

**Office for
Students**



Estimates of the costs of the Teaching Excellence Framework 2023

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Executive summary

Introduction

1. This report estimates the costs associated with the 2023 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The analysis covers costs incurred by higher education providers in preparing their submissions (and, where relevant, representations), as well as the costs incurred by the Office for Students (OfS) in delivering the TEF 2023 assessments. There are also costs associated with the development of the TEF 2023 exercise, which we have been able to calculate for the OfS but not for the sector, as we do not have the data.

Methodology

2. The costs to the sector were estimated by collecting estimates from higher education providers of the time spent by their staff and non-staff costs they incurred (such as on consultants) and then applying staff salary data and an uplift for other payroll costs to calculate staff costs. These estimates are subject to a number of limitations, most notably the sample size (32.3 percent of the providers that participated in TEF), and the unknown accuracy of providers' own estimates. The costs incurred by the OfS were retrieved from OfS financial records.
3. This report refers to all providers in the higher education sector as 'higher education providers'. For the purposes of our analysis, we distinguish between further education colleges¹ (hereafter, 'colleges') and 'higher education institutions' (hereafter, 'institutions'). In this case, we use the latter to refer to all other types of higher education provider that are not colleges.

Findings

The key findings are as follows.

Sector-level cost estimates

- The total cost to the providers that participated in TEF 2023 is estimated to be between £7.75 million and £12.16 million, with a mean estimate of £9.96 million.²

Provider-level cost estimates

- Institutions incurred higher costs on submissions on average (£49,700 per provider) compared with colleges (£20,600 per provider).
- For Institutions, the total number of days spent on TEF submissions per provider ranged from 30 to 410 days, with an average of 116.

¹ In the context of this report, 'further education colleges' refers to providers that identified themselves as further education colleges in the survey.

² The estimates in this report are based on 226 participating providers. One of the 227 that participated had dissolved as the result of a merger by the beginning of the evaluation period.

- On average, senior management staff at institutions spent approximately 1.8 times more days on TEF submissions than staff at reader level and below.
- Colleges spent between eight and 360 working days on their TEF submissions per provider, with an average of 86.
- On average senior staff at colleges spent 2.2 times more days on TEF submissions than staff below management level.
- The cost of making representations was also analysed, with institutions incurring an average of £5,500 and colleges £1,300.

OfS costs

4. The estimated cost to the OfS of delivering the TEF 2023 assessments, covering OfS staff-related costs, panel member and assessment costs, and other delivery costs, over an 18-month period, is £4.3 million.

Conclusion

5. This report estimates the level of financial investment required for participation in the TEF 2023 from both providers and the OfS. Despite the limitations, the findings provide valuable insights into the cost implications of the TEF and can inform future policy decisions.

Introduction and background

6. This paper provides cost estimates associated with the Teaching Excellence Framework 2023. The costs to the sector cover time spent preparing submissions between October 2022 and January 2023, additional direct costs such as consultancy or legal fees, and time spent on representations related to TEF outcomes, where applicable.
7. Additionally, the paper provides estimates for costs incurred by the OfS in delivering the TEF 2023 over an 18-month period from October 2022 (when the submission window opened), as well as the costs incurred by the OfS in developing the TEF 2023 in the preceding 18 months. We have not been able to calculate TEF 2023 development-related costs for the sector, as the provider survey did not collect data on the time and resources spent on TEF-related activity prior to preparing submissions.
8. This paper forms one part of a broader set of evaluation activities being conducted by the OfS.
9. Sector cost estimates are based on responses to targeted questions included in a provider survey, conducted by IFF Research as part of evaluation activities commissioned by the OfS.³ Specific questions in the survey were designed to collect data on the time and resources spent on the TEF 2023 exercise.
10. The survey captured time and cost estimate responses from 73 providers, representing 32.3 per cent of those that participated in TEF 2023. This sample size and the retrospective nature of the survey, which relied on providers' recollections of time and resource use, may limit the accuracy and generalisability of the results.
11. This sector cost estimation builds on prior analyses conducted since the TEF's introduction, with initial estimates from 2016 revised by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2018, and again in 2019 using data from a provider cost survey during the 2017-18 subject-level TEF pilot evaluation.⁴

Background on the TEF

12. The TEF is a scheme run by the OfS that aims to encourage higher education providers in England to improve and deliver excellence in teaching, learning and student outcomes.⁵ The TEF does this by assessing and rating providers for excellence above a set of minimum requirements for quality. The TEF is a desk-based expert review exercise, with a panel of academics and students appointed to conduct the assessments and make the decisions about ratings.
13. To participate in the TEF 2023 a provider was required to make a written submission up to 25 pages long, in which it presented evidence of excellence in relation to the experience and outcomes of its students. The provider submission was one source of evidence considered by

³ See OfS, [Evaluation of the TEF 2023](#).

⁴ Cost estimates for 2016, 2018 and 2019 respectively are available at Gov.UK: [Higher Education and Research Bill: Impact assessment](#) (Detailed impact assessment pp6-58); [Higher Education and Research Act: Impact assessments](#) (Annex E pp82-85); and [Updated cost estimates of TEF](#).

⁵ More information on the TEF is available at OfS, [About the Teaching Excellence Framework \(TEF\)](#).

the TEF panel, alongside an independent student submission where available, and TEF data indicators generated by the OfS. In total 227 providers participated in TEF 2023.⁶

14. Following the panel's assessments, a provisional rating decision was issued to each provider, along with a panel statement setting out the rationale. Providers then had 28 days to make any representations before the final ratings were decided. Representations could relate either to factual inaccuracies in the panel statement, or more substantially to whether the panel's judgement appropriately reflected the original evidence. At a later stage providers were also able to make representations about OfS decisions to publish their TEF outcome and their submission. In total 73 providers made representations.

Methodology

Provider survey

15. As part of a wider evaluation, a survey was designed to capture providers' experiences of the TEF submission process, its early impacts, changes to monitoring and evaluation practices, motivations for participating where this was voluntary, and the perceived impact of the TEF on the student voice.⁷
16. The survey was administered online in September and October 2024. Survey invitations targeted providers' TEF teams and relevant strategic roles. While all providers (participating and non-participating) were eligible for the survey, cost questions were only asked of participating providers.
17. The survey asked providers to estimate staff time and other costs, such as consultancy or legal expenses, involved in preparing their submissions and, where applicable, in making representations.⁸ Staff time was captured as the number of working days spent across different role groupings. This was then costed using related salary data (see Annex D), with an uplift applied to account for costs such as employer pension and national insurance contributions.
18. This report refers to all providers in the higher education sector as 'higher education providers'. For the purposes of our analysis, we distinguish between further education colleges⁹ (hereafter, 'colleges') and 'higher education institutions' (hereafter, 'institutions'). In this case, we use the latter to refer to all other types of higher education provider that are not colleges.

