attributes that are valued by employers and that enhance their personal and/or professional lives
	Positive Outcomes for All (SO3)	Positive outcomes are achieved by its students from all backgrounds, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who are at greater risk of not achieving positive outcomes

Supporting the needs and attainment of all students

4.11 The Government has been clear on the importance it places on **supporting the aspirations and achievement of students** from a diversity of backgrounds. The assessment framework includes a specific criterion on the outcomes achieved by students from disadvantaged backgrounds and we expect that in making the case against the other criteria, a provider will show how the experiences, development, progression and attainment of all students is supported, including identifying and addressing any differences in the outcomes achieved by specific groups.

TEF ratings

4.12 A provider that applies for the TEF in Year Two will attain one of three possible levels of excellence: **Bronze, Silver or Gold**.

4.13 Guidance on performance at each level is in the **Outcomes section**.

Contextual data and metrics

Contextual data

5.1 Assessors will be supplied with **contextual data** on each provider, which allows them to understand their **nature** and **operating context** (including size, location and student population), as well as aiding the **interpretation of core and split metrics**. Providers will also receive a copy.

5.2 Contextual data allows assessors to take into account the specific context in which the provider is operating – for example, considering employment/destination outcomes in the context of employment statistics for the geographical area or widening participation in the context of the student population studying at the provider. **Table four** sets out the contextual data that will be provided. Data will be shown as an average of the last three years.

Table 4 **Contextual data**

Contextual Data	Category Definition	Sub-groups	
Level of study	Level of the programme a student is registered on	First degree, other UG	
Age	Age at start of study	Under 21, 21 to 30, over 30	
POLAR	Providers in England only. Applies to young students only. Participation of Local Areas is used as a proxy for social disadvantage in HE in England.	Quintiles 1,2,3,4,5	
SIMD	Providers in Scotland only. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland in a consistent way.	Quintiles 1,2,3,4,5	S
NI IMD	Providers in Northern Ireland only. The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010 identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across Northern Ireland.	Quintiles 1,2,3,4,5	NI
WIMD	Providers in Wales only. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in Wales. It is designed to identify those small areas where there are the highest concentrations of several different types of deprivation.	Quintiles 1,2,3,4,5	W

Contextual Data	Category Definition	Sub-groups	
Communities First	Providers in Wales only. Communities First is the Welsh Government's Community Focussed Tackling Poverty Programme. Communities First	Communities First Not Communities First	W
Welsh medium	Providers in Wales only. This measure identifies students who have accessed all or some of their provision delivered through the medium of Welsh.	At least 5 credits through the medium of Welsh for the relevant year Less than 5 credits through the medium of Welsh	W
Ethnicity	Ethnicity as self-declared on HESA record.	White, Black, Asian, Other and Unknown	See paragraph 5.2.2
Sex	Sex as self-declared on HESA record.	Male, female, neither male or female	
Disability	Disability as self-declared on HESA record.	Disabled and not disabled	
Entry Qualifications	Detailed qualifications on entry from HESA record	High (0ver 390), medium (280 to 390) or low tariff (Under 280), non-tariff	
Subject of Study	Based on high level JACS codes	18 subject groups	
Domicile	Domicile as self-declared on HESA record.	UK, Other EU, non-EU	
Local students	Students whose home address is within the same Travel to Work Area (TTWA) as their location of study.	Local and distance learning Not local	

Additional guidance

Contextual data

5.2.1 **Contextual data will be shown as an average of the last three years of data, where available. Where only two years of data exist, the contextual data is averaged across these two years instead. Where only one year of data exists, it is this that will be shown in the contextual data. Availability of data in any given year is determined at the overall cohort level, rather than being mode-specific. For example, if a provider has two years of part-time data, and three years of full time data, both sets of contextual data will be shown as the average of the last three years.**

5.2.2 **References to 'HESA record' in table 4 should be taken to include ILR records and, for Entry Qualifications for students at FECs in 2014-15, records from the Linked National Pupil Database.**

5.2.3 **The contextual data categories relating to SIMD, NI IMD, WIMD and Communities First (specific to providers in the devolved nations) are derived on the basis of students in providers within that nation. For example, SIMD quintile information is shown for providers in Scotland only, and based on Scottish domiciled students only.** S W NI

5.3 There will be four maps to support the interpretation of employment/destination measures (see examples in **Annex G**):

a. For each provider – where students who study at the provider were based before study

b. Common to all providers – The proportion of employed graduates in highly skilled employment (using DLHE responses).

c. For each provider – where students who study at the provider found employment (using DLHE responses).

d. Not illustrated – common to all providers – the population employment rate (using DLHE responses).

5.4 Not illustrated – Common to all providers – The population employment rate. HEFCE will make the contextual data available to providers, along with their metrics, at the beginning of the application period. Providers will be free to include additional contextual information in their submissions, such as details about their mission. See the **Provider submission** section for further details.

5.5 In addition to contextual data that is specific to an individual provider, assessors will also be provided with **sector level contextual information** that sets out the broader operating context for higher education in the nation in question. This will allow assessors to understand fully any differences and for providers to feel assured that their national operating context is understood. This information will be drafted by the relevant funding body, in collaboration with representatives of the sector.

5.6 Contextual data is used to support interpretation of performance but does not itself form the basis of any judgement.

Metrics

5.7 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 to inform their judgements. There are two TEF metrics aligned to each of the three aspects of the TEF (**table five**). As far as possible, the metrics for Year Two are modelled on measures that will be familiar to large parts of the sector. Providers are encouraged to supplement the core and split metrics with further data in their provider submission. The six metrics are summarised in **Annex D**.

Table 5 **TEF metrics aligned with aspects of quality**

Aspect	Metric	Source
Teaching Quality	Teaching on my course	NSS Q1-4
Teaching Quality	Assessment and feedback	NSS Q5-9
Learning Environment	Academic support	NSS Q10-12
Learning Environment	Non-Continuation	HESA and ILR data
Student Outcomes and Learning Gain	Employment or further study	DLHE declared activity 6 months after graduation
Student Outcomes and Learning Gain	Highly skilled employment or further study	DLHE declared activity 6 months after graduation

Metric Definitions

5.8 There is a full technical description of each metric in **Annex E**.

Student satisfaction

5.9 These metrics are based on student responses to questions from the National Student Survey (NSS). The NSS runs in the spring of each academic year and is targeted at all final year undergraduates in participating providers. Students indicate their level of agreement to a range of statements. For the TEF, the questions from three areas, or scales, are aggregated to form an agreement score for each student. These scores are then averaged to give the provider's score.

Non-continuation

5.10 This metric is the proportion of students who start but do not continue their studies. Students are counted between their first and second year of study (see **Annex E** for the part time definition). Students who continue studying at HE level at the same or at another provider are deemed to have continued, all other students are deemed non-continuers.

See paragraph 5.10.1

Additional guidance

5.10.1 **The definition of students who are deemed to have continued (as referenced in the final sentence in paragraph 5.10 above) should be taken to include students who completed their qualification in the period considered.**

Employment/destinations including highly skilled employment

5.11 These metrics are based on the Destination of Leavers Survey from Higher Education (DLHE) which asks leavers to indicate their activity six months after gaining their qualification. The survey collects detailed data about employment and further study. Job titles and descriptions of duties are coded into the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC).

5.12 The employment or further study metric is the proportion of leavers (responding to the DLHE) who report that they are in employment or further study. The Highly skilled employment or further study metric is the proportion of leavers (responding to the DLHE) who report that they are in highly skilled employment or further study, where highly skilled employment is those jobs matched to SOC groups 1-3 (managerial and professional).

Calculation of metrics

5.13 Each core and split metric will be calculated using three years of student data. No weighting is used when aggregating the data. Not all providers will have a full set of metrics for Year Two. A full set of metrics is three years of reportable, benchmarked data for each of the core metrics for either full time or part time students (whichever forms the majority for students taught at the provider). A **suitable set of metrics** (which is required for a full TEF assessment) is one year of reportable, benchmarked data for each of the core metrics, again, for either full or part time students, whichever forms the majority[17, 18]. Providers that do not have suitable metrics may

17 For both a full and a suitable set of metrics, in some providers, the offer means that the majority of students are on part-time other undergraduate programmes which are excluded from the non-continuation metric. Where this is the case providers may still be considered to have suitable or full metrics as appropriate, although this would be a gap which should be addressed in the provider submission.

18 For both a full and a suitable set of metrics, this must be a majority of all students taught by the provider that are in scope for TEF.

receive a provisional TEF award (see **Eligibility, pre-requisites and provisional TEF awards section**). Reportable core and split metrics must refer to at least ten students, and in the case of survey data, have met the response rate threshold[19] and have sufficient data to form the benchmarks[20].

Additional guidance

Majority mode of provision

5.13.1 In determining the number of years of complete metrics that a provider has, and whether it has suitable metrics, HEFCE has identified the mode in which the majority of students are taught at the provider, as follows:

a. Only one majority mode has been calculated for each provider (rather than a majority mode calculated for each year of data). The majority mode has been calculated on the basis of the full-time and part-time student headcounts, averaged over the same number of years used for the provider's contextual data.

b. Where the headcount of full-time students is greater than or equal to the headcount of part-time students, full-time has been identified as the majority mode.

c. Where b. above is not met and the headcount of part-time other undergraduate students is greater than or equal to the combined headcount of full-time and part-time first degree students, part-time other undergraduate has been identified as the majority mode. (In this case, footnote 20 of the TEF specification applies.)

d. If neither condition b. nor c. above are met the majority mode is part time.

Suitable metrics and number of years

5.13.2 The metrics workbook released to each provider indicates whether the definition of suitable metrics has been met, and hence whether the provider can apply for a TEF assessment or can opt-in for a provisional TEF award. Where the definition of suitable metrics is met it also indicates the number of years of suitable metrics, which determines the duration of the TEF award. These are calculated based on the majority mode of provision, as set out below.

5.13.3 The metrics are suitable if each of the six metrics is reportable and benchmarked, either when aggregating all years of available data, or for at least one year.

5.13.4 If the metrics are suitable, the number of years of suitable metrics is calculated as follows:

a. The number of years for each of the six metrics is calculated as follows:

   i. Where a metric is reportable and benchmarked when aggregating all years of available data, it is the number of years in which there are students contributing to that metric (this will be one, two or three).

   ii. Where a metric is not reportable and benchmarked when aggregating all years of available data, it is the number of individual years that are reportable and benchmarked (this will be either one or two).

b. The number of years of suitable metrics is the lowest of these values across the six metrics.

19 For the NSS, this is 50%. For the DLHE, this is 85% of the target which is equivalent to 68% for full time students and 59.5% for part time students.

20 Sufficient benchmarking data would be at least 50% coverage for each factor (for example where entry qualifications are used as a benchmarking factor, at least 50% of the provider's students included in the core or split metric must have appropriately recorded entry qualifications.)

5.14 For each metric, for each provider, full time and part time students will be reported separately. Further, '**splits**' will be produced showing performance within a number of sub groups (e.g. Full time Males or Part Time UK domiciled students). The full list of splits is given in the **Contextual data and metrics section**.

5.15 In order to aid the TEF assessors, core and split metrics will be **flagged** if they are significantly and materially above or below a weighted sector average (**benchmark**). The way in which assessors will use the core and split metrics to make their decisions is set out in the **Assessment: decision-making section**.

5.16 The base data for all the metrics is the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) student record (for HEIs, APs and some FECs) and the Individual Learner Record (ILR) for FECs. These provide data about the characteristics of students and the courses and providers they are registered with. Some metrics use responses to the NSS and the DLHE survey. NSS data is collected by a third party and any data supplied to providers will be at a sufficiently aggregate level to prevent disclosure.

5.17 HEFCE will calculate the metric data and create an individual TEF metrics set for each provider an illustration is provided in **Annex H** (published separately). Providers will have the opportunity to view this data, along with technical documentation at the beginning of the application period. During this period, HEFCE will consider requests to amend student or DLHE data in exceptional cases. Once the application window is closed, final provider level TEF metrics sets will be issued to TEF assessors for consideration. Assessor guidance will include sector level metrics data to contextualise the provider level data.

