| **Title** | **Success as a Knowledge Economy**  
**Technical consultation on TEF2**  
**Digest and summary issues for UTLC** |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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| **Strategic context** | On 16th May, the Government published its HE White Paper, along with a technical consultation on TEF2. Taken together, these documents have major implications for the shape and scope of the sector, how it is regulated and how teaching quality will be assessed. |
| **Summary** | This summary briefing on the White Paper and TEF consultation is provided to inform UTLC discussion on the University’s response to the consultation and wider arrangements to prepare for the changes in quality assessment. |
1. Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice – executive summary

1.1 The key points emerging from the White Paper are as follows:\(^1\):

*Market entry, quality and risk-based regulation*

i. The replacement of the present multiple overlapping HE systems (e.g. specific course designation, HEFCE-funded etc) with a single regulatory system and route into the sector, overseen by a new regulator, the Office for Students (OfS). Competition, choice and the student interest will be at the regulator's heart.

ii. Provision for new providers to enter the sector, with greater flexibility to gain degree awarding powers, including new foundation and taught DAPs. Removal of the minimum student numbers criterion for university title.

iii. Encouraging providers to improve validation arrangements, and provision of a new power for the OfS to designate a validation service.

iv. A new requirement for providers to have a student protection plan in place, in the event that the provider is unable to deliver their course of study.

*Choice, teaching excellence, social mobility and transparency*

v. Confirmation of the phased approach to introducing the TEF.

vi. Measures to ensure that the TEF explicitly takes into account outcomes for disadvantaged groups.

vii. Successful TEF performance will allow providers to maintain their fees and access to loans within the rate of inflation and up to the maximum fee cap, which will continue to be set under the same parliamentary procedure as now.

viii. Publication of a call for evidence on credit transfer to encourage more students to transfer between institutions.

ix. Legislation to require UCAS to share the data they hold with Government and researchers to improve social mobility policy.

x. Merger of the Office for Fair Access with the OfS, with the role of Director of Fair Access retained.

*Higher Education, research and innovation architecture*

xi. The OfS will be responsible for allocating teaching grant funding, and monitoring financial sustainability, efficiency and the overall health of the sector. OfS will be given a statutory duty to assess the quality and standards of the HE sector.

xii. The creation of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to allocate funding and act as a champion for UK research.

\(^1\) This section is a precis of the White Paper Executive summary
## 2 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

### Overview

2.1 The White Paper and technical consultation describe the phased introduction of the TEF, as set out in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEF year</th>
<th>Academic year</th>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Financial aspects</th>
<th>Evidence and metrics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>• All providers with a satisfactory QAA review automatically receive a judgement of 'meets expectations'</td>
<td>Fee cap of £9k + inflation from 2017/18</td>
<td>QAA review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2        | 2017/18       | • A pilot year, with trial assessments on a voluntary basis  
• Assessments in winter 2016/17  
• Three levels of judgement 'meets expectations', 'excellent' and 'outstanding' | £9k + inflation from 2018/19 | • NSS: 'the teaching on my course' (q. 1-4), 'assessment and feedback' (q. 5-9) and 'academic support questions' (q. 10-12)  
• HESA non-continuation rates  
• Employment and further study outcomes from DHLE  
• Possible measure of highly skilled employment  
Plus: benchmarking, contextual information, provider submission |
| 3        | 2018/19       | • Incorporation of new metrics  
• Piloting of discipline level assessments | Differentiated fee caps introduced:  
Meets expectations - 50% of inflationary rise  
Excellent or outstanding - 100% of the inflationary rise | Introduction of additional metrics on contact hours and teaching intensity |
| 4        | 2019/20       | • Introduction of discipline-level assessments  
• Inclusion of postgraduate | Fees raised by differential fee caps for 2020/21 entry |
Assessment criteria

2.2 To be eligible to apply for TEF2 providers must: demonstrate commitment to widening participation through an access agreement or equivalent statement; hold a successful QA judgement; have a minimum reportable set of metrics over three years.

2.3 Assessment process will take account of three broad aspects of quality, for each of which a number of specific criteria and possible sources of evidence are identified:

i. **Teaching quality**
   Teaching practices which provide an appropriate level of contact, stimulation and challenge, encourage student effort and engagement, and which are effective in developing the knowledge, skills, attributes and work readiness for students.

ii. **Learning environment**
   The wider context for teaching which includes the effectiveness of resources designed to support learning, maximise completion, and aid the development of independent student and research skills

iii. **Student outcomes and learning gain**
   The education and employment outcomes of graduates and gains made by students from a range of different backgrounds

Metrics

2.4 Each metric will comprise:

i. The indicator (the percentage achieved by the provider)

ii. A benchmark (the sector average of the indicator adjusted to take account of the subject mix and student characteristics of the provider)

iii. A flag to show whether the difference between indicator and benchmark is significant – based on 2 standard deviations and 2 percentage points, rather than the 3 standard deviations and percentage points currently used by the HESA UK PI.

2.5 Metrics will be disaggregated for full-time and part-time students, and by level of student, age, participation groups, disability, ethnicity and domicile.