⁶ The estimates in this report are based on 226 participating providers. One of the 227 that participated had dissolved as the result of a merger by the beginning of the evaluation period.

⁷ See OfS, [Evaluation of the TEF 2023](#).

⁸ As shown in the survey questions in Annex A, respondents were asked to estimate the amount of staff time directly linked to preparing the TEF submission between the publication of guidance in October 2022 and making their submission in January 2023. This included familiarisation time that staff spent on understanding the TEF guidance and processes, and time spent supporting the student representatives involved.

⁹ In the context of this report, 'further education colleges' refers to providers that identified themselves as further education colleges in the survey.

19. The role groupings and associated salaries for colleges were derived from the DfE's 2022-23 dataset for the further education workforce,¹⁰ and those for institutions were derived from annual salary data in the HESA staff record.
20. Analysis of the collected data was conducted in house by OfS data analysts between November 2024 and January 2025.

Sample coverage

21. Survey responses containing usable TEF submission cost estimates were received from 73 providers. This represents 32.3 per cent of providers that participated in TEF 2023. This includes 52 of 171 institutions (30.4 per cent) and 21 of 55 colleges (38.2 per cent). Analysis of survey participation rates by four types of provider characteristic is provided in Annex B.
22. The low sample sizes generally preclude granular statistical analysis about the differences in submission cost estimates across all these types of categories. However, the findings do seek to draw out strong differences where this is possible.
23. For representations, sample coverage was very low as only 11 institutions (20.4 per cent out of a total of 54 that made representations) and eight colleges (of 19, 42.1 per cent) provided a usable response. This precludes any analysis by provider characteristic.

Limitations

24. Several limitations for this study were noted.
25. **Low survey participation rates.** As noted in paragraph 22, overall sample coverage was low, with only 52 institutions (of 171) and 21 colleges (of 55) providing usable responses to the questions about the submission cost. While not unexpected, this results in a large statistical margin of error, approximately 11.4 per cent for institutions and 17.0 per cent for colleges, at the 95 per cent confidence level. This was lower for providers that made a representation, as detailed in paragraph 23.¹¹ This results in a very high margin of error, of approximately 26.6 per cent for institutions and 27.1 per cent for colleges, at the 95 per cent confidence level.
26. **Errors in the individual provider cost estimates.** Providers' responses to the cost questions could contain errors for the following reasons:
- Retrospective data collection. Respondents may struggle to accurately recall or quantify the staff time spent on the TEF submission process. This may lead to under- or overestimation, depending on respondents' perception of the amount of work done by different roles.
 - Potential misunderstanding of cost questions. There is a risk that some respondents may have misinterpreted or misunderstood the cost estimation questions, potentially leading to under- or overestimation. However, the survey included data checks to mitigate this issue,

¹⁰ DfE 2022-23 dataset for the further education workforce, available at Gov.UK, [Further education workforce: Academic year 2022-23 – Explore education statistics](#) (Appendix A).

¹¹ One additional higher education provider respondent was excluded from the mean and maximum statistics as an extreme outlier that did not appear to be representative of the sector.

and the possibility of misinterpretation was considered during the analysis stage, particularly when reviewing outliers.

- c. Potential exaggeration in responses. Providers may have been incentivised to exaggerate the time and cost burden, to highlight the perceived effort involved in the TEF process.

27. **Provider costs that were not included.** Costs associated with participating in TEF 2023, but not directly related to preparing the submission, were not captured. These include responding to the OfS consultation, any early preparation that may have taken place before the guidance was published and releasing staff to serve as panel members.

28. **Broad assumptions for some staff costs.** For colleges, the staff categories are based on role type (e.g. administrative staff) rather than salary level. Therefore, these categories do not reflect the range of seniorities and salaries within them and may lead to an underestimate of costs. The salary uplift was based on average data held for institutions and then applied to colleges.

Findings

Time spent by staff (submissions)

Higher education Institutions

29. In institutions the total number of days spent on TEF submissions per provider ranged from 30 at the lowest, to almost 14 times that amount, with 410 days at the highest (see Table 1). On average (mean), providers spent 116 days of staff time on their submission.

30. There was considerable variation in the number of days spent on TEF submissions by each staff role category reported by different institutions (see Annex D for the staff role groupings). Providers distributed responsibility between roles very differently. For example, at some providers the senior leaders (vice-chancellor, deputy vice-chancellor, pro-vice-chancellor, chief executive officer etc.) were heavily involved,¹² spending substantially more days on TEF submissions than other senior management staff (such as directors of a major function or major academic area, heads of academic areas or centres, and professorial academic staff). In contrast, at other providers the senior leaders had little involvement in the TEF submission, with other senior management staff spending substantially more days on TEF submissions. There was similar variation among more junior staff levels.

31. While the majority of institutions (32 out of 52) reported that their senior management staff spent more time on TEF submissions than staff at reader or equivalent level and below, there was also substantial variation within this. On average senior management staff spent approximately 1.8 times more days on TEF than staff at reader level and below. The highest ratio was ten times more days on TEF by senior management (followed by 6.2 times), and the lowest was more junior staff spending 25 times more days on TEF than senior management staff – though the latter was an extreme outlier, with the next lowest being 3.8 times.

¹² For institutions, this group was referred to as 'head of institution' in the survey questions, with the list of example job titles for clarity.

32. As shown in Table 1, the averages (both mean and median) are all relatively similar across all staff categories except for the administrative and assistant professional staff category, which is notably lower. The means for all staff categories are substantially higher than the medians, because of approximately six outlier institutions that reported between three and eight times the median number of days spent by each staff category.

Table 1: Higher education institution days spent on TEF submissions by staff group

Survey question – number of days spent on higher education institution TEF submission by:	Min	Max	Median	Mean	Range
Senior leaders (vice-chancellor, deputy vice-chancellor, pro-vice-chancellor, chief executive officer etc.)	1.0	120.0	14.5	20.4	119.0
Director of major function (finance, corporate services, human resources) or director of major academic area	0.0	90.0	15.0	21.6	90.0
Head of an academic area or centre or professor	0.0	100.0	15.0	19.3	100.0
Non-academic staff or academic staff (senior lecturer, reader or principal research fellow)	0.0	125.0	15.0	22.8	125.0
Senior professional staff, lecturer or researcher	0.0	75.0	12.5	19.8	75.0
Administrative staff, assistant professional staff	0.0	75.0	10.0	12.4	75.0
All roles combined total	30.0	410.0	91.6	116.3	380.0

Further education colleges

33. In colleges, providers spent somewhere between eight and 360 working days on their TEF submission in total, reflecting even greater variation in how they approached the process than in institutions (see Table 2). The average (mean) number of days spent was 86, notably less than the amount in institutions (116). Managers (e.g. faculty leads) tended to spend the most time, followed roughly equally by senior leaders, teaching staff and administrative staff.