5.18 Unless otherwise stated, calculations are based on student **headcount**. Where there is a difference, students will be included in the data for the **teaching provider** rather than the registering provider. Normally, the teaching provider is the provider where the student spends the majority of their first year.

5.19 For each metric, all providers and students in scope (see **Scope section**) for the TEF and for that metric are selected from the datasets. Where the data source has a wider scope than the TEF (for example the DLHE includes post graduate students), those outside the scope of the TEF are excluded from the metrics.

Benchmarking

5.20 Benchmarks are used to allow meaningful comparisons between providers by taking into account the different mix of students at each provider. A unique benchmark is calculated for each provider's core and split metrics. **The benchmark is a weighted sector average where weightings are based on the characteristics of the students at the provider**. This means that the provider is not being compared to a pre-set group of providers. Each provider will therefore have its own benchmark for each core and split metric. The UK Performance Indicators and NSS outcomes already use this methodology. A full explanation of the methodology, including an explanation of how student characteristics (benchmarking factors) were selected for inclusion, please visit the HESA website.

5.21 For the purpose of calculating benchmarks, 'the sector' is made up of all providers in scope for the TEF, regardless of whether they have met the eligibility criteria or have chosen to enter the TEF.

5.22 An example is given at **Annex F**. This methodology is designed to ensure that the factors that have the most impact on the results are selected and that the comparison group is as wide as possible. Benchmarking factors are selected and combined to minimise the level of self-benchmarking. Self-benchmarking can occur when a large proportion of the students in the comparison group are from the provider itself.

5.23 The benchmarking factors used for each metric are covered by **table six**.

Table 6 **Benchmarking factors**

Factor	Description (no. categories)	NSS	Non-continuation	Employment or Further Study	Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study
Subject of study	High level JACS codes. Joint honours are split on an FTE basis (variable)	✔	✔ (18, 14 for part time)	✔ (18)	✔ (18)
Entry qualifications	Described on the HESA website (variable)		✔ (26)	✔ (11)	✔ (11)
Age on entry	Young, Mature, Unknown (3) Unless otherwise stated, Young is defined as under 21, and Mature is 21 and over.	✔	✔ (full time only, Young is under 31, Mature is 31 and over)	✔	✔
Ethnicity	Asian, Black, White, Other, Unknown (5)	✔		✔	✔
Sex	Male, Female, Other (3)	✔		✔	✔
Disability	Disabled, Not Disabled (2)	✔			✔
Social disadvantage (measured by POLAR)	POLAR 1 or 2, Not POLAR 1 or 2 (2)				✔
Total distinct benchmarking groups		1,620	1,404	8,910	35,640

See paragraph 5.23.2

Additional guidance

Age on entry

5.23.1 In table 6, 'Age on entry' and in tables 4 and 7, 'Age at start of study' all refer to the student's age at 30 September of the academic year in which their studies started.

5.23.2 For the purpose of **benchmarking** (see table 6), Young is defined as under 21, and Mature is 21 and over. This applies to all metrics and all modes of study where 'age on entry' is used in benchmarking, and is consistent with the benchmarking factors used in the UK Performance Indicators. This supersedes the information in table 6 of the TEF specification concerning 'Age on entry' for the non-continuation metric. For the avoidance of doubt, 'age on entry' is not used at all in the benchmarking of the part-time non-continuation metrics.

5.23.3 For the purpose of **splitting** the TEF metrics (see table 7):

a. For splits of the full-time TEF metrics by age on entry, Young is defined as under 21, and Mature is 21 and over.

b. For splits of the part-time metrics by age on entry, Young is defined as under 31, and Mature is defined as 31 and over. This is consistent with the way the UK Performance Indicators are reported for non-continuation. In addition, given the distribution of part-time cohorts, this distinction is more likely to produce informative metric splits.

Use of POLAR data

5.23.4 The POLAR classification is an area-based measure of participation in higher education at age 18 or 19, and as such it has limited applicability when considering backgrounds of those aged 21 and over. Therefore, for providers in England, where the contextual data are reported by POLAR groups (table 4) and where the metrics are split by POLAR groups (table 7), these apply to Young UK domiciled students only. This applies to all the metrics split by POLAR groups for both modes of study, for providers in England.

5.23.5 However, for technical reasons where POLAR groups are used in the benchmarking of the highly skilled employment or further study metric (table 6), these apply to all UK-domiciled students.

Significance flagging

5.24 Once the core and split metrics are calculated and benchmarked, those results that are significantly and materially different from benchmark are highlighted. This is referred to as **flagging**. TEF assessors will primarily use these flags to form an initial judgement of the provider (see section on **Assessment: Decision-making**).

Significant differences

5.25 It is not automatically clear whether an indicator is significantly different from its benchmark. To identify whether it is significant, we need to establish statistical confidence that the difference is greater than variances that would be expected due to chance alone. TEF metrics have adopted a variation on the UKPI method for testing for that difference. The method is explained in full on the HESA website. The method calculates the standard deviations of the differences between the indicators and their benchmarks[21]. **In TEF metrics the number of standard deviations that the indicator is from the benchmark is given as the Z-score**. Metrics with a Z-score +/-1.96[22] will be considered significantly different. This is equivalent to a 95% confidence interval (that is, we can have 95% confidence that the difference is not due to chance).

21 More details of the statistical model used can be found in 'Statistical analysis of performance indicators in UK higher education' by D. Draper and M. Gittoes, in JRSS Series A, volume 167, part 3, 2004.

22 The threshold is 1.96 standard deviations although this is usually rounded to 2 when quoted.

Material differences

5.26 In some cases the difference may be significant but due to the narrow distribution of the metric the difference is not material. **Differences of less than 2 percentage points are not considered material.**

5.27 Exceptionally, the materiality test will not be applied. **Where the benchmark is above 97% (or below 3% in the case of the non-continuation metric) and the provider's indicator is above the benchmark, the materiality test will not apply and core and split metrics will only have to meet the significance test in order to be flagged**. This is because it would otherwise be impossible for some providers to receive a flag of ++ (see below), as it is not possible to achieve a result of over 100% (or below 0% in the case of non-continuation).

Flags

5.28 **Flags will be applied where the indicator is at least +/-2 percentage points from the benchmark AND the Z-score is at least +/-2 (1.96)**. A positive flag will be labelled '+' and a negative flag will be labelled '-'. Further, where the indicator is at least +/-3 percentage points from the benchmark AND the Z-score is at least +/-3, the flags will be labelled '++' or '--'.

Splits

5.29 **Each core metric will be presented for all the provider's students (separately for full time and part time) and then for a series of sub groups (called splits) reflecting widening participation priorities**. Assessors will be particularly interested where the split metric receives a flag but that flag is different from the same core metric. Providers may wish to explicitly address these differences in their submission.

5.30 For each split, the benchmark is recalculated to include only students within the split. That is, only mature students are included when calculating the benchmark for split metrics in the mature category of the Age split. Note that this means, for the split metrics specific to providers in the Devolved Administrations, they will only be benchmarked against students in providers within their Administration. The categories and their definitions that will be used for producing the splits are in **table seven**.

Table 7 **Categories and their definitions for metric splits**

Split	Category Definition	Sub-groups
Level of study	Level of the programme a student is registered on.	First degree Other undergraduate qualifications
Age	Age at start of study.	Young Mature
Sex	Sex as self-declared on HESA record.	Male Female
Participation groups	Providers in England only. Applies to young students only. Participation of Local Areas is used as a proxy for social disadvantage in HE.	POLAR quintiles 1-2 POLAR quintiles 3-5

See paragraph 5.23.3

See paragraph 5.30.1

Table 7 **Categories and their definitions for metric splits continued**

Split	Category Definition	Sub-groups	
SIMD	Providers in Scotland only. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland in a consistent way.	SIMD quintiles 1-2 SIMD quintiles 3-5	S
NI-IMD	Providers in Northern Ireland only. The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010 identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across Northern Ireland.	NI-IMD quintiles 1-2 NI-IMD quintiles 3-5	NI
WIMD/ Communities first	Providers in Wales only. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in Wales. It is designed to identify those small areas where there are the highest concentrations of several different types of deprivation. Communities First is the Welsh Government's Community Focused Tackling Poverty Programme[23].	WIMD quintile 1 OR Communities First area WIMD quintiles 2 to 5 (excluding Communities First)	W
Welsh medium	Providers in Wales only. This split identifies students who have accessed all or some of their provision delivered through the medium of Welsh.	At least 5 credits through the medium of Welsh for the relevant year Less than 5 credits through the medium of Welsh	W
Disability	Disability as self-declared and recorded on HESA record.	Disability No disability	
Ethnicity	Ethnicity as self-declared on HESA record.	White background Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) background. Where there are significant differences (i.e. different flags) within the BME group, these will also be reported	
Domicile	NSS based metrics only.	UK other EU non-EU students	See paragraph 5.30.2

23 Communities First

Additional guidance

5.30.1 **References to 'HESA record' in table 7 should be taken to include ILR records.**

5.30.2 **The 'Category definition' for Domicile in table 7 should read 'Domicile as recorded on HESA and ILR records'.**

5.30.3 **References to SIMD are to SIMD 2016 and WIMD are to WIMD 2014.**

Treatment of mergers and divisions

5.31 Long term, where providers merge HEFCE will treat all data from the original providers as if they had always been a single provider. For TEF Year Two, where two or more providers merge before the submission deadline, the newly formed provider should if possible make a single submission and HEFCE will seek to merge the core and split metrics data. Where this is not practicable, or where the providers merge during the assessment process, the assessors will review their core and split metrics and provider submission alongside one another and the TEF panel will reach a single judgement. See the **Outcomes** section for further detail.

See paragraphs 3.25.2 to 3.25.6

5.32 HEFCE will follow the same principles described above for providers that divide.

Presentation of metrics data

5.33 The assessors will be presented with headline data showing the core metrics and key contextual data (provider size, split between full time and part time students).

5.34 Beyond that worksheets will provide further detail including the full contextual data and maps. For each metric (and split) TEF assessors will see:

- Indicator (as a percentage)
- Benchmark (as a percentage)
- % provider contribution to benchmark
- Difference between benchmark and indicator
- Z-score (the number of standard deviations from the benchmark)
- Flag (either -/+ or ++/--)
- The flags for each of the individual years that have contributed to the indicator (provider level only)

5.35 Any data point that does not meet the reporting threshold will be replaced with an 'n'. Any data point that is empty because the provider did not participate in the survey or submit learner records will be replaced with an 'n/a'.

5.36 An exemplar of the full TEF metrics, splits and contextual data contextual maps is at Annex H (published separately). The **Assessment: decision-making section** of this document describes how the data will be interpreted by the assessors.

Additional guidance

Data available to providers

5.37 **As indicated above, the contextual data and metrics described in this section of the TEF specification were made available to providers on the same day as publication of this guidance. HEFCE has released a TEF metrics workbook to each potentially eligible provider that has any TEF Year Two metrics data available (whether or not they meet the definition of 'suitable metrics').**

5.38 The workbook includes the core metrics, splits, and contextual data in the same format as it will be presented to assessors. (A fictional exemplar of a workbook is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-excellence-framework-year-2-specification.) The workbook also contains the numerator and denominator for each indicator, and some additional information to indicate why metrics are not reportable, to aid with understanding. The contextual data maps are provided as separate files, in the same format as they will be presented to the assessors. Additional individualised student-level data has also been released to providers so they can understand how the indicators have been derived from the underlying data, and can check the provider's underlying data for accuracy.

5.39 Details of how the workbooks and data can be accessed through the HEFCE TEF extranet are at paragraphs 6.24 to 6.32.

5.40 In addition, HEFCE has published a suite of technical documents that describe the detailed algorithms used to derive the indicators from the underlying student, DLHE and NSS data, alongside descriptions of the workbooks and individualised files that are available from the extranet. These are available at www.hefce.ac.uk/data/famd/latest/2014-15,overview. A workbook containing the data underlying the benchmark calculations will also be made available during the application window.

