

News story: Universities to be rated by subject quality

Teaching excellence will be rewarded and poor quality teaching exposed under a new rating system for English universities, the Universities Minister has announced today (12 March).

In a global first, Universities Minister Sam Gyimah has launched a new tool that will rate universities either gold, silver or bronze by subject – holding them to account for the quality of their teaching, learning environment and graduate outcomes.

By extending the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework – or TEF – to subject level the government aims to:

- help prospective students compare the different courses on offer across institutions, to make sure they get the most out of their university education;
- shine a light on course quality, revealing which universities are providing excellent teaching, and which are coasting or relying on their research reputation.

The Department for Education has today launched a 10-week public consultation, seeking views on the design of the new framework. This will run alongside a pilot of the scheme, which has 50 universities and colleges taking part, including the University of Cambridge, Imperial College London, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), De Montfort University and the Open University.

Universities Minister Sam Gyimah said:

Prospective students deserve to know which courses deliver great teaching and great outcomes – and which ones are lagging behind.

In the age of the student, universities will no longer be able to hide if their teaching quality is not up to the world-class standard that we expect.

The new subject-level TEF will give students more information than ever before, allowing them to drill down and compare universities by subject. This will level the international playing field to help applicants make better choices, and ensure that more students get the value for money they deserve from higher education.

The plans announced today will build on the progress already made under the first wave of TEF – which awards universities with an overall rating of gold, silver and bronze. This new framework recognises that outcomes and teaching quality differ not just by university but also by course, and will allow

students to look behind provider-level ratings and access information about teaching quality for a specific subject.

Those universities and colleges taking part in the pilot scheme for subject-level TEF are working with the sector in academic years 2017/18 and 2018/19, with the intention that the first full year of subject-level TEF will take place in 2019/20.

The new framework will take into account student feedback, drop-out rates and graduate outcomes to help deliver the objectives of the review of post-18 education launched by the Prime Minister last month, ensuring that students get the value for money they deserve from higher education.

The Minister will also launch an Open Data competition, the first of its kind in the UK HE sector, which will use selected government data on universities so that tech companies and coders can create apps to help prospective students decide where to apply.

This competition will build on the government's recently published Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) dataset, which gives information on employment and salaries after graduation. By democratising access to information about courses and their outcomes, it will help all applicants, regardless of their background, make better decisions and get better value for money.

The Universities Minister added:

Our new Open Data Competition will open up Government data on universities for the first time. It will harness the creativity and enterprise of coders and tech businesses to create new tools to help applicants get value for money. And it puts government data to work for students, democratising the information Government holds about universities.