34. Colleges' responses showed some variation in the distribution of time spent on TEF submissions among senior staff categories (senior leaders or management staff). Only five (of 21) reported more time spent on TEF submissions by senior leaders than managers. Below management level, colleges varied in how much time they used from teaching and administrative staff and generally used very little time from support staff.

35. Similarly to institutions, the majority of colleges (14 of 21) reported that senior staff (managers and above) spent more time on TEF than those below management level. On average senior staff at colleges spent 2.2 times more days on TEF submissions than staff below management level.¹³ The ratio of senior staff time to non-management staff time ranged from 7:1 down to 1:5.

36. As shown in Table 2, there is a much larger difference between the mean and median for each staff category than for institutions. This is down to large outliers having a greater effect on the

¹³ Although this average excludes a provider where staff below management level were not involved in the TEF submission at all.

much smaller sample size. This effect is lost when combining staff time across all roles at a further education college.

Table 2: Further education college days spent on representations by staff group

Survey question – number of days spent on further education college TEF submission by:	Min	Max	Median	Mean	Range
Senior leaders (e.g. principal, vice-principal, chief executive officer, managing director)	0.0	80.0	5.0	15.2	80.0
Managers (e.g. faculty leads, head of department, head of major function)	0.0	150.0	20.0	33.8	150.0
Teaching staff (e.g. lecturers, practitioners, instructors)	0.0	150.0	5.0	16.0	150.0
Support staff (e.g. teaching assistants, technicians, assessors)	0.0	25.0	3.0	6.4	25.0
Administration staff (e.g. data analysts, business managers, legal)	0.0	80.0	10.0	14.7	80.0
All roles combined total	8.0	360.0	80.0	86.0	352.0

Time spent by staff (representations)

37. As shown in Table 3 (institutions) and Table 4 (colleges), on average providers that made representations spent 9.8 and 5.4 days on TEF representations (respectively).¹⁴ The total number of days spent ranged from 4.5 to 20 for institutions and from two to ten for colleges. There was notable variation in the distribution of workload between staff roles on the representations process at different institutions and colleges.

38. Senior staff at both institutions and colleges spent more days on TEF representations than did their more junior colleagues. Senior leaders spent the most days on average (mean) at both institutions (3.9) and colleges (2.3).

Table 3: Higher education provider days spent on representations by staff group

Survey question – number of days spent on higher education provider TEF representation by:	Min	Max	Median	Mean	Range
Senior leaders (vice-chancellor, deputy vice-chancellor, pro-vice-chancellor, chief executive officer etc.)	1.0	12.0	2.5	3.9	11.0
Director of major function (finance, corporate services, human resources) or director of major academic area	0.0	5.0	1.8	1.8	5.0
Head of an academic area or centre or professor	0.0	7.0	1.1	1.8	7.0

¹⁴ One extreme outlier higher education provider was excluded from the analysis because of the impact it had on a much smaller sample size.

Survey question – number of days spent on higher education provider TEF representation by:	Min	Max	Median	Mean	Range
Non-academic staff or academic staff (senior lecturer, reader or principal research fellow)	0.0	5.0	0.5	1.0	5.0
Senior professional staff, lecturer or researcher	0.0	5.0	0.8	1.2	5.0
Administrative staff, assistant professional staff	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.1	1.0
All roles combined total	4.5	20.0	9.0	9.8	15.5

Table 4: Further education college days spent on representations by staff group

Survey question – number of days spent on further education college TEF representation by:	Min	Max	Median	Mean	Range
Senior leaders (e.g. principal, vice-principal, chief executive officer, managing director)	0.0	5.0	2.0	2.3	5.0
Managers (e.g. faculty leads, head of department, head of major function)	0.0	4.0	2.0	2.0	4.0
Teaching staff (e.g. lecturers, practitioners, instructors)	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.4	2.0
Support staff (e.g. teaching assistants, technicians, assessors)	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.1	1.0
Administration staff (e.g. data analysts, business managers, legal)	0.0	2.0	0.5	0.6	2.0
All roles combined total	2.0	10.0	5.5	5.4	8.0

Provider-level and sector-level cost estimates

39. This section presents the cost estimates for submissions and representations at the provider and sector levels for both institutions and colleges. A range of estimates using a variety of methods is presented, including an upper and lower bound. An estimated total for the costs incurred by all participating providers for the TEF process (including submissions and representations) is also presented.

Submissions

40. As shown in Table 5, the mean per provider cost estimate for institutions is £49,700 and is more than twice that for colleges (£20,600), despite the latter spending on average approximately three quarters of the number of days on TEF submissions that the former do. This difference is largely explained by the lower pay for most roles at colleges when compared with institutions, including senior leadership roles. The median estimates are lower than the means because of the providers that did not incur any 'other costs'. This is more pronounced for colleges, where 'other costs' made up a greater proportion of their mean cost.

Table 5: Higher education provider-level submission cost estimates

	Min	Max	Median	Mean	Range
Higher education institution submission staff cost estimate	£10,500	£186,100	£37,400	£47,300	175,600
Higher education institution 'other costs' estimate	£0	£30,000	£0	£2,500	30,000
Higher education institution per provider cost estimate	-	-	£37,400	£49,700	-
Further education college submission staff cost estimate	£2,100	£63,700	£13,400	£16,600	61,600
Further education college 'other costs' estimate	£0	£25,000	£0	£3,900	£25,000
Further education college per provider cost estimate	-	-	£13,400	£20,600	-

Note: Totals may not sum because of rounding error.

41. Sector-level estimates were produced by multiplying the average provider cost by the number of providers that participated in TEF, as shown in Table 6 (medians) and Table 7 (means). The median sector TEF submission cost estimate is £7.14 million, and the mean estimate is £9.64 million. In the median estimate, institutions account for 90 per cent (£6.40 million) and colleges only 10 per cent (£0.74 million) of the total sector cost of TEF submissions, despite the latter making up 24 per cent of TEF participants. Using the mean gives a reasonably similar split (87 per cent and 13 per cent). While it was anticipated that colleges would spend less time on average than institutions given their smaller size, and that their lower salaries would reduce cost estimates, this is a substantial difference. Note that the median 'other costs' is zero, because more than half of surveyed providers incurred zero 'other costs'.