5.41 Queries about the metrics workbooks and supporting data should be raised with tefmetrics@hefce.ac.uk.

Data amendment process

5.42 The TEF metrics and contextual data are formed using the provider's original data returns that have been signed-off at year-end as quality assured by the head of institution, and that have already been used in published performance indicators, information for students such as the Key Information Set (KIS), and other published Official and National Statistics. It is essential that data used to inform the TEF metrics remains, as far as possible, consistent with these other published sources of information. Therefore, requests to amend the data used in calculating the TEF metrics will be considered only in exceptional circumstances, in accordance with the criteria set out below.

5.43 Previous amendments that have been made since the year-end sign-off are **not** incorporated in the TEF metrics. Where the provider wishes to incorporate any previous data amendments into the TEF metrics this will need to be requested according to the TEF criteria and process for data amendments set out below.

5.44 To prevent delay in the release of benchmarked data, HEFCE has frozen all sector figures used for benchmarking at the point of releasing metrics to providers in late October 2016. This is to ensure that providers who are not requesting amendments – or have not agreed to changes requested by other providers which affect their metrics – are able to progress their applications without indicators or benchmarks changing due to amendments made by other providers.

Criteria for amendments

5.45 All requests to amend the data underlying the TEF metrics must be made by **noon on 18 November 2016**, and must be complete and in the correct format.

5.46 A request to amend data for TEF purposes will be granted only if it satisfies **all** of the following criteria:

a. All the requested amendments are necessary due to widespread and significant errors in the underlying data, rather than reinterpretation of the data (for example, re-categorisation).

b. Any amendments by a registering provider which directly affect the metrics of one or more teaching providers involved in a franchise relationship[24] have been agreed in writing beforehand with the affected teaching provider(s), and confirmation of their agreement has been supplied with the data amendment request. This means that the metrics for a teaching provider that does not agree to a change being made by the

24 Where a student is registered at one provider but is taught by another. The registering provider reports the students on their individualised student returns. For TEF purposes, students are assigned to the provider where they spend most of their time during their first year of study or 2009-10, whichever is the latest. See paragraphs 2.10 to 2.10.5 for further information.

registering provider will not change as a result of the amendments process. In this case, the registering provider may still request amendments so long as they do not affect that teaching provider's metrics.

c. The amended data makes a material difference to the TEF metrics for one or more of the providers that have agreed to the data amendments. A 'material difference' is defined as either of the following:

   i. At least one of the six core TEF metric flags, in the mode in which a majority of students are taught, changes from positive, negative or unflagged to a different category. (A change between '- -' and '-' or between '+' and '++' will not be considered sufficiently material to merit a data amendment. As set out in paragraphs 7.8 to 7.22, these differences do not have a clear and direct impact on how assessors will form an initial hypothesis about the rating. These differences will be used by assessors, alongside a number of other factors, in refining the initial hypothesis.)

   or

   ii. Metrics that do not meet the definition of 'suitable metrics' change to meeting the definition; or vice versa.

5.47 A provider's TEF metrics and contextual data will be amended only if the above criteria are met.

Timetable for data amendments

5.48 In summary, the timetable for data amendments is as follows:

- **Noon on 18 November 2016**: Deadline for providers to make amendment requests and submit corrected data (see paragraphs 5.49 to 5.53)
- **By 12 December 2016**: Providers will be informed if their requests satisfy criteria a. and b. above. If they do, the requests will be granted subject to satisfying criterion c.
- **By 19 December**: Providers whose requests satisfied criteria a. and b. above will receive revised metrics workbooks, and will be informed if the requests satisfy criterion c. If they do, the revised metrics workbook will be used for the TEF application.
- **11 January 2017**: Deadline for providers to notify HEFCE if any errors are found in HEFCE's processing of the revised metrics (see paragraph 5.62).

Making an amendment request

5.49 We can accept amendment requests only to data which the provider itself had submitted to HESA or the Data Service (or directly to HEFCE in the case of DLHE for FECs). We are unable to process requests to amend data that had been submitted by another provider. If a teaching provider in a franchise relationship wishes to make an amendment to data supplied by the registering provider it must be routed through the registering provider that made the original data submission.

5.50 A registering provider that wishes to amend data that directly affects the metrics of a teaching provider in a franchise relationship must obtain written agreement to the amendments from the affected provider(s) beforehand. Confirmation of their agreement must be supplied as part of the amendment request.

5.51 All corrections must be submitted to HEFCE along with the request, and made to a copy of the signed-off year-end data originally submitted to the relevant data collection agency. The amended file must represent a complete return that includes records for all students, including those whose records remain unchanged. In order for the file to be processed, it must be in exactly the same format as was required in the year when it was originally submitted to the relevant data collection agency. The years that inform the various TEF metrics are given in the 'TEF Year 2 Specification, Annex F: Full metrics descriptions'. Data files for only those years that the provider wishes to amend should be submitted to HEFCE.

5.52 Providers will be required to provide an explanation of the reason(s) for the errors in their original year-end returns and of the changes they are requesting, by completing a separate Data Amendment Request Form for each return they wish to amend. A return is an individual, complete year-end dataset for a particular year that informs the TEF metrics – for example, the DLHE and the Student return are considered to be different returns, as are the Student returns for 2012-13 and 2014-15.

5.53 Providers must submit their data amendment request(s) and the corrected data to HEFCE by noon on **18 November 2016**. Requests must be made by completing a Data Amendment Request Form available on the TEF extranet, and the amended data must be supplied in the correct format. Late requests, or requests that are incomplete or not in the correct format, will not be considered. See paragraphs 6.24 to 6.32 for information about the TEF extranet.

Decisions on amendment requests

5.54 When a request is received, HEFCE officers will check the following:

- that each Data Amendment Request Form is complete and the associated data file(s) are in the correct format
- that the data file(s) do not contain errors which prevent the file from being processed
- that at an aggregate field by field level the changes to the data appear to match those declared in the Amendment Request Form
- that they do not include amendments to data which directly affects another provider without their written agreement.

The provider will then be notified of the outcome of these checks and whether the amendment request can progress to the next stage.

5.55 After the amendment request deadline of noon on 18 November when all the amendment requests and data files have been checked, HEFCE officers will review the information provided on the Data Amendment Request Form for those submissions passed as fit for further processing. They will provide advice and make a recommendation to the TEF Data Panel on whether criteria 5.46.a and 5.46.b. for amendments have been satisfied. Officers from the other UK funding bodies will be asked for advice as appropriate, and this will inform the recommendations in relation to providers from Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

5.56 The TEF Data Panel will review the amendment requests and make recommendations to the HEFCE chief executive on whether the amendment requests should be accepted or rejected based on criteria 5.46.a and 5.46.b. The TEF Data Panel will include director-level staff from HEFCE, the TEF manager and a senior HESA representative.

5.57 The Data Panel will recommend whether to accept or reject each amendment request in its entirety. It will not be possible to selectively approve and process some amendments contained in a request and not others, although it will be possible to accept one request from a provider while rejecting another: for example, a request to amend 2013-14 data may be accepted while a request to amend 2014-15 may be rejected.

5.58 Providers will need to ensure that their proposed amendments meet the specified criteria, and do not include any that do not. Similarly, the provider is responsible for ensuring they have not included any amendments that affect the metrics, that are not documented in the covering Data Amendment Request Form. Failure to account for all the amendments contained in the data file to fields that are relevant to the TEF could result in the whole request being rejected.

5.59 Following the Data Panel meeting and decisions by the HEFCE chief executive, HEFCE officers will inform providers if their requests have satisfied criteria a. and b. above, by 12 December, stating the reason for the decision.

5.60 In December, HEFCE will then recalculate the metrics for those providers whose amendment requests have satisfied criteria 5.46.a and 5.46.b. HEFCE will supply these providers with their revised metrics by 19 December 2016.

5.61 At the same time, HEFCE will indicate whether or not the amendment has resulted in a material change to a core metric flag, as described in criterion 5.46.c. This will include a material change to another provider's core metric flag as a consequence of changes agreed between both parties. If there is a material change, the processed amendment request will be automatically accepted. If the amendment request results in no material change to any relevant core metrics, the amendment request will not be accepted and the original metrics provided in October will stand.

5.62 Where the amendment request is accepted, the provider should use the revised metrics in finalising its application, and the revised metrics will be supplied to the assessors after the TEF application deadline. When it receives the revised metrics the provider has the opportunity – but is not obliged – to check this information for any processing errors on HEFCE's part. If a provider identifies a material error in the processing of their amendments, they must notify HEFCE by 11 January 2017.

5.63 The TEF team will inform the assessors which providers made amendment requests and whether they were accepted, so that assessors are aware of this context for their submissions.

Data audits

5.64 Accepted data amendments may be audited during the assessment stage, on the advice of the TEF Data Panel. Should an audit find the requested amendments to be materially inaccurate, this could result in the metrics being deemed unsuitable. The provider would then be able to opt-in for a provisional award.

Providers that are unable to amend inaccurate data

5.65 Where a provider believes there are significant and material inaccuracies in its metrics data which are outside its control, the provider can request that its metrics be deemed unsuitable, in which case it can opt-in for a provisional TEF award. This applies only to teaching providers in a franchise relationship whose data are submitted by another provider, and where the registering provider responsible for the data returns is unwilling or unable to request amendments to the data in question. Such a request for metrics to be deemed unsuitable will need to be made by **noon on 18 November 2016**, using the Data Amendment Request Form. The request will need to explain the nature and extent of inaccuracies in the data.

5.66 The TEF Data Panel will consider whether the data errors described in the form are widespread and material to the TEF metrics, and will recommend to the HEFCE chief executive whether or not the provider's metrics should be deemed unsuitable.

Provider submissions

Purpose, format and length

6.1 Providers will submit evidence to support their case for excellence that will be used by assessors alongside performance against the core and split metrics. Submissions will be **no longer than 15 pages** each and there will be no minimum length. HEFCE will issue guidance on style, format and coverage, but providers will not be obliged to follow a prescribed template.

6.2 The purpose of the provider submission is to enable a provider to:

A. add **additional context further to the standard contextual data**, such as details of its mission (previous chapter)

B. support or **explain its performance against the core and split metrics**, particularly where performance is not strong (this chapter)

C. put forward **evidence against the assessment criteria** which will be used alongside performance against the core and split metrics (this chapter)

D. further explore **performance for specific student groups** based on split metrics (this chapter).

A. Additional context further to the standard contextual data

6.3 This is an opportunity for a provider to add any additional context that explains its mission and characteristics that is not fully captured by the standardised contextual data outlined in the **Contextual data and metrics section**. This could include aspects such as mission, collaborative provision or knowledge exchange activity.

B. Contextualising performance against the core and split metrics

6.4 Contextual factors can be those that have adversely affected performance against the core metrics which are not under the control of a provider. They can also be factors that have affected performance which are under the control of the provider, but which reflect decisions that have been made for good reason. Assessors will take this information into account when reaching their assessment of performance. Further guidance will be included in technical guidance from HEFCE.

C. Evidence against the assessment criteria

6.5 The provider submission should put forward any **additional evidence** that a provider feels best supports its case for excellence against the assessment criteria. This evidence can be qualitative and/or quantitative. Evidence should be current, within the time period covered by the core and split metrics.

See paragraphs 6.10.1 to 6.10.2

6.6 A provider is **not required to address each criterion** or to use them as a checklist. Rather, they may wish to **focus on areas of strength and areas where there are weaknesses in performance against the core and split metrics**. Additional evidence should allow an assessor to form a view on how a provider has performed in respect of each of the three aspects, particularly where performance against the core and split metrics is not clear cut (see **Assessment; decision making section**).

6.7 Assessors will carry out their assessment with the assurance that the high baseline quality eligibility requirements are met and will instead focus on identifying evidence of excellence above the baseline. As such, while the submission **may refer to and build upon evidence explored as part of broader quality assurance arrangements**, it should not duplicate it. Any findings from QA review included in

the submission should be timely, demonstrate performance above the baseline and be clearly related to the TEF assessment criteria. The emphasis in the provider submission should be on demonstrating the **impact and effectiveness of teaching on the student experience and outcomes they achieve**. The submission should therefore avoid focusing on descriptions of strategies or approach but instead should focus on impact. Wherever possible, impact should be demonstrated empirically. Assessors and panellists will base their decisions on only the metrics and provider submission available, taking into account the contextual information they have been provided with. HEFCE guidance and TEF assessor and panel training will stress that no prior knowledge or additional external evidence can be taken into account when reaching a judgement.

