

## Response ID ANON-TWMW-TNPW-R

Submitted to Independent Review of TEF: Call for views.

Submitted on 2019-03-01 17:06:00

### Who are you?

#### 1 What is your name?

Name:

Dr Willy Kitchen

#### 2 What is your role/position (if relevant)?

What is your role/position (if relevant)? :

Chair, Foundation Year Network

#### 3 What is your email address?

Email:

w.kitchen@sheffield.ac.uk

#### 4 In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?

Representative organisation, business, or trade body

If other, please specify below:

#### 5 Are you responding on behalf of an organisation (eg. higher education provider, student union or representative group)?

Yes

a. If yes, what is the name of your organisation?:

Foundation Year Network (<https://foundationyear.ac.uk/>)

Not Answered

#### 6 Have you been involved preparing for or writing a TEF or subject TEF submission?

No

#### 7 Have you been involved as a TEF assessor or panel member (for provider TEF or in the subject pilots)?

No

#### 8 Would you like us to keep your responses confidential?

No

If yes, what is the reason for confidentiality?:

#### 9 Please indicate which UK country/other country you are responding from.

Please indicate which UK country/other country you are responding for. :

UK-wide

If you are responding from a country outside of the UK, please write this in below.:

### Why have TEF?

#### 10 Do you support the aim of assessing the quality of teaching excellence and student outcomes across providers of higher education?

Don't know

Please explain why:

No answer.

### Why have TEF?

#### 11 These purposes fall into two main areas: providing information, and enhancing the provision of higher education.

Enhancing provision

**b. Please outline below the reasons for your answers :**

To the extent that TEF can have a beneficial effect upon the quality of learning outcomes for a diverse range of students, it is to be welcomed.

However, we have considerable reservations about the potential unintended consequences of using blunt metrics to achieve this aim - particularly as regards 'providing information' to measure such 'quality'.

See answer to 14 below.

**12 Should there be any other purposes for TEF?**

**Should there be any other purposes for TEF? :**

No answer.

**What is TEF?**

**How does TEF work?**

**13 Are the criteria used in TEF (see Figure 1 for a list of the criteria) appropriate?**

Don't know

**If not, what criteria would be more appropriate? :**

**14 There is no direct measurement of teaching quality currently available. As a result, the TEF uses existing data as indirect measures of teaching quality. These measures are known as "proxies".**

No

**b. If you answered no, what metrics would be more suitable proxies? :**

The Foundation Year Network has particular concerns in relation to the non-continuation metrics and those metrics described as measuring 'learning gain'.

Non-continuation rates for students originally registered on an integrated degree with foundation year who do not continue into their second (FHEQ level 4) year can only be properly understood in context. Individual degrees with foundation year are designed by individual HEIs to fulfil very particular, institution-specific, purposes and each has admissions policies and practices aligned to meet those purposes.

It would be quite wrong, therefore, to directly compare the continuation rates of an FY programme which predominantly admits school leavers with high tariff A-levels (to provide additional specific subject content/skills development) with that of a programme which predominantly admits mature learners without a recent (or sometimes any) past record of achievement at GCSE or A-level (in order to provide a 'second chance' education).

Furthermore, the definition of 'continuation' itself is problematic because it creates a potential conflict of interest between those of an institution to have a student remain registered on a programme (by having a student repeat a failed year) and the interests of individual students (for whom continuation in the form of repeating a year may have severe impacts on their ability to access student loan funding later in their studies if they were to fail again in their repeat year).

This tension has the potential to affect the quality of advice and guidance the student receives. Given the risk that atypical applicants take from the outset by applying for HE entry with less well-calibrated, or even no, qualifications - or when changing direction post-A level - this is a particular concern for FY students and providers.

Finally, in relation to non-continuation metrics, the experience of members right across the Foundation Year Network is that the key determinants of non-continuation amongst FY's more diverse entry cohorts are much more commonly related to personal, financial or health-related matters than they are to 'academic matters'. As such, non-continuation is largely an irrelevant measure of teaching quality, or of the learning environment, so far as FY students are concerned.

Similarly, true 'learning gain' for many degrees with foundation year would be much more appropriately expressed as a measure of degree outcome relative to prior achievement (e.g. UCAS tariff) on entry, rather than as a measure of employment outcomes.