Table 6: Median sector-level submission cost estimates

Broad provider type	Total number of TEF participants	Median estimated staff costs for the sector	Median estimated 'other costs' for the sector	Median estimated total sector costs
Higher education institution	171	£6,403,900	£0	£6,403,900
Further education college	55	£736,300	£0	£736,300
All TEF participants	226	£7,140,200	£0	£7,140,200

Table 7: Mean sector-level submission cost estimates

Broad provider type	Total number of TEF participants	Mean estimated staff costs for the sector	Mean estimated 'other costs' for the sector	Mean estimated total sector costs
Higher education institution	171	£8,080,700	£424,900	£8,505,600
Further education college	55	£915,100	£216,600	£1,131,700
All TEF participants	226	£8,995,800	£641,500	£9,637,300

42. Lower and upper (mean) estimates of submission costs were produced using confidence intervals, to reflect the uncertainty introduced by sampling error. These use the 95 per cent confidence level for staff costs, but 'other costs' use the 80 per cent confidence level because of poor response rates. As shown in Table 8, we estimate that TEF submissions cost the sector between £7.53 million and £11.74 million. The relatively large difference between lower and upper estimates is a result of the high margin of error from the low sample size.

Table 8: Submission costs confidence intervals at provider and sector level

	95% confidence interval	80% confidence interval	95% confidence interval	80% confidence interval	Sector totals
	Higher education institution staff costs	Higher education institution 'other costs'	Further education college staff costs	Further education college 'other costs'	
Lower bound – per provider	£39,000	£1,300	£11,500	£300	-
Upper bound – per provider	£55,600	£3,700	£21,800	£7,600	-
Lower sector cost estimate	£6,660,900	£220,600	£633,500	£14,600	£7,529,600
Upper sector cost estimate	£9,500,600	£629,100	£1,196,700	£418,500	£11,744,900

Representations

43. For representations, the median (£1,400) per provider representation cost for colleges was slightly higher than the mean (£1,300), as shown in Table 9. Conversely, for institutions the mean (£5,500) is higher than the median (£4,400). The relatively small difference between mean and median for both reflects the lack of large outliers in the valid representation responses.¹⁵ Similarly, there was relatively little variation in cost among different institutions

¹⁵ One extreme outlier higher education provider was excluded from this analysis.

and colleges. Estimates of ‘other costs’ associated with making a representation were not possible, because of the poor response rate to this question, and have been excluded.

Table 9: Higher education provider-level representation cost estimates

	Min	Max	Median	Mean	Range
Higher education institution representation staff cost estimate	£2,200	£11,200	£4,400	£5,500	£9,000
Further education college representation staff cost estimate	£400	£2,300	£1,400	£1,300	£1,900

44. Sector-level estimates were produced by multiplying the average provider cost by the number of providers which made a representation in TEF. As shown on Table 10, we estimate that 2023 TEF representations cost the sector £318,800 using the mean, and £262,000 using the median.

Table 10: Sector-level representations cost estimates – median and mean

Broad provider type	Total providers that made a representation	Median estimated costs for the sector	Mean estimated staff costs for the sector
Higher education institution	54	£234,900	£294,900
Further education college	19	£27,100	£23,900
All representation participants	73	£262,000	£318,800

45. Lower and upper mean estimates using confidence intervals were also produced for representation costs associated with staff time. These use the 95 per cent confidence level for staff costs. As shown in Table 11, we estimate that TEF representations cost the sector between £222,800 and £415,000. The relatively large difference between lower and upper bounds is a result of the very high margin of error from the low sample size.

Table 11: Representation costs confidence intervals at provider and sector level

	Higher education institution staff costs	Further education college staff costs	Sector totals
Lower bound – per provider	£3,800	£900	-
Upper bound – per provider	£7,100	£1,600	-
Lower sector cost estimate	£205,300	£17,500	£222,800
Upper sector cost estimate	£384,600	£30,400	£415,000

Total sector-level TEF provider costs

46. In conclusion, using the mean we estimate that in total TEF 2023 cost the sector £9.96 million, with lower and upper bound estimates of £7.75 million and £12.16 million. The lowest cost estimate we produced (using the median) indicates that TEF 2023 cost the sector in total £7.40 million.

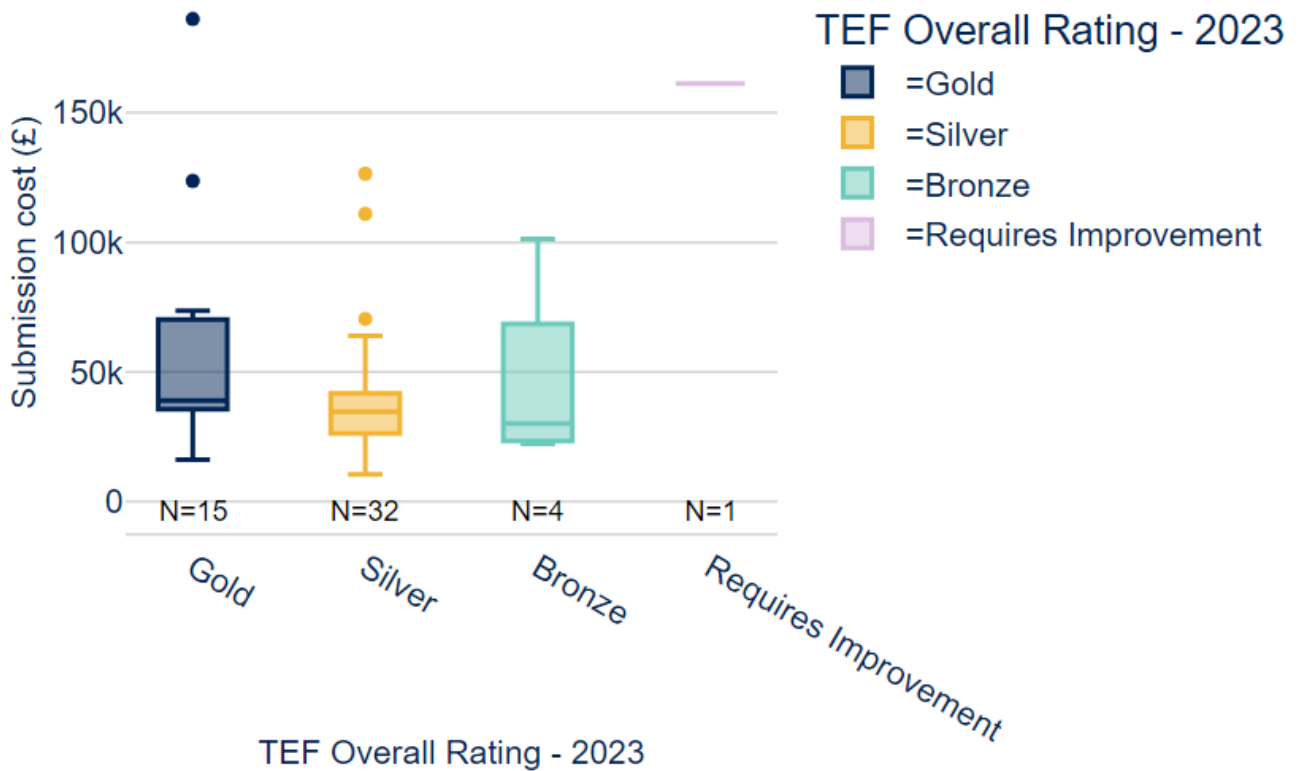
Variation in submission costs by provider characteristics