6.8 Copies of, or links to, primary evidence – for example, strategy documents, policies or committee minutes – should not be included. Assessors may seek clarification or verification of the information and evidence covered in the submission (through TEF officers) if it is needed but will not otherwise engage with the provider. HEFCE guidance will reflect our expectation that verification should only be sought to clarify something the provider has included that is unclear or that an assessor considers may be untrue. It should not be used as a way of introducing new evidence into the assessment process.

6.9 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.

See paragraph 6.10.3.b

6.10 **Indicative guidance on the sorts of evidence** a provider may wish to use to support its case is in **table eight**. This is **not** intended to be a checklist and it is **not** exhaustive. Providers are not expected to submit all of this evidence. Rather, a provider should make its case using the strongest available evidence, using the examples in the table **and/or** others.

Additional guidance

Evidence against the assessment criteria

6.10.1 **Providers are encouraged to focus their submission on current and recent performance against the assessment criteria. This means focusing on teaching activities and outcomes that occurred in the last three years, from 2013-14 to 2015-16 inclusive.**

6.10.2 **While a focus on recent performance is paramount, it is recognised that information about activity in previous years may also be relevant for the provider submission, particularly when explaining performance against the metrics which include data from previous years. A summary of the student cohorts covered by the metrics is in Annex D of the TEF specification.**

6.10.3 **Providers might wish to consider the following good practice suggestions in preparing their submissions:**

a. **The submission may contain both qualitative and quantitative information. In either case the information should be factual and verifiable, rather than making assertions or statements that are not capable of verification.**

b. **Care should be taken to ensure the information is relevant to the assessment criteria, and to provision that is in scope of the assessment. (See paragraphs 2.1 to 2.11.1 for more information.) Information relating to provision that is not in scope (for example, postgraduate provision or transnational education) will be considered relevant only if it helps to explain the context of the submission, or to the extent that it impacts on provision that is in scope (for example, how postgraduate provision impacts on the learning environment for undergraduate students). Evidence of the quality of out-of-scope provision will not in itself be considered relevant to the TEF assessment.**

c. **Franchised provision will be assessed in respect of the provider that delivers the teaching, and franchised students will be included in the metrics of the teaching institution. However, the registering provider may wish to include information about its franchise activity. This may be to help explain the context of the submission or to provide evidence of how such activity impacts on its own performance in relation to the assessment criteria.**

d. **While providers are not expected to address all the criteria individually, they should bear in mind that the assessors will consider performance across all three aspects of teaching and learning highlighted in the assessment framework – teaching quality, learning environment, and student outcomes and learning gain – when forming a holistic judgement. They will therefore be looking for evidence that relates to all three aspects, from the combination of the metrics and the submission.**

D. Further explore performance for specific student groups

6.11 A provider may use the provider submission as an opportunity to further explore the contextual factors that adversely affected performance against their split metrics for specific student groups. Providers can also use their provider submission as an opportunity to explore the particularly positive actions they have taken for specific student groups. Assessors will take this information into account when reaching their assessment of performance, comparing it with their initial assessment of the provider's performance against the split metrics.

6.12 All **submissions will be published**. They will therefore be available for providers and stakeholders to learn from each other and freely available for researchers wishing to understand more about the basis of high quality learning and teaching in UK HE.

Student engagement

6.13 Recognising the additional insight that direct information from students can provide, providers are encouraged to **show how they have involved students in preparing the submission.** Additional evidence provided by a provider's students will be given the same weight as the other forms of "additional" evidence referred to in **table eight**.

6.14 This could take a variety of forms, including, but not limited to, use of surveys, representative structures, focus groups, student membership of relevant committees, consultation events, online discussion fora, or facilitating the Student Union or other representative body to draft a section of the provider submission.

6.15 Students can only provide input via their provider's submission. Separate student submissions will not be accepted.

6.16 No provider will be disadvantaged in the event of non-cooperation by their students or Student Union.

Additional guidance

Evidence of student engagement in learning and teaching

6.16.1 **Table 8 below includes examples of possible types of evidence that providers may wish to include in the submission, relating to student engagement in learning and teaching. Some further possible examples include evidence of the impact and effectiveness of: collaborating with students on projects such as the co-design of curriculum; student involvement in lesson observation; or embedding student engagement into teaching and learning plans.**

Student engagement in the submission

6.16.2 **Providers are encouraged to involve students in the production of the submission. For example, they may wish to capture student feedback, either within the submission itself, embedded in the main body of the text, or by including a supporting statement of endorsement from student representatives within the 15 page submission. Providers could develop the submission in partnership with elected student councils, or include student representation on its TEF working group. Providers are encouraged to share their metrics workbook with student representatives, to support their engagement with the submission.**

6.16.3 **The student input may raise negative aspects of their experiences. This can be a good opportunity to show how providers are working in collaboration with the student body to address these issues by, for example, evaluating the impact of an action plan or positive engagement activities.**

6.16.4 **Where students or student representatives produce information for potential submission to the TEF, the provider should determine the extent to which such information is integrated into its submission; a separate student submission cannot be considered.**

6.16.5 **Provider briefing events will take place across the UK from mid-November to early December 2016, for both institutional and student representatives.**

Table 8 **Possible examples of evidence for each aspect**

Aspect	Possible examples of evidence
Teaching Quality (TQ)	Impact and effectiveness of involving students in teaching evaluation e.g. collecting and acting on their feedback Impact and effectiveness of schemes focused on monitoring and maximising students' engagement with their studies such as the UK Engagement Survey (UKES) and others Recognition of courses by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) How the provider is achieving positive outcomes for students, whilst also successfully identifying, addressing and preventing grade inflation Quantitative information on teaching intensity, such as weighted contact hours[25] Impact and effectiveness of external examining Impact and effectiveness of teaching observation schemes Impact and effectiveness of innovative approaches, new technology or educational research Recognition and reward schemes, and their impact and effectiveness, including progression and promotion opportunities for staff based on teaching commitment and performance Quantitative information relating to the qualification, experience and contractual basis of staff who teach Impact and effectiveness of feedback initiatives aimed at supporting students' development, progression and achievement

25 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.

Table 8 **Possible examples of evidence for each aspect continued**

Aspect	Possible examples of evidence
Learning Environment (LE)	Impact and effectiveness of initiatives aimed at supporting the transition into and through a higher education course Quantitative information demonstrating proportional investment in teaching and learning infrastructure Use and effectiveness of learner analytics in tracking and monitoring progress and development Extent, nature and impact of employer engagement in course design and/or delivery, including degree apprenticeships Extent and impact of student involvement in or exposure to the latest developments in research, scholarship or professional practice (one or more) (For relevant providers) Evidence of Welsh medium provision contributing to students' academic experiences Impact and effectiveness of initiatives aimed at understanding, assessing and improving retention and completion
Student Outcomes and Learning Gain (SO)	Learning gain and distance-travelled by all students including those entering higher education part-way through their professional lives Career enhancement and progression for mature students Evidence of longer-term employment outcomes and progression of graduates including into highly-skilled employment Evidence and impact of initiatives aimed at preparing students for further study and research Evidence and impact of initiatives aimed at graduate employability Extent of student involvement in enterprise and entrepreneurship Number, impact and success of graduate start-ups Use and effectiveness of initiatives used to help measure and record student progress, such as Grade Point Average (GPA) 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.

Submission format

6.17 The submission must be a single PDF document that may not exceed 15 pages of A4; there is no minimum length requirement.

6.18 In the interests of equity and clarity for the assessors, the following guidelines on formatting must be adhered to:

- Arial font, 11 point (minimum)
- single line spacing (minimum)
- 2 cm margins (minimum)
- contain the name of the provider and its UKPRN in the header (on all pages)
- contain page numbers in the footer.

6.19 Use of formatting such as bold or underlined text, headings, lists, and so on are welcome. Tables, diagrams or any non-text content may be included within the 15-page limit.

6.20 Footnotes are permissible, either to clarify statements made in the submission, or to indicate where the submitted evidence has been drawn from. However, hyperlinks to primary evidence should **not** be included, and the assessors will be instructed **not** to access any referenced sources or follow any hyperlinks in a submission. As stated at paragraphs 6.7 and 6.8, judgements will be based only on the metrics and provider submission (taking into account the contextual information and any clarification or verification queries), and no additional external evidence. The onus therefore is on the provider to ensure that all the information required to make the judgement (in addition to the metrics workbook and data maps) is included within the 15-page submission.

6.21 No appendices or any other type of information may be included if not incorporated within the 15-page limit.

6.22 Submitted PDF documents must be accessible to screen reading technology, and therefore not scanned documents. The format and structure of the document should be accessible for assessors to support the assessment process and for the general public as it will be published.

6.23 A pre-formatted template document is available on the TEF extranet that providers may use. It adheres to the above format requirements, and includes suggested headings (which may be used or adapted). Providers are not required to use this template, so long as their submission adheres to the above format requirements.

The TEF extranet and how to apply

6.24 Providers must make use of the HEFCE TEF extranet to access their metrics workbooks and complete their application or opt-in for a provisional award. The TEF extranet is available at https://tef.hefce.ac.uk/extranet.

6.25 Each provider has a HEFCE extranet user administrator that is responsible for granting access to the HEFCE extranet to members of staff. The provider's user administrator will need to grant staff access specifically to the TEF extranet. There are two TEF extranet user 'groups', each with access to specific information and functionality, and the user administrator can assign staff to one or both groups as appropriate:

- The **TEF Year Two main group** is for staff overseeing the application or opt-in. It provides access to the metrics workbook (that is, the aggregated metrics) and data maps; general templates; and the facility to upload the provider submission and authorisation letter.
- The **TEF Year Two data group** is for staff involved in processing individual-level student data. It provides access to the metrics workbook and data maps; the additional student-level data (see paragraph 5.38); and the facility to upload data amendment requests (see paragraphs 5.49 to 5.53).

6.26 Providers' TEF main and metrics contacts and user administrators were informed about access to the TEF extranet when it went live on 31 October.

6.27 Submissions can be accepted only if uploaded in the correct format to the TEF extranet, by the deadline of **noon on 26 January 2017**.

6.28 Providers may upload, download and replace their submission at any time up to the application deadline. The onus is on the provider to ensure that the submission document that has been uploaded to the extranet as at noon on 26 January 2017 is the correct and final version. HEFCE will take this to be the final version and will use it for the assessment and later publication.

6.29 After noon on 26 January 2017, it will not be possible to upload or replace the submission document, except where HEFCE determines there were circumstances beyond the control of the provider that prevented it from uploading a complete submission by the deadline.

6.30 When uploading a submission to the TEF extranet, the system will verify that it is in PDF format, and is no longer than 15 pages in length. If it is not in PDF format or exceeds 15 pages, the upload will fail. Providers are therefore advised to test the upload in advance of the final deadline, and ensure the final version is uploaded by the deadline.

6.31 After noon on 26 January 2017, the provider will continue to be able to download its submission and metrics workbook, for information.

6.32 For technical assistance with the TEF extranet or uploading files, please contact tefmetrics@hefce.ac.uk.

Authorisation of the application

6.33 The provider application or opt-in for a provisional award must be authorised by the accountable officer. A template of the authorisation letter is available on the TEF extranet. It must be completed, signed by the accountable officer (electronic signatures will be accepted), and uploaded to the TEF extranet by the deadline of noon on 26 January 2017. P

6.34 The authorisation letter:

- confirms that a provider with suitable metrics is applying for a TEF assessment; or without suitable metrics is opting-in for a provisional TEF award
- authorises a provider submission and attests to the accuracy of its contents
- where required, includes a URL to the provider's Access and Participation Statement.

Survey of intentions to apply

6.35 To help effective implementation of the assessment process, providers that have suitable metrics will be invited to indicate whether or not they intend to apply for a TEF assessment, during November 2016. The survey of intentions will enable the TEF team to identify the number and range of assessors required from among its TEF assessor pool, and the number of TEF officers needed to support the assessment stage, in order to make adequate preparations for assessment.

