



Teaching Excellence Framework Technical Consultation – Response Form

Name/Organisation: Institution of Environmental Sciences (IES) & Committee of Heads of Environmental Science (CHES)

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)

TEF Technical Consultation

Submission from the Institution of Environmental Sciences and Committee of Heads of Environmental Sciences

Background

The Institution of Environmental Sciences (IES) is a membership organisation that represents professionals from fields as diverse as air quality, land contamination and education - wherever you find environmental work underpinned by science. A visionary organisation leading debate, dissemination and promotion of environmental science and sustainability, the IES promotes an evidence-based approach to decision and policy making.

The Committee of Heads of Environmental Sciences (CHES) is the collective voice of the environmental sciences and related programmes in higher and further education. CHES plays a leading role in the Higher and Further Education Environmental Science community and advocates for environmental science within education. After working closely together for over a decade in 2013 CHES merged with the IES and now serves as its education committee. Together the IES and CHES now accredit over 75 degree programmes in the UK and abroad, including more than 20 Masters courses.

In this response we have primarily highlighted areas where, in our experience, these proposals could benefit from adjustment to better reflect the situation in our discipline and sector.

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.

Question 2 (Chapter 3)

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

Employment metrics need to have the capacity to reflect the wide variety of paths some graduates may take to 'highly skilled employment' and the time that this can

take. In some disciplines graduates often take some time off before enrolling on PGT courses and may take numerous forms of (non-graduate level) job to support themselves in this period. Even after the suggested 40 month period in some disciplines, including environmental ones, graduates may require temporary (often seasonal) work or internships before full time employment is possible, which can translate into periods of unemployment or low salaries. Any metric must be able to account for this, to avoid misrepresenting the performance of departments in disciplines where the path to 'highly skilled employment' can be longer or more complex.

In addition, metrics must be designed to take account of regional differences in salary, which could otherwise falsely indicate low pay attainment amongst graduates in, for example, the north.

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

Some highly skilled jobs in the civil service, NGOs and other similar organisations, may fall under SOC group 4, so would be excluded in this case.

Some leisure or outdoor posts which could also be considered highly skilled may also not fall under categories 1-3, so a more nuanced approach to this measure may be required.

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

On the whole we agree with the proposed approach to benchmarking. However, although it is broadly accepted that institutions should be working to overcome issues of differentiation (paragraph 77), it does not seem appropriate to isolate some of these issues from the chosen benchmarks by excluding these 'factors' (e.g. POLAR quintiles) whilst others are retained (e.g. sex, ethnicity, or disability), which institutions should also be seeking to address. In fact, analysis of combinations of these characteristics could provide useful information.

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

We agree with this approach, but would note that the use of standard deviations will not be appropriate if metrics are not normally distributed.

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.

We agree with this proposal, and are pleased to see that distinctions will be made between full and part time students, which will produce useful information.

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.

The number and proportion of full and part time students should be added as contextual information under section A of Table 1. Otherwise we agree with the proposals on contextual information.

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?

As this is an illustrative, rather than prescriptive list we support these examples.

We are pleased to see that recognition or accreditation of courses by PSRBs may be considered under additional evidence. Such recognition can represent an engagement with the wider sector and employers in this area which should be encouraged in this framework.

In our discipline (environmental science), fieldwork is usually an essential component of taught degree programmes. One potentially beneficial addition to this list would be an indication of the amount of time spent working and developing skills in the field or lab, if and where it is appropriate.

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.

Note on Chapter 4, paragraph 119:

Under paragraph 119 it is stated that it is anticipated providers will fall into a bell-shaped distribution of performance across the various ratings. Considering the position of the UK Higher Education sector, and the continued drive for excellence, it could be just as reasonable to expect a distribution skewed towards excellence as a bell-shaped curve. Some further clarity on this point would be beneficial before guidance for assessors is produced to avoid confusion and ensure consistency.

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.

We agree with this proposal in principle. However, it is difficult to foresee cases in which providers with less than three years of experience will be operating alone (i.e. without a validating or franchising institution with greater experience). Guidance must be clear which organisation is being assessed in this case – the deliverer or the validator/franchiser.

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.

We are comfortable with these ratings, but would welcome some clarification on the 'Meets Expectations' proposal. Arguably, for UK HE to continue to compete at its current level on the international stage, it should be made clear that the 'Meets Expectations' category demonstrates evidence that the provider is operating at a very high level.

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

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