47. In this section we explore the distribution of submission cost estimates for institutions for different categories: TEF 2023 overall rating, previous TEF rating, and provider size¹⁶. Provider type is not included here, as results were inconclusive, primarily because of the small sample sizes for most provider types. Similarly, colleges are not included in this section, again because of small sample sizes for most characteristics.

48. Figure 1 provides some tentative evidence to suggest that on average institutions that achieved a Gold rating overall in TEF 2023 had spent more on their TEF submission than institutions that achieved a Silver rating. Half of Gold-rated institutions spent between £35,600 and £70,200, with a median of £39,000. In comparison, half of Silver-rated institutions spent between £26,300 and £41,700, with a median of £34,700. There were insufficient Bronze-rated institutions in the sample (four) to draw any reliable conclusions regarding them though Bronze-rated institutions also had lower costs on average than Silver or Gold-rated ones in the sample. Nonetheless, it appears that institutions that invested more time and money into their TEF submissions were more likely to receive a higher overall rating (though this does not necessarily imply causality).

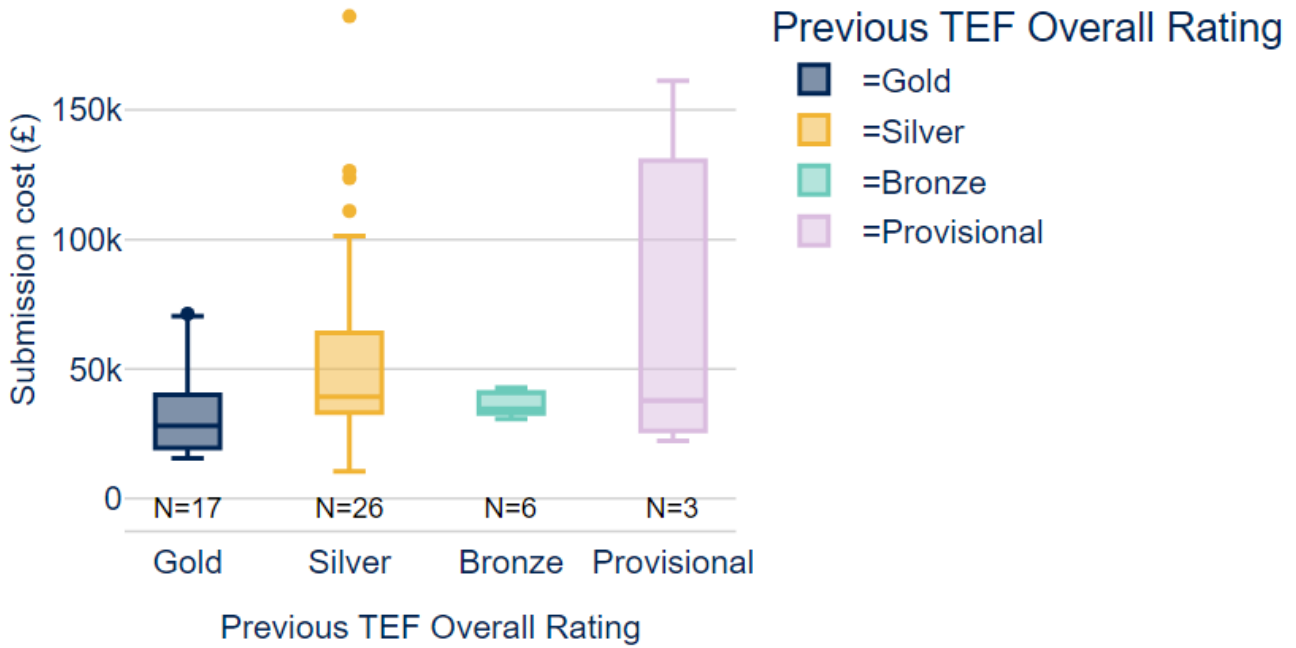
¹⁶ Prior to participating in the TEF 2023, a provider may have held a TEF rating from the previous TEF scheme, awarded in either 2017, 2018 or 2019. Some other providers held a 'provisional' award from the previous TEF scheme.