6.36 The TEF main contact at all providers with suitable metrics will be surveyed in mid-November, with a response due by 21 November. They will be invited only to state whether or not the provider intends to apply for a TEF Year Two assessment. Responses will not commit a provider to participate, and a response is not required in order to apply. However, accurate responses will enable the TEF team to prepare for the assessment stage and ensure that a suitable range of assessors are given adequate notice for their work.

6.37 Responses to the survey will not be published. An aggregated and anonymised summary of responses will be reported to the TEF Project Board and may be used to inform the lessons learned exercise.

6.38 Providers that do not have suitable metrics and are potentially eligible for a provisional award will **not** be surveyed. They will need to decide whether to opt-in or not, by the deadline of noon 26 January 2017. P

Assessment: decision-making

7.1 This section provides a summary of **the approach to decision-making against the assessment framework**. The design of the TEF is underpinned by metrics and the TEF core and split metrics provide the starting point for assessment. The assessment process is in stages:

a. Review of core metrics

b. Review of performance based on split metrics

c. Review of the provider submission

d. Overall judgement of teaching quality

7.2 Further detail on the processes involved to reach a judgement is dealt with later in the chapter.

7.3 Before and, if necessary, during each stage, assessors will use the standard **contextual information** supplied to aid understanding of the provider and its operating context, as well as interpretation of performance against the core and split metrics. Contextual information should not, in itself, be a factor in determining a provider's TEF rating, as size, mission, location or admissions and access profile are not measures of teaching quality. It may, however, provide useful context for assessors when interpreting the core and split metrics and/or additional evidence.

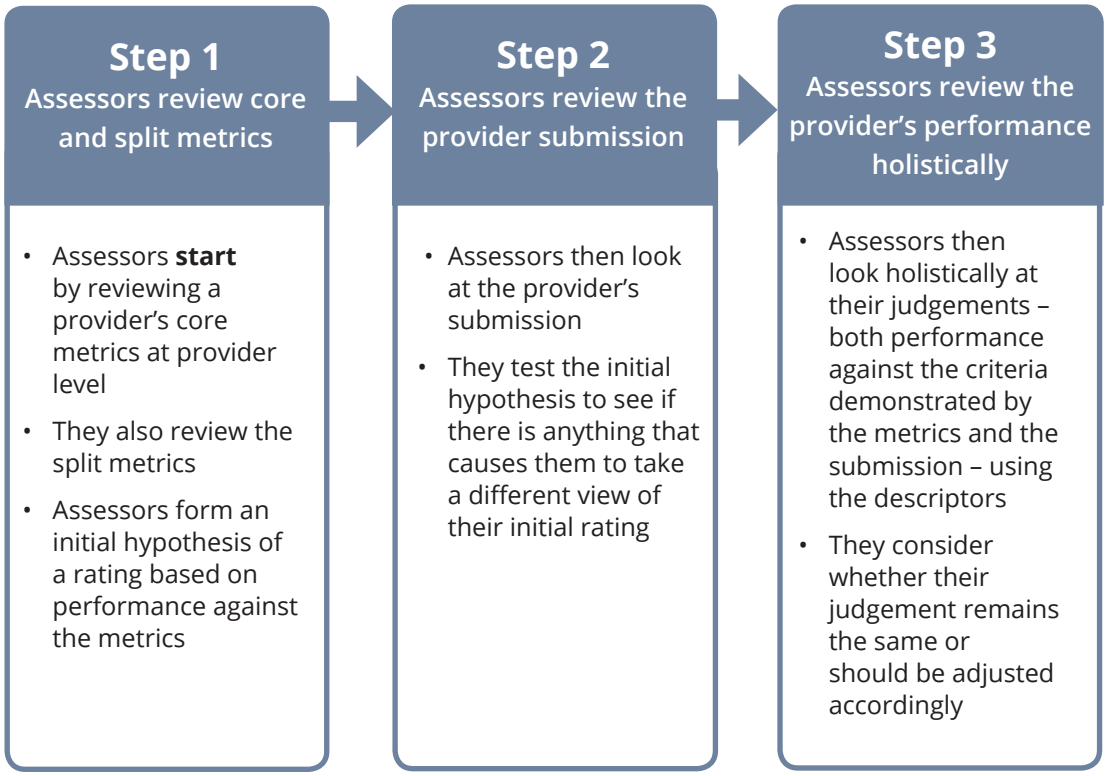
7.4 Assessors will look at **performance against the core metrics** to form an initial hypothesis on the likely rating. This will be based on distance from benchmarks using the system of significance flagging outlined in the **Contextual data and metrics section**. The initial hypothesis will also **take account of performance based on split metrics** (see **Contextual data and metrics section**). The number and direction of flags, whether or not there is a mixture of positive and negative flags and whether there are any contrary flags on split metrics, will determine not just the position of the initial hypothesis but the degree of confidence in which it is held.

7.5 The **provider submission** will be used to determine whether the initial hypothesis should remain unchanged, particularly in circumstances where the evidence from the core and split metrics is mixed or unclear, before an overall judgement is recommended.

7.6 For a provider that has fewer than three years of core metrics, for very small providers or for providers where there are conflicting core and split metric flags, particular care will need to be taken in interpreting performance solely based on core and split metrics. In such cases assessors should consider the initial hypothesis to be only lightly held, and may need to rely more heavily on additional evidence in the submission in reaching their final view.

7.7 The decision-making process is displayed diagrammatically in **figure three**.

Figure 3 **Summary of approach to decision-making**



Review of core metrics

7.8 Assessors will form an initial hypothesis about the provider rating based on performance against the core metrics. Proportionately more weight will be given to core metrics in the delivery mode in which providers teach the most students (i.e. full or part-time).

7.9 A range of possible scenarios exist, with providers having a mixture of positive or negative flags, no flags at all, or a set of either all positive or all negative flags. The following general principles will be used to develop the initial hypothesis for subsequent testing using the additional evidence and contextual factors in the submission.

7.10 When looking at the delivery mode in which providers teach the most students:

- A provider with three or more positive flags (either + or ++) and no negative flags (either - or - -) should be considered initially as **Gold**.
- A provider with two or more negative flags should be considered initially as **Bronze**, regardless of the number of positive flags. Given the focus of the TEF on excellence above the baseline, it would not be reasonable to assign an initial rating above Bronze to a provider that is below benchmark in two or more areas.
- All other providers, including those with no flags at all, should be considered initially as **Silver**.

7.11 In all cases, the initial hypothesis will be subject to greater scrutiny and in the next steps, and may change in the light of additional evidence. This is particularly so for providers that have a mix of positive and negative flags.

7.12 Assessors will be provided with further guidance on the development of initial hypotheses and **the initial hypotheses will be tested against the additional evidence** as set out below.

7.13 The likelihood of the initial hypotheses being maintained after the additional evidence in the provider submission is considered will increase commensurately with the number of positive or negative flags on core metrics. That is, **the more clear-cut performance is against the core metrics, the less likely it is that the initial hypothesis will change** in either direction in light of the further evidence.

7.14 In the unusual case of a provider having six positive flags, we anticipate it will be highly unlikely that an initial hypothesis of Gold would not be maintained, regardless of the content of the additional evidence. Similarly, in the unusual case of a provider having six negative flags, it would be highly unlikely that an initial hypothesis of Bronze would not be maintained, regardless of the content of the additional evidence.

Review of split metrics

7.15 Before settling on an initial hypothesis based on the metrics, assessors should test the hypothesis by considering **how a provider performs with respect to different student groups**. This includes considering the performance of the provider in the delivery mode in which the provider does not teach the most students (i.e. full time or part time). This is particularly relevant to criterion SO3 (see **Assessment Framework section**).

7.16 Performance with respect to certain student groups, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, must be taken into account in determining a provider's rating. It could lead to an adjustment of the initial hypothesis, either to a different rating or to a more borderline position within a rating, and/or to a reduction in the confidence with which the hypothesis is held – which would lead to the assessor needing to seek further information in the additional evidence. Assessors may alter their initial hypothesis in the light of evidence from the splits, particularly when considering providers for the highest rating of Gold.

7.17 Due to small sample sizes, split metrics are less likely to result in a significance flag than for the core metric. Therefore, no weight should be assigned to a split metric that does not display a flag. Assessor training will make clear that **assessors should not allow splits that do not display flags to affect their hypothesis**.

7.18 Assessors should focus on those split metrics that do display flags, in particular where these flags differ from the core metric. A number of possible variations exist.

a. A positive flag in a split metric, where the core metric is neutral or negatively flagged

b. A negative flag in a split metric, where the core metric is neutral or positively flagged.

7.19 The presence of these combinations should lead assessors to consider reassessing the provider upwards or downwards from the initial assessment, either to a higher/lower position within the current category or to a higher/lower category, or to weakening the strength with which they hold their hypothesis.

7.20 After interpreting splits, we would **expect assessors to look at the additional evidence for further information before reaching a final view**. Assessors should also be alert to patterns across all three aspects based on split metrics.

Additional factors in reviewing performance against the core and split metrics

7.21 Assessors will consider a number of **additional factors** related to the interpretation of the core and split metrics in order to refine the initial judgement outlined above. These are:

a. In addition to the number of flags, assessors will consider **how the flags are distributed across the three aspects of quality**. If positive or negative flags are concentrated – or absent from – one or more aspect, that may influence the judgement.

b. Assessors should be careful **not to overweight information coming from the NSS**, which provides three separate metrics in two out of three aspects, and ensure that positive performance on these metrics is triangulated against performance against the other metrics and additional evidence. They should also bear in mind that it has been suggested that, in some cases, stretching and rigorous course design, standards and assessment (features of criterion TQ3[26]), could adversely affect NSS scores.

c. Assessors should give particular weight to the core and split metrics on retention and highly skilled employment since students should expect to be supported to complete their studies and attain a job appropriate to their qualification and skills.

d. Particularly in borderline cases, and where there are no or few flags, assessors will need to take particular account of **Z scores**, to consider by **how much a provider exceeded a benchmark**, or how close it was to the boundary.

e. Assessors should account for the fact that providers in Scotland typically have slightly lower retention rates, due to the HE landscape and funding model that prevails in Scotland and that this should be taken into account when the assessors judge performance against these metrics.

7.22 The process outlined above will allow assessors to arrive at their initial assessment based on the core and split metrics. More information on this process will be available in HEFCE's TEF guidance.

Provider submission

7.23 In looking at the provider submission, assessors will be looking for evidence of **factors that could have affected performance against the core and split metrics**. These factors might lead assessors to adjust their initial hypothesis based on performance against the core and split metrics.

7.24 Assessors will also be looking for **evidence of excellence against the criteria** that core and split metrics alone may not have fully demonstrated.

7.25 The purpose of the provider submission is to enable a provider to:

A. add additional context further to the standard contextual data, such as details of its mission.

B. support or explain its performance against the core and split metrics, particularly where performance is not strong.

C. put forward evidence against the assessment criteria which will be used alongside performance against the core and split metrics.

D. further explore performance for specific student groups based on split metrics.

26 See the Assessment Criteria section for further detail

7.26 It is possible that:

- a provider with a negative core flag could have their rating adjusted to Gold if all or most of the other flags were positive. Similarly, a provider with two negative core flags could have their rating adjusted to Silver, if all or most of the other flags were positive. In both cases, though, assessors should expect to see further corroborating evidence and a strong and convincing justification for the negative flag in the provider's additional evidence.
- a provider with one or more positive core flags could receive a rating of Bronze if it also had core negative flags.

See paragraph 7.35.2

7.27 The core and split metrics are considered to provide evidence of performance against all three aspects of teaching excellence. Furthermore, since all providers taking part in the TEF will already have met the high baseline quality threshold for the sector, assessors should not take the absence of evidence to be 'evidence of absence' i.e. a de facto reason to adjust their initial hypothesis in either direction, unless negative performance in the core and split metrics, has given them previous cause for concern.

