



Teaching Excellence Framework Technical Consultation – Response Form

Name/Organisation: Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

Please tick the box that best describes you as a respondent to this consultation:

	Respondent type
<input type="checkbox"/>	Alternative higher education provider (with designated courses)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Alternative higher education provider (no designated courses)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Awarding organisation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Business/Employer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Central government
<input type="checkbox"/>	Charity or social enterprise
<input type="checkbox"/>	Further Education College
<input type="checkbox"/>	Higher Education Institution
<input type="checkbox"/>	Individual (Please describe any particular relevant interest; parent, student, teaching staff etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Legal representative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Professional Body
<input type="checkbox"/>	Representative Body
<input type="checkbox"/>	Research Council
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade Union or staff association
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please describe)

Question 1 (Chapter 1)

Do you agree with the criteria proposed in Figure 4?

Yes No Not sure

Please outline your reasons and suggest any alternatives or additions.

- We support the framework for assessment that recognises the diversity of student needs and provision and that enables various forms of teaching and learning excellence to be identified – one size does not fit all;
- We also support the idea that assessment will be holistic; will be undertaken by expert peer review panels; and that it also considers the learning environment and student outcomes
- Effective metrics must be valid, robust, comprehensive, reliable, and current. We do not believe there is a quantitative metric that can adequately capture teaching quality across the great diversity of teaching and learning approaches and environments found in universities. Metrics need to recognise differences in students - their backgrounds, experience, expectations and desired outcomes from higher education. Individual students will value different aspects of their degree experience – face-to-face contact hours, strong employability-focus, proximity to the best researchers, library facilities, etc. This may also vary between disciplines. The contextual/benchmark data for panels will be critical if metrics are used.
- It is essential that the purpose is clear and that the metrics suit that purpose. Currently, it is not clear whether the metrics proposed have been selected to (a) inform student choice, (b) identify poor provision (or thresholds of provision), (c) allocate funds; or (d) enable the generation of 'league tables'. Furthermore, metrics must relate to periods of time appropriate to the purpose.
- In terms of measures of teaching quality, the core metrics proposed based on the NSS questions are not fit for purpose, for reasons of validity and reliability Teaching quality and student satisfaction are different things, and at best tangentially associated. Furthermore, metrics as they stand, show little variation and do not differentiate between the vast majority of universities. We draw reference to the analyses of the NSS (by the ONS, by Marsh and Cheng, by HECFE and by Surridge), cited by the Royal Statistical Society in their response.
- There is a danger that measures such as student satisfaction will discourage innovation and drive behaviour, for example in inhibiting or limiting the provision of certain types of modules, especially those that challenge preconceptions or are in any way 'non-standard'. In geography, for example, data skills and other methods training often, not always, receive lower satisfaction ratings; however they are of high value to employers and future career prospects.
- Furthermore, a very important element of teaching and learning in higher education, particularly in the social sciences, is challenging students and exposing them to alternative perspectives and different ways of thinking about the world. This involves using a diverse range of teaching practices (seminars, labs, field courses etc). This can unsettle students, there are no 'right' answers and students are expected to be active participants in their learning. This learning experience may be as important as the learning outcome. Student satisfaction metrics soon after graduation do not always reflect the value of these experiences. Students do revise their understanding of the relevance and value of content of their degrees, but after some time post-graduation/in employment. Capturing such perspectives would be helpful – thus reinforcing the point about timing of data capture.
- **Contact hours** *per se* are not a helpful indicator of teaching quality as defined by the criteria. We caution against this being used as a metric. However, if it is used, the time involved in fieldwork, independent research and study must be fully quantified and included. In programmes such as geography these intense experiences of learning are critical to learning outcomes. The time and role of all those supporting and facilitating the teaching and learning experience regardless of contract type (e.g. teaching assistants who

facilitate small group teaching in the lab, field tutorials etc; technicians in the lab and field) must be considered and valued.

- **Student outcomes and learning gain.** Changes in GPA over a programme of learning are not necessarily evidence of a student's acquisition of skills, knowledge or understanding. While there is ongoing research on this, current approaches are not valid or reliable.
- Paragraph 101, on page 28 is problematic and might have adverse consequences. Different disciplines have quite different approaches to teaching and learning and asking assessors to 'avoid focusing on successful but **localised practices**' may work against particularly effective practices related to, for example, fieldwork, data skills, independent research.
- **Professional bodies and learned societies** have a key role to play in professional development, training and accreditation of those teaching in universities and of the courses delivered. This needs to be recognised.
- Looking forward, careful attention needs to be directed to **interdisciplinary**, as well as disciplinary teaching and learning needs to be embedded into TEF. In this context we draw attention to the British Academy project (www.britac.ac.uk/interdisciplinarity)
- We ask that a full assessment of the **resources** (institutionally and centrally) to deliver on TEF is built into the process from the outset and critically evaluated. This is particularly important in this period of significant and profound change in higher education as the UK transitions to a new relation with the European Union.