Figure 1: Box plot of submission costs by 2023 TEF overall rating



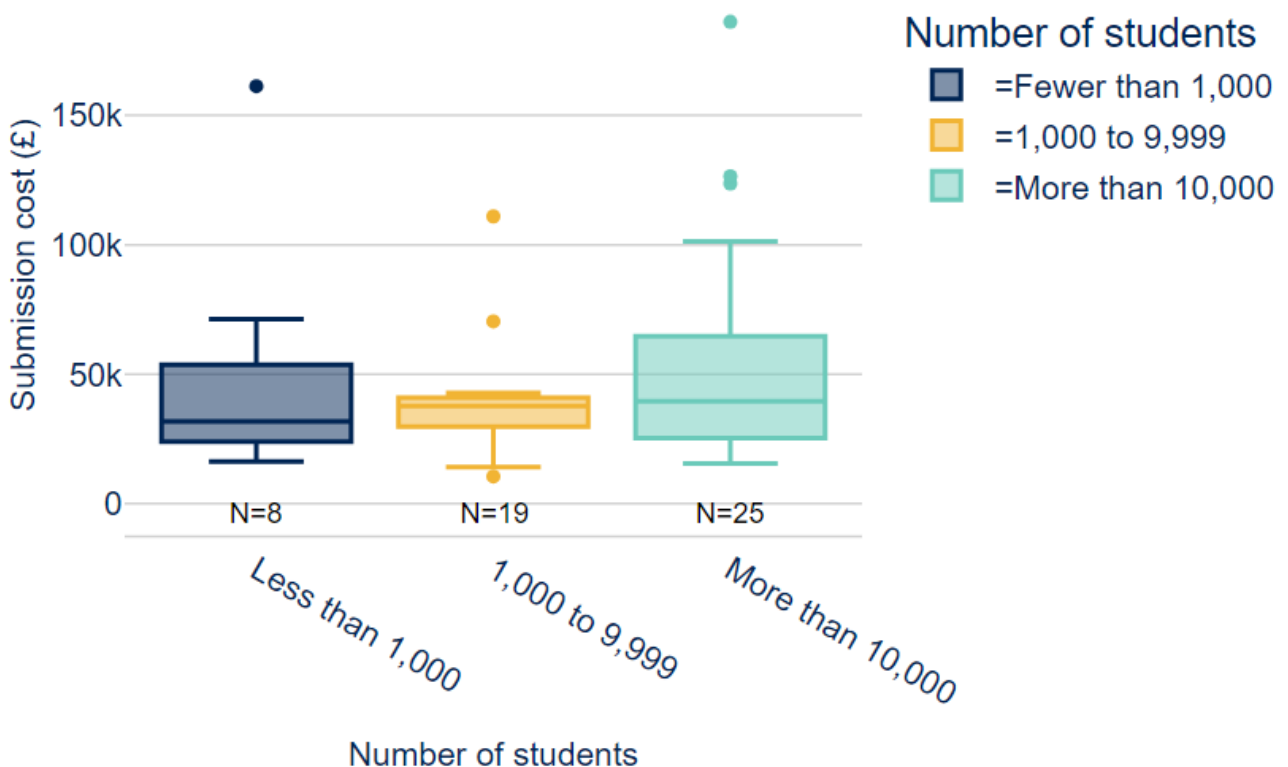
49. In contrast, Figure 2 provides tentative evidence that institutions with a previous TEF rating of Gold tended on average to spend less on their 2023 TEF submission than those with a previous TEF rating of Silver. Half of previously Gold-rated institutions spent between £19,500 and £40,000, with a median of £28,000, whereas half of previously Silver-rated institutions spent between £33,200 and £63,900, with a median of £39,300. This is tentative evidence of previously Silver-rated institutions investing heavily in their 2023 TEF submission in an attempt to achieve a Gold rating this time around.

Figure 2: Box plot of TEF submission costs by previous TEF rating



50. As shown in Figure 3, providers with more than 10,000 students tended to spend more on their TEF submission than smaller providers. However, the smallest providers (fewer than 1,000 students) were underrepresented in our survey sample, with only eight responses. This, combined with the presence of large outliers in these responses, makes concluding anything about the smallest providers unreliable. Nonetheless, the median values of expenditure on TEF do increase across all three size bands as provider size increases. This suggests that there may be a small relationship between provider size and TEF cost, but a larger sample size would be necessary to confirm this in the smaller providers.

Figure 3: Box plot of TEF submission costs by banded provider size



OfS costs

51. This section presents the estimated cost to the OfS of delivering the TEF 2023 assessments, along with the estimated cost of prior development work.
52. The figures used in this section were obtained from OfS financial records and are based on actual costs incurred in each financial year. The costs have been grouped as either TEF 'delivery' or 'development', based broadly on the overall nature of the TEF-related activity that took place across three financial years: 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24.
53. To date, the OfS has received direct funding for TEF activity from the DfE.

Delivering the TEF 2023 assessments

54. The figures in Table 12 show the estimated cost to the OfS of delivering the TEF 2023 assessments over an 18-month period from October 2022 (when the submission window opened).

Table 12: Estimated cost to the OfS of delivering the TEF 2023 assessments over two financial years

	2022-23	2023-24	Total
TEF 2023 delivery costs	£1,203,935	£3,136,198	£4,340,133

55. The nature of the TEF 2023 activity that took place across these 18 months can be summarised as follows:
- The second half of **2022-23** was focused predominantly on TEF 2023 delivery, with the launch of the exercise in October 2022, the training of the TEF panel and the start of assessments by panel members.
 - In **2023-24** the assessments by the TEF panel continued, through to the publication of most outcomes in September 2023. Work to finalise and publish the remaining outcomes continued until February 2024.
56. The figures include OfS staff-related costs, panel and assessment costs, and other delivery costs.

Developing the TEF 2023

57. Along with the cost of delivering the TEF 2023 assessments, there were also costs associated with developing the TEF 2023 exercise.
58. While we have been able to calculate an estimated cost to the OfS of developing TEF 2023, we cannot similarly estimate the cost to the sector of engaging in TEF-related activity before the submission period (such as responding to the OfS consultation, or any early preparation in advance of the guidance being published) as we do not have the data.

59. The figures in Table 13 show the estimated cost to the OfS of developing the TEF 2023 exercise. Though some ongoing development work continued into 2023-24, the costs were incurred primarily in the 18 months prior to October 2022.

Table 13: Estimated cost to the OfS of developing the TEF 2023 over three financial years

	2021-2022	2022-23	2023-24	Total
TEF 2023 development costs	£1,896,304	£1,737,775	£167,312	£3,801,391

60. The nature of the TEF activity that took place across these 18 months can be summarised as follows:

- a. From 2021-22, key policy development work in relation to the TEF 2023 took place. Work was also underway to develop the TEF indicators and their presentation. In July 2021, the OfS published an update that set out our thinking on the future approach to the TEF, which was followed by a consultation on a full set of proposals in January to March 2022.
- b. Development continued for roughly the first half of 2022-23, with activity including consultation analysis, final policy decisions, the preparation and publication of TEF data dashboards and guidance on submissions and assessment, and panel recruitment.

61. The figures include OfS staff-related costs, and other professional services costs including systems development and support.

Annex A: Survey cost questions

The following is an extract from the survey administered by IFF Research to providers that took part in the TEF 2023.

Introduction

We would like to finish by asking a few questions about the costs that were associated with participating in the TEF for [provider name]. We are interested in your best estimates, we are not necessarily expecting you will be able to provide precise figures.

Question 1

Please estimate how much time, in working days, [provider name] spent preparing your TEF submission, between guidance publication in October 2022 and making your submission in January 2023.

This should only include time that you think is directly linked to doing the TEF submission, including familiarisation time staff spent on understanding guidance/processes and supporting the student representatives involved. Please exclude time related to representations here and any subsequent work or changes made at your provider.

For context, there were 75 working days between these dates.

Roles for higher education institutions

Type of role	Estimated number of working days	Don't know	Not involved in TEF submission
1. Head of Institution e.g. Vice-Chancellor/Principal/equivalent; or Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Pro Vice-Chancellor; CEO	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
2. Director of major function e.g. finance, corporate services, HR; or Director of major academic area	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
3. Head of an academic area or centre, e.g. head of school/division/department; function head; or Professor	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
4. Non-academic staff: section manager or team leader (professional, technical, administrative); or academic staff: senior lecturer, reader or principal research fellow	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
5. Senior professional staff; lecturer; or researcher	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
6. Administrative staff, assistant professional staff	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2

[Note: This table was only shared with institutions.]