7.28 For additional evidence to alter the initial hypothesis, **assessors should expect to see clear, significant and well supported evidence of performance above the baseline, directly relevant to the criteria**. In particular, for providers to achieve the highest TEF rating, assessors should look to see clear evidence, from the core and split metrics, usually in combination with the additional evidence, of outstanding performance against all three aspects of teaching excellence.

7.29 Assessors should give no weight to evidence that is not relevant to the criteria.

7.30 Providers can, if they wish, re-use existing excerpts from their quality assessment review (e.g. HER or ELIR) results within their TEF submission. Where these reviews are timely and report excellence above the baseline that is directly relevant to the TEF assessment criteria, assessors will consider these to be strong evidence against the criteria. This may, in some cases, lessen the burden on some providers when they are putting together their provider submissions. However, providers will need to consider strongly the relationship of the excerpt to the TEF criteria and the need to demonstrate performance above the baseline.

7.31 The additional evidence is likely to be particularly important when a provider:

a. has a mixture of positive and negative significance flags
b. has no or few significance flags
c. has fewer than three years of core metrics
d. is very small, meaning that significance flags are less likely
e. displays a core metric and split metric with a contrary flag
f. has a concentration of positive or negative flags in one or more aspects that are not replicated in other aspects.

7.32 Should a provider include very little additional evidence in its submission, proportionately more weight will be placed on the core and split metrics in making decisions. **In the extreme case where a provider submission contains no substantive additional evidence, assessors will be required to make a judgement based on the core and split metrics alone**, according to the following rules:

a. Five or six positive flags in the core metrics for the mode of delivery in which it teaches the most students and no negative flags in either mode of delivery or split metrics confers a rating of Gold.

b. No flags, one, two, three or four positive flags in the core metrics for the mode of delivery in which it teaches the most students and no negative flags in either mode of delivery or split metrics confers a rating of Silver.

c. Any negative flags in either mode of delivery for any core or split metric confers a rating of Bronze.

7.33 These rules are more stringent than those set out regarding the formation of an initial hypothesis due to the fact that, where evidence of excellence derives solely from core and split metrics, this evidence must be particularly strong and unambiguous for assessors to have confidence in awarding the higher ratings. The difficulty of achieving a Gold rating on the basis of core and split metrics alone reflects this need for certainty and consistency, which is essential in a sector where many providers have specific strengths.

Final judgement

7.34 In reaching their final holistic judgement, **assessors will look at each application against the rating descriptors below to confirm that the rating arrived at by the process outlined above corresponds with the best fit to the relevant descriptor**. If assessors conclude it does not, they should revisit the process above to consider whether the rating should be revised.

7.35 Providers will not need to meet all components of a descriptor and assessors should not have to prove that a provider satisfies the requirements of a lower level before proceeding to consider a higher level. Instead, assessors should make a judgement about best fit based on the evidence from core and split metrics supported by the provider submission.

Additional guidance

Approach to decision making

7.35.1 **Assessors will receive training on all the components of a provider's application (the contextual data, metrics and provider submission) and on how to follow the three-step approach described above to making decisions. This will involve forming and refining an initial hypothesis based on the metrics (step 1), and in all cases taking full account of the provider submission (step 2) before making a holistic judgement (step 3). Steps 2 and 3 will be carried out for every application regardless of what initial hypothesis is reached in step 1, or the degree of confidence with which the initial hypothesis is held. This means that assessors will always consider in full both the metrics and the provider submission before reaching a judgement.**

7.35.2 **This process may lead to the initial hypothesis being adjusted, regardless of the degree of confidence with which it was held. Paragraph 7.26 in the TEF specification indicates some possible scenarios in which this might occur. These examples should not be taken as exhaustive; there are a range of other possible scenarios whereby the initial hypothesis could be adjusted in light of the evidence in a provider submission. For clarity, the references to 'core flags' in paragraph 7.26 should be taken to mean flags for the core metrics in the mode in which the majority of students are taught. The references to 'all or most of the other flags' should be taken to mean flags for the core and split metrics, in the mode in which a majority of students are taught.**

7.35.3 **Paragraphs 7.32 to 7.33 in the TEF specification indicate that where there is very little additional evidence in the provider submission, the assessors will need to rely more heavily on the metrics to form a judgement, and in extreme cases apply more stringent rules when considering performance against the metrics. If the provider wishes to avoid this, it should ensure that it includes relevant and substantive evidence against the criteria, within its submission.**

TEF descriptors

7.36 The descriptors in **figure four** set out **typical characteristics** of a provider at each level of excellence, related to the criteria. Assessors will use the descriptors to confirm or adjust their assessment.

7.37 In all cases, assessors will make their assessment based on the criteria, using as evidence either performance against the core and split metrics, where these provide clear cut and unambiguous evidence, or, more usually, through a combination of the core and split metrics and the provider submission, to determine a best fit against the criteria using the generic descriptors below. It will not be necessary for providers to meet all components of a descriptor; assessors will need to make a judgement about 'best fit' based on the evidence from core and split metrics supported by the provider submission.

Figure 4 **TEF Descriptors**

Gold: The Panel will award a provider a rating of Gold if it appears likely, based on the evidence available to the Panel, that provision is consistently outstanding and of the highest quality found in the UK Higher Education sector; that is:

The provider achieves consistently outstanding outcomes for its students from all backgrounds, in particular with regards to retention and progression to highly skilled employment and further study. Course design and assessment practices provide scope for outstanding levels of stretch that ensures all students are significantly challenged to achieve their full potential, and acquire knowledge, skills and understanding that are most highly valued by employers. Optimum levels of contact time, including outstanding personalised provision secures the highest levels of engagement and active commitment to learning and study from students.

Outstanding physical and digital resources are actively and consistently used by students to enhance learning. Students are consistently and frequently engaged with developments from the forefront of research, scholarship or practice, and are consistently and frequently involved in these activities. An institutional culture that facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching is embedded across the provider.

Silver: The Panel will award a provider a rating of Silver if it appears likely, based on the evidence available to the Panel, that provision is of high quality, and significantly and consistently exceeds the baseline quality threshold expected of UK Higher Education; that is:

The provider achieves excellent outcomes for its students, in particular with regards to retention and progression to highly skilled employment and further study. Course design and assessment practices provide scope for high levels of stretch that ensures all students are significantly challenged, and acquire knowledge, skills and understanding that are highly valued by employers. Appropriate levels of contact time, including personalised provision secures high levels of engagement and commitment to learning and study from students.

High quality physical and digital resources are used by students to enhance learning. Students are engaged with developments from the forefront of research, scholarship or practice, and are sometimes involved in these activities. An institutional culture that facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching has been implemented at the provider.

Bronze: The Panel will award a provider a rating of Bronze if it appears likely, based on the evidence available to the Panel, that provision is of satisfactory quality; that is:

Most students achieve good outcomes; however, the provider is likely to be significantly below benchmark in one or more areas, in particular with regards to retention and progression to highly skilled employment and further study. Course design and assessment practices provide sufficient stretch that ensures most students make progress, and acquire knowledge, skills and understanding that are valued by employers. Sufficient levels of contact time, including personalised provision secures good engagement and commitment to learning and study from most students.

Physical and digital resources are used by students to further learning. Students are occasionally engaged with developments from the forefront of research, scholarship or practice, and are occasionally involved in these activities. An institutional culture that facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching has been introduced at the provider.

7.38 In addition, providers at all levels will have met baseline quality thresholds for UK higher education providers. This means[27]:

- Degree standards are reliable, meet UK expectations, and are reasonably comparable to those set and maintained across the UK sector
- The quality of the student academic experience meets baseline requirements
- The provider has in place an effective approach to continuously improve the student academic experience and student outcomes.

Anticipated distribution

7.39 In the Technical Consultation, we indicated a likely distribution based on performance against the core metrics where approximately 20% of participating providers would receive the lowest rating, approximately 20-30% would receive the highest rating and the remaining 50-60% would receive the intermediate rating.

7.40 This distribution is **not** a quota. That is, the panel will not be expected to force an allocation of providers to categories based on these proportions. Rather, their assessment will be based on evidence as outlined in the **Assessment process section**. HEFCE will use the indicative distribution as a guide in assessor training to calibrate individual standards of assessment.

7.41 The decision of the TEF Panel will be the final determinant of a provider's rating. The Panel will be under no obligation to comply with a quota or guided distribution when determining ratings.

27 In the section on quality assessment and the TEF in the Introduction, we outlined the different approaches to quality assessment in different parts of the UK and over time. Some review methods will include different emphases on these three elements and some will include additional elements.

Assessment process

8.1 TEF assessment is a **desk-based process**. TEF assessors will make recommendations to the TEF Panel about the rating to be awarded. The TEF Panel will make the final judgements.

8.2 The assessment process is in **three stages**, which are outlined in the overview below. The process has been designed to allow a rigorous and fair assessment. It has academic judgement at its heart with appropriate checks and balances built in to ensure transparency and consistency.

Preparation and training

8.3 It is important that students, providers and other stakeholders, in the UK and overseas, can have confidence that the TEF is a robust assessment exercise and have confidence in the outcomes. The process of ensuring assessments are robust begins with a transparent assessment framework. It continues with the selection and appointment of assessors and Panel members who are suitably qualified and prepared to carry out the role.

8.4 In this section we outline in brief how assessors will be **prepared and supported**.

8.5 Once initially selected, assessors will take part in training that includes mock assessment exercises and briefing. The TEF Panel and assessors will also receive training on the operating context of higher education in each of the devolved nations, including on the different quality systems and the role of Welsh medium provision in Wales.

8.6 TEF officers will assess performance throughout the training period. Preferred assessors will be identified to take part in actual assessments.

8.7 At the start of the assessment, a small selection of real applications will be used to allow assessors and Panel members to discuss the assessment process, clarifying uncertainties and developing a common understanding of standards to be applied.

8.8 HEFCE will publish further information about the training and preparation of TEF assessors in its guidance.

Additional guidance

Preparation and training

8.8.1 **The panel members and assessors will be trained, guided and supported to conduct their work according to the following principles:**

a. **Adherence to the published criteria and procedures.**

b. **Impartiality and integrity, neither advantaging nor disadvantaging any type of provider or provision.**

c. **Reliance on the evidence supplied formally to them to inform judgements, not prior knowledge or other information.**

d. **Consistency, as far as possible, in the application of the criteria and rating descriptors across all providers.**

e. **Consensus, as far as possible, in deciding the outcomes.**

f. **Maintenance of due confidentiality and data security throughout the process.**

8.8.2 **During the application window assessors and panellists will receive briefing and training on all the components of an application (the contextual data, the metrics and the provider submissions); and on the approach to making decisions, taking full consideration of all these components in reaching a judgement. TEF officers will support and observe training exercises and will recommend if any assessors do not meet the required standard to proceed to the next stage.**

8.8.3 **After the application deadline, at the start of the assessment process, panellists and those assessors that are allocated submissions, will undertake a calibration exercise. This will involve reviewing a sample of submissions and then meeting to discuss grade boundary issues and develop common standards of assessment.**

Stage one – individual assessment

8.9 Stage one involves **individual assessment** of a set of provider applications by assessors and Panel members. In allocating applications, care will be taken to ensure there are no conflicts of interest between assessors and Panel members and the provider being assessed. Details about how conflicts of interest will be managed will be made clear in guidance from HEFCE.

8.10 The guidance will also set out any additional considerations HEFCE intend to make, for example, around matching of assessor expertise and experience to the provider being assessed.

8.11 Each teaching and learning ('academic') assessor and Panel member, and each student assessor and Panel member, will be allocated a set of applications. Each application will be looked at by at least two academics and at least one student.

8.12 TEF officers will be present to support and facilitate the assessment process, ensure the guidance is followed, and address any requests for **clarification or verification** from the provider.