Question 2 (Chapter 3)

A) How should we include a highly skilled employment metric as part of the TEF?

B) If included as a core metric, should we adopt employment in Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) groups 1-3 as a measure of graduates entering highly skilled jobs?

Yes No Not sure

- A highly skilled employment metric needs to be rethought. It assumes a direct link between teaching quality and employment outcomes, which does not capture the myriad of inter-dependent factors (locational, institutional, socio-demographic, disciplinary etc) that influence employment choices and outcomes.
- HEIs should not perversely be deterred from recruitment of students onto programmes with social value (as opposed to earning power). Positive outcomes are much broader than paid employment (e.g. unpaid or voluntary work, time overseas).
- Employers are a heterogeneous group and their needs are diverse. The employment destinations of graduates also are diverse. For disciplines such as geography, given the variety of career paths and outcomes, identifying a highly skilled employment metric (or metrics) would be particularly difficult. Some students will pursue graduate careers 'in' their disciplines, others will draw on their transferable skills and find employment in a broad range of sectors and roles. Very careful attention needs to be given to engagement with employers (inclusive of large organisations and SMEs) and metrics used to document quality and success of graduates from their perspectives.
- Employment destinations within a short period of graduation are a poor guide to later career progress. If employment destination is to be pursued, research needs to inform an understanding of the time required post graduation for students to enter such high skilled employment, which will vary by discipline. The current DHLE survey measures

employment outcomes too early and does not adequately recognise the preferences/choices of graduates.

C) Do you agree with our proposal to include all graduates in the calculation of the employment/destination metrics?

Yes No Not sure

Please outline your reasons and suggest any alternatives.

Question 3 (Chapter 3)

A) Do you agree with the proposed approach for setting benchmarks?

Yes No Not sure

- Benchmarking (paragraphs 75-77)- is critical and needs to be better articulated. Very careful attention is needed to appropriately reflect the student body, institutions, disciplines and their context.

B) Do you agree with the proposed approach for flagging significant differences between indicator and benchmark (where differences exceed 2 standard deviations and 2 percentage points)?

Yes No Not sure

Please outline your reasons if you disagree.

Question 4 (Chapter 3)

Do you agree that TEF metrics should be averaged over the most recent three years of available data?

Yes No Not sure

Please outline your reasons and suggest alternatives.

Question 5 (Chapter 3)

Do you agree the metrics should be split by the characteristics proposed above?

Yes No Not sure

Please outline your reasons and suggest alternatives.

Question 6 (Chapter 3)

Do you agree with the contextual information that will be used to support TEF assessments proposed above?

Yes No Not sure

Please outline your reasons and suggest any alternatives or additions.

Question 7 (Chapter 3)

A) Do you agree with the proposed approach for the provider submission?

Yes No Not sure

B) Do you agree with the proposed 15 page limit?

Yes No Not sure

Please explain your reasons and outline any alternative suggestions.

Question 8 (Chapter 3)

Without the list becoming exhaustive or prescriptive, we are keen to ensure that the examples of additional evidence included in Figure 6 reflect a diversity of approaches to delivery. Do you agree with the examples?

Yes No Not sure

Please outline your reasons and suggest any additions or alternatives?

Question 9 (Chapter 4)

A) Do you think the TEF should issue commendations?

Yes No Not sure

B) If so, do you agree with the areas identified above?

Yes No Not sure

Please indicate if you have any additional or alternative suggestions for areas that might be covered by commendations.

Question 10 (Chapter 4)

Do you agree with the assessment process proposed?

Yes No Not sure

Please outline your reasons and any alternative suggestions. The proposed process is set within a relatively tight timescale, reflected in the key dates included in Annex B. Responses should be framed within this context.

Question 11 (Chapter 4)

Do you agree that in the case of providers with less than three years of core metrics, the duration of the award should reflect the number of years of core metrics available?

Yes No Not sure

Please outline your reasons.

Question 12 (Chapter 5)

Do you agree with the descriptions of the different TEF ratings proposed in Figure 9?

Yes No Not sure

Please outline your reasons and any alternative suggestions.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views.

We do not intend to acknowledge receipt of individual responses unless you tick the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply

At BIS we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would you be happy for us to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

No

BIS/16/262/RF