Roles for further education colleges

Type of role	Estimated number of working days	Don't know	Not involved in TEF submission
1. Senior leaders e.g. Principal; Vice-Principal; CEO; Managing Director	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
2. Managers e.g. faculty leads, head of department, head of major function e.g. finance, corporate services, HR	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
3. Teaching staff e.g. lecturers, practitioners, instructors	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
4. Support staff, e.g. teaching assistants, technicians, assessors	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
5. Administration staff, including data analysts, business managers, communication support, employer engagement, legal	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2

[Note: This table was only shared with colleges.]

Question 2

Please estimate any other total costs in £ directly linked to your submission (e.g. consultancy or legal costs)

Write in £	
Don't know	1
No other costs incurred	2

Question 3

Did [provider name] make any representations about your rating?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3

Question 4 [ask if Question 3 = Yes]

Please estimate how much time, in working days, [provider name] spent on TEF representations.

This should only include time that you think is directly linked to making the TEF representation.

Roles for higher education institutions

Type of role	Estimated number of working days	Don't know	Not involved in TEF representation
1. Head of Institution e.g. Vice-Chancellor/Principal/equivalent; or Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Pro Vice-Chancellor; CEO	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
2. Director of major function e.g. finance, corporate services, HR; or Director of major academic area	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
3. Head of an academic area or centre, e.g. head of school/division/department; function head; or Professor	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
4. Non-academic staff: section manager or team leader (professional, technical, administrative); or academic staff: senior lecturer, reader or principal research fellow	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
5. Senior professional staff; lecturer; or researcher	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
6. Administrative staff, assistant professional staff	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2

[Note: This table was only shared with institutions.]

Roles for further education colleges

Type of role	Estimated number of working days	Don't know	Not involved in TEF representation
1. Senior leaders (e.g. Principal; Vice-Principal; CEO; Managing Director)	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
2. Managers (e.g. faculty leads, head of department, head of major function e.g. finance, corporate services, HR)	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
3. Teaching staff (e.g. lecturers, practitioners, instructors)	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
4. Support staff (e.g. teaching assistants, technicians, assessors)	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2
5. Administration staff (e.g. data analysts, business managers, communication support, employer engagement, legal)	WRITE IN (0-75)	1	2

[Note: This table was only shared with colleges.]

Question 5 [ask if Question 3 = Yes]

Please estimate any other total costs in £ directly linked to representation (e.g. consultancy or legal costs)

Write in £	
Don't know	1
No other costs incurred	2

Annex B: Sample coverage details

Introduction and summary

1. This annex provides further details on the representativeness of our sample by four provider characteristics and also covers the implications and limitations of the sample coverage to our approach and final estimates. This analysis focuses on respondents to the submission questions. Similar analysis for respondents that made a representation is not included because of the small numbers in each category.
2. A summary of the key points is as follows.

Higher education institutions

- Provider size: Overall, there were substantially more responses from larger institutions than smaller ones, compared with the proportions in all TEF institutions. Small numbers of respondents in most size bands means that detailed analysis by provider size is not possible.
- Provider type (OfS student typology):¹⁷ Medium and low or unknown tariff institutions are substantially overrepresented in the sample. Very small sample sizes in all other provider types preclude any analysis of them.
- TEF 2023 overall rating: Institutions with a Gold or Silver overall rating were overrepresented in the sample. There are relatively few Bronze-rated institutions across all TEF participants, and given the low survey participation rate overall, analysis of Bronze-rated institutions is very limited.
- Previous TEF rating: Similarly, institutions that held a Gold or Silver rating prior to the TEF 2023 were overrepresented, and relatively small numbers in all other categories across all TEF participants limit the analysis of the latter.

Further education colleges

- The low sample size of colleges precludes any analysis by respondent characteristic.

Provider size

3. As shown in Table B1, providers from the four largest size bands of institutions were slightly overrepresented, and the two smallest size bands were underrepresented (most notably providers with fewer than 500 students).
4. Similarly, as Table B2 shows, the largest colleges (1,000 to 4,999 students) were overrepresented and those in the smallest category are underrepresented (Table 18).

¹⁷ See OfS, [Provider typologies 2022: Methodology for grouping OfS-registered providers](#).

However, proportions of colleges with 500 to 999 students are approximately the same between the survey and total TEF participants.

- Nonetheless, given the small number of respondents in each size band for both institutions and colleges, it is unlikely we can confidently identify any effect of size on the cost of TEF submissions.

Table B12: Distribution of higher education institution respondents and TEF participants by size bands

Provider size	Number of survey respondents	Survey percentage	Total TEF participants	Participant percentage
More than 20,000	7	13.5%	20	11.7%
10,000 to 19,999	18	34.6%	51	29.8%
5,000 to 9,999	9	17.3%	24	14.0%
1,000 to 4,999	10	19.2%	30	17.5%
500 to 999	4	7.7%	19	11.1%
Less than 500	4	7.7%	27	15.8%
Total	52	100.0%	171	100.0%

Table B2: Distribution of further education college respondents and TEF participants by size bands

Provider size	Number of survey respondents	Survey percentage	Total TEF participants	Participant percentage
1,000 to 4,999	7	33.3%	13	23.6%
500 to 999	13	61.9%	34	61.8%
Less than 500	1	4.8%	8	14.5%
Total	21	100.0%	55	100.0%

Provider type

- As shown in Table B3, medium and low or unknown tariff institutions are overrepresented in the sample, with all other provider types underrepresented. The most underrepresented type is that of specialist creative institutions, which has almost half the representation in the survey, as it does among total TEF participants. Given the small number of higher education provider survey respondents in most categories, it is highly unlikely that we will be able to draw any conclusions for all provider types. However, some tentative insights may be able to be drawn by comparing medium and low or unknown tariff providers.

7. As shown in Table B4, large Level 4 and 5 colleges are slightly overrepresented in the survey. However, they make up such a large proportion of the colleges that participated in TEF in total that no reliable conclusions regarding provider type would have been possible, regardless of sample size.