Additional guidance

Allocation of submissions

8.12.1 **During December 2016, expected submissions will initially be allocated to academic and student assessors and to academic and student panel members. This will be based on the survey of providers' intentions to apply carried out in November 2016, and the selection of assessors will be informed by assessor training and the approach to allocation described below. After the submission deadline (26 January 2017) the initial allocations will be finalised.**

8.12.2 **Each submission will be allocated to at least three people to review in stage one. Wherever possible, two will be academics and one a student; one of these will be a panel member and the other two will be assessors. (For convenience, the term 'assessor' is used in the additional guidance below to refer to all those who are allocated submissions to assess, that is, both panel members and assessors.)**

8.12.3 **Each assessor will be allocated a case load of approximately 15 submissions.**

8.12.4 **Assessor appointments have been made as a result of a competitive selection process, and all will be trained to a standard that enables them to undertake their duties fairly, consistently and robustly across a range of submissions. The assessors will make recommendations to the TEF panel, and decisions will be taken with the involvement of all members of the TEF panel, which includes members with diverse experience and expertise across a range of provider types across the UK. Allocations will be made in the light of these principles.**

8.12.5 Due account will also be taken of the mix of the assessors' experience and expertise in relation to:

- type of provider
- the national context of the provider
- subject-specific approaches to learning and teaching, for small and specialist providers.

Conflicts of interest

8.12.6 Assessors are required to declare conflicts of interest they hold with any UK higher education providers. Assessors will not be allocated, and will not take part in assessing, submissions for which they have a conflict of interest.

8.12.7 For the purposes of the TEF, a conflict of interest is defined as follows:

A. Within the last five years:
   - the individual worked for or studied at the provider
   - the individual was a board or council member of the provider
   - the individual held an honorary position at the provider.

B. Within the last three years:
   - the individual acted as a consultant to the provider
   - the individual undertook internal or external validation or examination for the provider (including at postgraduate level)
   - the individual applied for a post at the provider
   - the individual had an immediate relative studying or working there
   - the provider was an awarding body or delivering partner of the individual's institution.

8.12.8 In addition, if an assessor is aware of any other circumstance that presents a potential conflict of interest with a provider, they should raise this with the TEF team. The TEF manager will decide whether or not the provider in question should be recorded as a conflict of interest.

8.12.9 Panel members and assessors will be instructed to declare their conflicts of interest prior to training, and to update these at regular intervals.

8.12.10 During stage one, each assessor will review their case load of applications and, independently of one another, form a view about the TEF ratings. They will follow the approach described in paragraphs 7.1 to 7.37, taking full consideration of both the metrics and the provider submission. TEF officers will collate the three assessments for each submission in preparation for stage two, in which the assessments will be discussed and agreement reached on the provisional outcomes (see below).

8.12.11 During stage one, panel members and assessors will also, where necessary, raise verification and clarification queries.

Verification and clarification

8.12.12 The purpose of verification and clarification queries will be for assessors to satisfy themselves that judgements made are based on evidence that has been a. clearly understood and b. is sufficiently reliable to support those judgements, against the assessment criteria.

Scope

8.12.13 All information included in a provider submission may be subject to verification or clarification, at the request of assessors. Assessors could raise queries either if any of the available evidence gives them reason to doubt the veracity of specific content within the submission; or if they consider that the submission is unclear as to what is being claimed. In either case, queries will be raised only by exception, where the responses could potentially make a material difference to the overall outcome.

8.12.14 As outlined in paragraphs 6.7 to 6.8, it is the provider's responsibility to include in its submission, all the information required for the assessors to make a judgement. Consequently, queries will not be raised – and responses will not be considered – that seek to expand on or add new evidence to a submission.

Timing and process

8.12.15 Assessors will start to inform the TEF officers of any potential queries, once they begin to review submissions in mid-February 2017. TEF officers will check that queries fall within the scope of the guidance and the TEF assessment process, before sending them on to the provider's TEF contact. If unsure about the query, TEF officers will seek advice from the TEF manager, who will decide whether or not to raise the query.

8.12.16 Where queries are raised, TEF officers will send them to the provider's main TEF contact between mid-February to late March 2017 by email. The main TEF contact is responsible for ensuring that such emails are acted on promptly.

8.12.17 TEF contacts will have five working days to respond by email to the query, providing as complete a response as possible within this time-frame. Where more time is needed to complete the response, this should be stated clearly, at the earliest available opportunity, setting out the reasons for the extension. An additional five working days will be allowed only where reasonably required by the provider. Where unsure if the extension should be granted, the TEF officer will consult the TEF manager, who will decide.

8.12.18 For verification queries, responses may need to include a copy of or link to primary sources of evidence that verifies the particular claim being queried. For clarification queries, responses should comprise only a textual description to clarify the point(s) being queried.

Use of the information

8.12.19 The TEF officer will review the response and provide information or advice to the assessors in a way which seeks to resolve the query, while limiting as far as possible any additional information becoming available to the assessors. For clarification queries the TEF officer will seek to ensure the response is succinct and addresses the original request; superfluous or out-of-scope information may be excluded and no weight will be attached to its inclusion. For verification queries the TEF officers will advise the assessors of the nature of the evidence supplied, and will make a recommendation on whether it is sufficient to verify the claim. The assessors will be provided with the full response only if they request it and the TEF manager agrees. In all cases the assessors will decide on the outcome of the query.

8.12.20 Clarification and verification requests and responses to them will not be published. Where a query and the response made a material difference to the outcome, the panel may refer to this in the statement of findings.

8.12.21 The TEF team may aggregate and anonymise information about the number and nature of clarification and verification queries, to inform the lessons learned exercise.

Stage two – agreement of provisional outcomes

8.13 TEF officers will continue to address any **clarification or verification requests** from the provider.

8.14 Assessors and Panel members will attend a conference-style meeting to **agree provisional outcomes**.

8.15 At the meeting, assessors and Panel members will discuss cross-cutting issues that affect judgements and establish consistency in grade boundaries and treatment of borderline cases.

8.16 The employer and widening participation expert Panel members will contribute to the discussions and be available to provide specific advice on request.

8.17 HEFCE analysts will be available to provide advice or clarification on interpreting the metrics.

8.18 TEF officers will compile the recommendations and check the statements of findings for consistency, including appropriate coverage and level of detail, ready for presentation to the Panel.

Stage three – decisions on final outcomes

8.19 A meeting of the full TEF panel will take place to **agree the outcomes**. The Panel will consider borderline cases or cases assessors have flagged as particularly challenging, as well as a selection of other cases. The Panel may consider any case it chooses. Its decision on the ultimate rating to be awarded will be final.

8.20 Decisions will be taken collectively by the Panel, with the expectation that any member who is conflicted with a provider will leave the room while that application is discussed. Technical guidance will make clear the steps to be taken should the Panel not reach consensus on a decision.

Additional guidance

Decision making

8.20.1 The TEF Panel will meet to consider the recommendations from stage two and decide the final outcomes. Decisions will be taken by the panel as a whole.

8.20.2 Once the panel has been presented with the recommended outcomes from stage two (and following discussion of borderline and challenging cases), it will seek to reach unanimous decisions on the outcomes. If it does not unanimously agree the outcomes for any particular application, it will seek to reach a consensus view, if appropriate by having one or more additional panel members review the submission. If after further discussion a unanimous view is not reached, the final decision will be taken by majority vote, with the TEF Panel Chair arbitrating.

8.20.3 When a memberhas a conflict of interest with a provider they will leave the room while that submission is discussed, and they will not be involved in any vote.

Appeals

8.21 Providers will be able to **appeal their TEF outcome on the basis of a significant procedural** irregularity in the consideration of their TEF application. A provider will not be able to appeal or challenge the academic judgement of the Panel or any founding principle of the TEF.

8.22 HEFCE will publish details of the appeals process, including further guidance on the grounds for appeal and the timetable and process to be followed. As noted in **Annex B**, TEF results will be published in May to inform student choices in a timely fashion. Appeals will be heard subsequently.

Additional guidance

Grounds for appeals

8.22.1 After the publication of the TEF outcomes, a provider can appeal its outcome on the basis of a significant procedural irregularity in the consideration of its TEF application. This might be on the basis that the published process was not followed when reaching a decision. A significant factual inaccuracy in the statement of findings may be taken by the provider to indicate a potential procedural irregularity. To have grounds for appeal, the procedural irregularity needs to be significant, meaning that it materially affected one of the following decisions:

- whether to accept a data amendment request
- whether the provider is eligible for a TEF Year Two award
- the panel's judgement on the rating awarded to the provider.

8.22.2 Providers would **not** be able to appeal if:

a. They were challenging the underpinning principles of the TEF or the criteria or process set out in the TEF specification or this additional guidance.

b. They were challenging the accuracy of the data underlying the TEF metrics.

c. They were challenging the academic judgement of the panel.

d. New information had come to light that was not included in the submission. The panel will only consider the original information relied upon that formed part of the assessment process (including requests for verification or clarification).

Appeals process

8.22.3 HEFCE will make an appeals form available on the TEF extranet, prior to the publication of the outcomes in May 2017. Any provider wishing to appeal the outcome must do so by completing and uploading the template, signed by the accountable officer, no later than **noon on 15 June 2017**. Late appeals or appeals not made on the TEF appeal form will not be considered.

8.22.4 Appeals will be considered as follows:

a. Initially, an appeals panel will consider the appeal. The chair and members of the appeals panel will be individuals who were not TEF panel members or assessors, or otherwise directly involved in the TEF decisions. The membership of the panel will be confirmed prior to the TEF outcomes in May 2017. The TEF Panel Chair and TEF manager may attend to observe and provide information as requested by the appeals panel. In the case of an appeal from a provider in a devolved nation, a member of the relevant funding body may also attend. The appeals panel will consider:

   - whether there was a procedural irregularity that affected one of the decisions listed in paragraph 8.22.1
   - if so, whether it could potentially have had a material effect on the provider's TEF outcome.

b. If the appeals panel concludes that either there was no irregularity, or that it could not have materially affected the outcome, the appeal will be declined and the provider informed of this.

c. **If the appeals panel concludes there was an irregularity that could potentially affect the outcome, the original decision will be reconsidered, in the light of that procedural irregularity. An eligibility decision or data amendment request will be reconsidered by the HEFCE chief executive. A judgement on the rating will be reconsidered by at least three TEF Panel members, none of whom were originally involved in assessing the submission, overseen by the TEF Chair.**

8.22.5 **Providers will be informed of the outcomes of the appeal, and in the event of a successful appeal, any resulting changes will be made to the published outcomes by 31 July 2017.**

TEF assessors and TEF Panel members

8.23 Assessment will be carried out by peers and experts. A pool of appropriately qualified TEF assessors and TEF Panel members has been appointed which includes representatives from all four parts of the UK. TEF assessors include experts in teaching and learning ('academic'), students or their representatives, employers or their representatives, and widening participation experts.

8.24 The **TEF Panel will be chaired by Professor Chris Husbands, Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield Hallam University**. The **TEF Chair** was appointed by the Secretary of State and HEFCE, after open competition.

8.25 The role of TEF assessors, TEF Panel members and the TEF Chair is set out in **table nine**. Also included is a description of the role of TEF officers and other support officers who are members of staff from HEFCE and the QAA.

Table 9 **TEF roles**

Actor	Description of role
TEF assessor	TEF assessors are either experts in teaching and learning in a higher education setting, or students. Their role is to assess TEF applications and agree provisional outcomes.
TEF officer	TEF officers are staff from HEFCE and 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. Analyst officers provide technical assistance to assessors to aid their interpretation of the core and split metrics but do not take part in actual assessment.
Employer and WP expert Panel members	Their role is to provide specialist input to the assessment process, further to that which may already be available through existing expertise of assessors, and to contribute to the final decision-making as members of the TEF Panel.
TEF Panel	The TEF Panel is the decision-making body. Its members will be made up of experts in teaching and learning and students (who will also act as assessors) and employer and WP experts. The role of the TEF Panel is to make the final decision on TEF ratings by moderating and confirming provisional outcomes recommended by assessors. The TEF Panel will be chaired by the TEF Chair.

Additional guidance

8.25.1 The membership of the TEF panel and the pool of assessors are listed at www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/tef/panel/.

8.25.2 As well as chairing the TEF Panel, the TEF Chair will advise HEFCE and the DfE on the conduct and development of the TEF, and the TEF Chair is also a member of the HEFCE TEF Project Board and the DfE TEF Delivery Group.

8.25.3 A deputy chair will be appointed from among the panel membership, to chair discussions of the TEF Panel that involve any providers the Chair is conflicted with and to deputise in the event of any unforeseen absence of the Chair.