2.6 The core metrics for TEF2 will be: NSS, HES UK PI retention, 6 month DHLE data; and possibly a highly skilled employment metric.

2.7 Providers may submit additional evidence, proposed to be limited to 15 pages and focussing on impact of teaching excellence above the minimum baseline quality threshold (see 2.8 below).

Relationship to broader quality assessment arrangements

2.8 TEF is in addition to what are referred to in the documents as ‘broader quality assessment arrangements.’ The former is focussed on measuring excellence above a baseline, while the latter is focussed on securing that the baseline is met. Therefore, the TEF judgement ‘meets expectations’ corresponds with meeting the baseline.
2.9 The White Paper gives statutory duty to OfS to assess quality and standards, but a power to the Secretary of State to designate a quality body to undertake this on the OfS behalf (likely to be QAA).

2.10 The latest on arrangements for baseline quality assessment are those set out in HEFCE’s revised operating model for quality assessment\(^2\). For established providers this comprises: i. a one-off desk-based review of an institution’s periodic review process; ii. an annual return in which governors give assurances about quality; iii. a five yearly assurance visit. HEFCE has also recently announced the successful bidders for the packages of quality work set out in the revised operating model\(^3\). Since HEFCE will cease to exist from 2018, it is unclear whether these arrangements for assessing baseline quality will go ahead in the current form, will be transitional, or revised in some way.

Assessment process and outcomes

2.11 Assessors will:

i. Be individuals with appropriate experience and expertise who are independent of government and the provider being assessed; trained student representatives will be included

ii. Apply equal weighting to the three aspects of quality (teaching quality, learning environment and student outcomes and learning gain)

iii. Not look for evidence of fundamental quality expectations and processes that are assessed during the broader QA process

iv. Make holistic assessments based on both core metrics and additional evidence

2.12 BIS anticipate a bell-shaped distribution of outcomes, with 20% receiving a rating of ‘meets expectations’, 50-60% receiving ‘excellent’ and 20-30% receiving ‘outstanding’. The assessment process makes provision for panels to award commendations, but the consultation anticipates that these would be relatively rare (5-10% of providers) highlighting that providers who achieve one are amongst the top-performing in that particular areas.

Implementation and next steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultation closes</td>
<td>12th July 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government response</td>
<td>September 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applications open</td>
<td>October 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applications close</td>
<td>December 2016</td>
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<td>Judgements</td>
<td>February to March</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awards</td>
<td>April 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lessons learned exercise</td>
<td>May to June 2017</td>
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\(^2\) [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/201603/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/201603/)

\(^3\) [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2016/Name,108839,en.html](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2016/Name,108839,en.html)
3 Summary issues

3.1 UUK has issued a briefing document on the TEF technical consultation\(^4\), in which it highlights the following issues requiring particular attention from the sector.

**Relationship of TEF to quality assessment**

i. Overlap in the use of metrics, (for example student outcome metrics are used in both annual provider review and TEF)

ii. Elements of crossover between the TEF criteria and the quality code

iii. Inclusion of examples of evidence that relate to institutional quality and standards, such as measures to identify and address grade inflation and external examining arrangements.

iv. The use of TEF awards as an element of assessment as part of the annual provider review under the revised Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) operating model for quality assessment.

**Institutional diversity**

i. The impact of lowering the standard deviation of benchmarks on statistical confidence in the results; conversely, greater reliance on qualitative judgements would lower transparency and consistency in judgements.

ii. Qualitative judgements may result in other forms of evidence submitted as part of the provider narrative being favoured by panels. There is also potential for panels to favour process-oriented teaching and learning indicators, such as contact, time/teaching intensity, or indicators related to class size and rewards for teaching.

**TEF judgements and awards**

i. The judging process and design of awards will be important to ensure that the TEF is a transparent, robust and fair exercise that respects sector diversity and supports innovation. Particular consideration will need to be given to how evidence will be weighted and judgements calibrated.

ii. It is important that the chair of the assessment panel and assessors give the sector confidence that assessments will be peer led. It will be important that the chair has input into the design of the process, including guidance to assessors and the calibration and moderation of judgements.

iii. Further clarity is required on the definition of each award level and how judgements will be formed against each of the three different levels (‘meets expectations’, ‘excellent’ and ‘outstanding’).

iv. In particular, an explanation of how the proportions quoted in the consultation were arrived at would be welcome (20% of providers will receive ‘meets expectations’, 50–60% ‘excellent’, and 20–30%)

v. The technical consultation states that for TEF year two, providers will not be able to appeal their TEF outcome. The necessity for an appeals process will need to be considered during an evaluation (‘lessons learned’) process to be conducted at the end of TEF year two, which will inform TEF year three.

vi. Further consideration may also be required in terms of how awards are presented and explained to students, including the necessary contextual information. It will also be important to clarify how TEF awards relate to other types of information that is already presented to students, including many of the core metrics underpinning TEF judgements.

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\(^4\) Copy of the UUK document available on request, it appears not to be published on the UUK website
Schedule for implementation

i. The schedule for implementing the TEF continues to be particularly tight with little opportunity for delays if awards are to be available for the full 2017–18 admissions cycle.