We would suggest that 'learning gain' by reference to degree (not employment) outcome could then be more usefully benchmarked relative to learning gain which has been measured in a similar way for students studying on degrees without a foundation year. In our view, this would give prospective students a much clearer indication of the potential value to them of taking a degree with foundation year rather than choosing another pathway into and through Higher Education.

**15 The TEF metrics are benchmarked to account for factors such as the subject of study, prior attainment, ethnicity and educational disadvantage of the provider's student intake (see that 'What is TEF?' section for detail).**

Yes

**b. Does TEF benchmark for the right factors?:**

The factors appear to be largely sound. However, cohorts recruited to Foundation Years are very often atypical relative to the provider's direct entry cohort, so that benchmarking cannot be used as a blunt tool in this way.

For example, a degree with foundation year which aims to widen participation for mature learners at a high tariff institution could not be reasonably benchmarked at the same point as the rest of the institution's direct entry degree programmes since its student intake will often be far removed from the institutional norm.

**16 The TEF process uses both quantitative evidence (for example, the core metrics) and qualitative evidence (for example, the written submission).**

**a. What are your views about the balance of quantitative and qualitative evidence considered in arriving at ratings?:**

No answer.

**b. Are there any other aspects of the process that you wish to comment on?:**

No answer.

**Are the ratings right?**

**17 Are the purpose(s) of TEF met by:**

Don't know

**Please explain your answer:**

No answer.

Don't know

**Please explain your answer :**

No answer.

Don't know

**Please explain your answer :**

No answer.

**18 If you answered no, what alternatives you would suggest.**

**a. For provider-level TEF?:**

N/A

**b. For subject-level TEF?:**

N/A

**c. If your previous response(s) reflected on the impact of the TEF on the international reputation of institutions and/or the UK as a whole, we would welcome any evidence or information you can provide that might support your view or help inform the independent review.:**

N/A

**Has TEF changed anything?**

**19 Has the introduction of TEF positively changed the educational experience of students (e.g. teaching and learning)?**

Don't know

**If yes, how?:**

**20 Has the introduction of TEF negatively changed the educational experience of students (e.g. teaching and learning)?**

Don't know

**If yes, how?:**

**21 Has the introduction of TEF impacted positively on research and/or knowledge transfer?**

Don't know

**If yes, how?:**

**22 Has the introduction of TEF impacted negatively on research and/or knowledge transfer?**

Don't know

**If yes, how? :**

**Is TEF worth it?**

**23 Does TEF help you as a student/provider/employer?**

Don't know

**Please explain the reasons for your answer.:**

No answer.

**24 Explaining your reasoning, what are the most significant costs of:**

**a. Provider-level TEF?:**

No answer.

**b. Subject-level TEF?:**

No answer.

**25 Explaining your reasoning, what are the most significant benefits of:**

**a. Provider-level TEF?:**

No answer.

**b. Subject-level TEF?:**

No answer.

**Is TEF fair?**

**26 Are there particular types of students, provision or providers that are disadvantaged by the current design of TEF, in a disproportionate way?**

Yes

**If so, what changes could be made to address this?:**

A much more nuanced approach to 'learning gain' for particular groups of students studying on particular forms of foundation years is required, as outlined in our previous answers.

It is not clear, however, whether the means to achieve such a measure fairly across the sector currently exists - not least because all but one of the metrics outlined relate directly to the experience and outcomes of final year students, measured three or more years after their foundation year of study.

By contrast, the one measure which relates directly to the foundation year (non-continuation) disproportionately disadvantages many types of degree with foundation year which have been explicitly designed to widen participation.

This may, in some circumstances, create potential pressures which can actively work against the students' own interests (see answer to 14 above). Alternatively, as has been reported to the network, in some instances individual HEIs may already be specifically reducing their intake of FY students with WP characteristics with the express intent of improving 'performance outcomes' as currently captured by the TEF metrics.

As a direct result of the current approach to TEF metrics therefore, either individual FY students or whole cohorts of potential FY students – many from groups under-represented in HE – are being disproportionately disadvantaged.

For this reason, whatever the overall outcomes of this review, we would ask that careful consideration is given as to whether degrees with foundation year should be included within TEF submissions and TEF metrics at all. The network are willing and ready to assist the panel further with their considerations if this would be helpful.

**27 Are there particular types of students, provision or providers that are advantaged by the current design of TEF, in a disproportionate way?**

Don't know

**If so, what changes could be made to address this?:**