Outcomes

9.1 TEF outcomes will include the overall **rating** and a brief **statement of findings** setting out the high level reason for the rating. Both will be published in official sources of information for students as part of the TEF award.

Award duration

9.2 TEF awards given in Year Two will be **valid for three years** (subject to a provider continuing to meet eligibility requirements), unless a provider does not have the requisite three years of core metrics to inform the assessment. For a provider that has only one or two years of core metrics, the award granted will last for one or two years respectively (see **Eligibility, pre-requisites and provisional TEF awards section**). A provisional TEF award given to a provider that does not have suitable metrics will last for one year (see **Eligibility, pre-requisites and provisional TEF awards section**).

See paragraph 5.13.2

9.3 If two (or more) providers have merged before the application cut-off date, these providers will receive a single TEF award, which reflects their new status as a single entity.

9.4 If two (or more) providers merge after the application cut-off date for TEF, they will initially receive separate awards. Once the providers have merged they will then receive a single award. HEFCE will be providing further guidance on the merger of awards process in their guidance (see the **Eligibility, pre-requisites and provisional TEF awards section** for further information).

See paragraphs 3.25.2 to 3.25.6

9.5 **TEF descriptors** were described in the **Assessment: decision-making section**.

9.6 The **statement of findings** will include the TEF Panel's summary view on why the rating was awarded, including areas of particular strength. It is intended to provide useful information to students and employers as well as to the provider itself. HEFCE will issue more detailed guidance for assessors on producing statements of findings, including on length, format and coverage.

Communication of TEF outcomes

9.7 TEF outcomes from Year Two assessments will be published by HEFCE. They will also be available on the UCAS website and on Unistats (or equivalent) in time to inform the decisions of students applying for courses starting in 2018/19.

9.8 A copy of a provider's core and split metrics and their submission will be published, linked to from the UCAS and Unistats pages (or equivalent) and hosted by HEFCE.

9.9 TEF outcomes for providers in England will also feature on the Register of Higher Education Providers[28]. 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.

9.10 These official sources of information for students will be updated at least annually so that they remain up-to-date.

9.11 Providers are also encouraged to include TEF outcomes on their own websites, prospectuses and other sources of information for students.

28 HEFCE Register

Additional guidance

9.11.1 **In early 2017 HEFCE will inform providers of more detailed plans for disseminating and publishing the TEF outcomes.**

Withdrawal of a TEF award

9.12 A TEF award given in Year Two will be withdrawn if a provider:

a. ceases to meet the quality threshold and other eligibility requirements, including for course designation, set out in the **Scope** and **Eligibility sections**.

b. is discovered post facto to have included substantive factual inaccuracies in their TEF application.

9.13 If a TEF award is withdrawn, HEFCE will notify the provider. The award will not feature in the next officially updated UCAS, Register and Unistats entries and the provider will be obligated to cease advertising or claiming that it has the award. These sanctions will apply to all providers across the UK that have applied for and received a TEF award.

9.14 Any fee uplift associated with the award will cease to apply from the start of the academic year immediately following the date on which the award is withdrawn.

9.15 In some exceptional circumstances, a provider may have its TEF award withdrawn because it ceases to meet the quality threshold or other eligibility requirements and then, through the course of the year succeed in addressing the causal issues and have this judgement overturned. In these instances, the provider will not be able to 'reclaim' the TEF award that had been withdrawn, as we expect those with a TEF award to be offering consistently high quality provision to their students. The provider would need to make a submission to the subsequent year of the TEF in order to regain a TEF award.

Additional guidance

Post-award mergers

9.15.1 **Where providers with TEF awards merge after the TEF outcomes are published, HEFCE will determine the status of the merged entity's TEF award, in a way that is compatible with the considerations described in 'Regulatory implications of merger or acquisition involving HEFCE-funded providers' (HEFCE Circular letter 28/2016, www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/CL,282016/). If the merged provider is eligible, the award will be considered as follows:**

a. **Where all the previously separate providers that offered higher education had the same TEF award, this award will be conferred on the merged provider.**

b. **Where the awards differed or not all the providers had TEF awards, HEFCE will either:**

   i. **Publish an additional explanation alongside the lead provider's TEF award, referring to the awards held by the previous providers. In this case the provider may be invited to apply again in TEF Year Three to determine a single overall award.**

   ii. **Determine a single award, where the weight of the evidence permits, taking into account the relative number of students at each provider, their associated metrics and submissions, and other considerations outlined in HEFCE Circular letter 28/2016. In this case HEFCE will ask the TEF Panel Chair (or deputy if the Chair is conflicted) to consult with up to three panel members and decide on the rating.**

TEF logo and conditions of usage

9.16 TEF awards will bear a protected logo that comes with conditions of usage. Providers will be expected to adhere to these conditions of usage or face consequences should a breach of conditions be reported or uncovered. Conditions of usage will seek to prevent fraudulent use, for example in the case of a provider that has not attained the advertised rating or which continues to advertise an expired TEF award.

Lessons learned for Year 2

10.1 We intend to carry out a lessons learned review of Year Two. DfE will seek advice from HEFCE, QAA and the TEF Panel, as well as representatives of the sector, about potential improvements for Year Three.

10.2 We will also draw upon the outcomes of other reviews and programmes of work that impact the design and delivery of the TEF – for example, the results of the review of the DLHE and interim findings from HEFCE learning gain pilots – so that the TEF reflects and makes use of available evidence.

Longer-term evaluation of the impact of the TEF

10.3 Longer-term, in accordance with standard government practice for new initiatives, we intend to conduct an evaluation of the extent to which the TEF has impacted students' choices and teaching practices in higher education.

Beyond Year Two

11.1 The assessment process in Year Three will, as with Year Two, be at provider-level and is expected to follow the same broad framework as in Year Two, modified and adjusted where necessary as a result of **the lessons-learned exercise. As a standard TEF award given in Year Two lasts for three years, providers who continue to have a valid TEF award will not have to reapply for the TEF** in Year Three, though they will be free to do so if they wish to – for example if they believe they are in a position to improve their rating.

11.2 Providers whose TEF Year Two award remains valid will still be eligible for a fee uplift. However, from Year Three onwards, we will introduce differentiated fee cap and loan cap increases. All providers with a Bronze rating in Year Three, whether awarded in Year Two or Year Three, will therefore only be eligible for 50% of the inflationary uplift in that year. Providers with a Silver or Gold rating will still be eligible to receive 100% of the inflationary uplift.

11.3 As set out in the White Paper: *Success as a Knowledge Economy*, providers that opt not to reapply after their TEF award expires or that do not reapply after their TEF award is withdrawn, will not be able to 'bank' previous inflationary fee uplifts.

11.4 Providers that opt not to apply to the TEF in Year Two will be able to apply for assessment in Year Three provided they meet the eligibility requirements and prerequisites. Providers who were able to claim a provisional award for TEF Year Two, but who now have a full set of metrics will need to apply for the full assessment if they wish to retain their TEF award. Providers who were able to claim a provisional award in TEF Year Two, but who still do not have suitable of metrics will be able to opt in for a provisional award in TEF Year Three.

11.5 A provider may also choose to apply for assessment in Year Three should it wish to seek an award at a higher level than it achieved in Year Two.

11.6 Further information on the application and assessment process for Year Three will be published following the conclusion of the lessons-learned exercise.

Annex A: Glossary

Access and Participation Statement

A statement published by a provider that sets out their commitment to widening participation and fair access. Providers in England that do not have an Access Agreement approved by the Director of Fair Access are required to publish an Access and Participation Statement to be eligible for a TEF Year Two rating.

Access Agreement

An Access Agreement (providers in England) sets out how an institution will sustain or improve access and student success, which includes retention, attainment and employability. Access Agreements are approved by the Director for Fair Access.

Additional evidence

Evidence on teaching and learning quality included in the provider submission. Additional evidence can be quantitative or qualitative and should address the criteria.

Aspects of quality

Areas of teaching and learning quality in which criteria are articulated against which providers will be assessed. These are: Teaching Quality, Learning Environment, and Student Outcomes and Learning Gain.

Assessment framework

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

Benchmark

The benchmark is a weighted sector average where weightings are based on the characteristics of the students at the provider. A unique benchmark is calculated for each provider, metric and split: it is calculated solely from the data returns informing the metric derivations.

Contextual data

Data on the nature and operating context of a provider, such as their size, location and student population, which is used by assessors in interpreting performance against the core metrics and additional evidence but does not itself form the basis of any judgement about excellence.

Core metrics

Measures deriving from national surveys and data returns which have been defined, benchmarked and reported as a key part of the evidence used in TEF assessments. For each provider, there are six core metrics, reported separately for the provider's full-time and part-time students, and averaged over three years.

Criteria

Statements against which assessors will make judgements.

Eligibility

The requirements that must be met in order for providers to be eligible to receive a TEF rating.

Flag

Metrics include flags when the difference between the indicator and the benchmark is significant and material (see other definitions). Flags denote either a positive or a negative difference.

Higher education provider

A higher education provider (or provider) is an organisation that delivers higher education. A provider can be an awarding body or deliver higher education on behalf of another awarding body. The term encompasses higher education institutions, further education colleges and alternative providers.

Indicator

The provider's value for a particular metric, expressed as a proportion, such as the percentage of students that indicated they were satisfied with teaching and learning.

Initial hypothesis

The TEF rating initially assigned to a provider by TEF assessors, based on their metrics only. This initial hypothesis may be modified by the additional evidence.

Learning Environment

One of the aspects of quality (see other definition). Learning Environment is described in the main text.

Material difference

In relation to the metrics, a provider's indicator is considered to be materially different from the benchmark if the difference is at least two percentage points.

Provider submission

The provider submission is prepared and submitted by a provider and used by assessors to inform their TEF judgement. A provider submission can contain information on a provider's mission and characteristics, contextual information that explains performance against the metrics and additional evidence to support the case for excellence. The additional evidence should address the criteria and can be qualitative or quantitative.

Provisional TEF award

A TEF rating given to a provider that opts into the TEF but who does not have suitable metrics to inform assessment. These providers meet all other eligibility requirements and are prevented from achieving a rating above the first level on procedural grounds.

Significant difference

In relation to the metrics, a provider's indicator is considered to be significantly different from the benchmark if the Z-score (see other definition) is +/-1.96. This is a measure of statistical significance.

Splits

Categories by which core metrics are sub-divided in order to show how a provider performs with respect to different student groups and/or in different years.

Statement of findings

A brief, high level written statement that outlines the reason for the rating awarded to a particular provider.

Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

One of the aspects of quality (see other definition). Student Outcomes and Learning Gain is described in the main text.

Suitable metrics

The minimum set of core metrics required to be eligible to make a provider submission and receive a TEF rating of Bronze, Silver or Gold.

Teaching provider

The provider where a student spends the majority of their first year. For franchised provision, students are included in the metrics of the teaching provider.

Teaching Quality

One of the aspects of quality (see other definition). Teaching Quality is described in the main text.

TEF assessor

TEF assessors consider the evidence available to them and make a provisional judgement about the TEF rating a provider should receive. The provisional outcome is recommended to the TEF Panel. Assessors are experts in teaching and learning or students.

TEF award

A TEF award is made up of the TEF rating (see other definition) and a brief statement of findings. TEF Year Two awards are valid for up to three years.

TEF Panel

The TEF Panel is the decision-making body for TEF assessments. It will be responsible for reviewing the judgements made by TEF assessors and deciding 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: Bronze, Silver and Gold.

Transnational education

Awards of UK degree-awarding bodies delivered overseas. Transnational education is out-of-scope for the TEF in Year Two.

Quality assessment

Quality assessment is a collective term used to refer to arrangements for ensuring higher education providers meet baseline expectations for academic quality and standards. There are different arrangements in operation in different parts of the UK and, in some parts, for different types of providers but in all cases, expectations are underpinned by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

Z-score

In relation to the metrics, the Z-score denotes the number of standard deviations that a provider's indicator is from the benchmark and is used as a measure of statistical difference.

More information about the Teaching Excellence Framework can be found on the HEFCE website at www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/tef/

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