Table B3: Distribution of higher education provider respondents and TEF participants by provider type

Provider type	Number of survey respondents	Survey percentage	Total TEF participants	Participant percentage
High tariff	5	9.6%	23	13.5%
Medium tariff	17	32.7%	36	21.1%
Low or unknown tariff	19	36.5%	54	31.6%
Large Level 4 and 5	1	1.9%	8	4.7%
Small Level 4 and 5	2	3.8%	4	2.3%
Specialist other	4	7.7%	19	11.1%
Specialist creative	4	7.7%	26	15.2%
Unknown	0	0.0%	1	0.6%
Total	52	100.0%	171	100.0%

Table B4: Distribution of further education college respondents and TEF participants by provider type

Provider type	Number of survey respondents	Survey percentage	Total TEF participants	Participant percentage
Medium tariff	0	0.0%	3	5.5%
Low or unknown tariff	3	14.3%	6	10.9%
Large Level 4 or 5	17	81.0%	41	74.5%
Small Level 4 or 5	0	0.0%	4	7.3%
Specialist: creative	1	4.8%	1	1.8%
Total	21	100.0%	55	100.0%

TEF 2023 rating

8. As shown in Table B5, institutions that achieved a Bronze overall TEF rating in 2023 were substantially underrepresented in the sample, with Gold and Silver-rated institutions both being overrepresented. As a result, we will not be able to draw any conclusions across all TEF ratings. Nonetheless, some insights may be drawn by comparing Gold and Silver-rated institutions.

9. In contrast, Silver rated colleges dominate the sample to such an extent that no comparisons on 2023 overall TEF rating will be possible for colleges (Table B6).

Table B5: Distribution of higher education institution respondents and TEF participants by 2023 overall TEF rating

2023 TEF overall rating	Number of survey respondents	Survey percentage	Total TEF participants	Participant percentage
Gold	15	28.8%	45	26.3%
Silver	32	61.5%	94	55.0%
Bronze	4	7.7%	30	17.5%
Requires improvement	1	1.9%	2	1.2%
Total	52	100.0%	171	100.0%

Table B6: Distribution of further education college respondents and TEF participants by 2023 overall TEF rating

2023 TEF overall rating	Number of survey respondents	Survey percentage	Total TEF participants	Participant percentage
Gold	2	9.5%	6	10.9%
Silver	16	76.2%	30	54.5%
Bronze	3	14.3%	18	32.7%
Requires improvement	0	0.0%	1	1.8%
Total	21	100.0%	55	100.0%

Previous TEF rating

10. As shown in Table B7, the proportions of institutions with a previous TEF rating of Bronze or Gold in the survey are reasonably similar to those of the overall TEF participants, though Silver is overrepresented. However, the numbers of previously Bronze or 'provisional' rated survey participants are too low to draw any meaningful conclusions. Nonetheless, there are sufficient numbers of previously Gold and Silver rated institutions to draw some tentative conclusions.

11. There are insufficient numbers of colleges in any group to draw any meaningful conclusions about any effect of previous TEF rating (Table B8).

Table B7: Distribution of higher education provider respondents and TEF participants by previous TEF rating

Previous TEF rating	Number of survey respondents	Survey percentage	Total TEF participants	Participant percentage
Gold	17	32.7%	57	33.3%
Silver	26	50.0%	71	41.5%
Bronze	6	11.5%	22	12.9%
Provisional	3	5.8%	16	9.4%
N/A – did not participate	0	0.0%	5	2.9%
Total	52	100.0%	171	100.0%

Table B8: Distribution of further education college respondents and TEF participants by previous TEF rating

Previous TEF rating	Number of survey respondents	Survey percentage	Total TEF participants	Participant percentage
Gold	6	28.6%	12	21.8%
Silver	8	38.1%	22	40.0%
Bronze	3	14.3%	10	18.2%
Provisional	3	14.3%	6	10.9%
N/A – did not participate	1	4.8%	5	9.1%
Total	21	100.0%	55	100.0%

Annex C: Response rates

1. This annex provides the response rates for all cost-related questions in the survey, split between institutions and colleges. A total of 97 providers included responses to the section on costs in the survey (72 institutions and 25 colleges). The response rate is the percentage of these respondents that indicated zero or more days spent on TEF by the staff role, or zero or more pounds for additional costs. A non-response means that the provider selected 'Don't know' for the question. A provider's response was included in the cost estimates if it responded to the majority of staff time questions.¹⁸ The response rates for the submission cost questions can be found in Tables C1 and C2.

Table C1: higher education institution response rates to submission cost questions

Survey question – number of days spent on higher education institution TEF submission by:	Response rate %	Number of valid responses
Senior leaders (vice-chancellor, deputy vice-chancellor, pro-vice-chancellor, chief executive officer etc.)	73.6%	53
Director of major function (finance, corporate services, human resources) or director of major academic area	73.6%	53
Head of an academic area or centre or professor	72.2%	52
Non-academic staff or academic staff (senior lecturer, reader or principal research fellow)	69.4%	50
Senior professional staff, lecturer or researcher	66.7%	48
Administrative staff, assistant professional staff	66.7%	48
Additional costs linked to higher education institution submission (£)	51.4%	37

Table C2: further education college response rates to submission cost questions

Survey question – number of days spent on further education college TEF submission by:	Response rate %	Number of valid responses
Senior leaders e.g. principal, vice-principal, chief executive officer, managing director	84.0%	21
Managers (faculty leads, head of department, head of major function)	84.0%	21
Teaching staff e.g. lecturers, practitioners, instructors	80.0%	20
Support staff, e.g. teaching assistants, technicians, assessors	84.0%	21
Administration staff (data analysts, business managers, legal, etc.)	84.0%	21
Additional costs linked to further education college submission (£)	36.0%	9

¹⁸ Providers with incomplete responses had missing data replaced with the survey response mean for that staff category. Two institutions that only answered one question were excluded entirely.

2. The total number of respondents that indicated they had made a representation was 14 institutions and nine colleges. However, only 11 institutions and eight colleges had usable responses on the costs of the representation process. The response rates to the representation cost questions can be found in tables C3 and C4.

Table C3: higher education institution response rates to representation cost questions

Survey question – number of days spent on higher institution provider TEF representation by:	Response rate %	Number of valid responses
Senior leaders (vice-chancellor, deputy vice-chancellor, pro-vice-chancellor, chief executive officer etc.)	85.7%	12
Director of major function (finance, corporate services, human resources) or director of major academic area	85.7%	12
Head of an academic area or centre or professor	78.6%	11
Non-academic staff or academic staff (senior lecturer, reader or principal research fellow)	78.6%	11
Senior professional staff, lecturer or researcher	78.6%	11
Administrative staff, assistant professional staff	85.7%	12
Additional costs linked to higher education institution representation (£)	64.3%	9

Table C4: further education college response rates to representation cost questions

Survey question – number of days spent on further education college TEF representation by:	Response rate %	Number of valid responses
Senior leaders (e.g. principal, vice-principal, chief executive officer, managing director)	88.9%	8
Managers (e.g. faculty leads, head of department, head of major function)	88.9%	8
Teaching staff (e.g. lecturers, practitioners, instructors)	88.9%	8
Support staff (e.g. teaching assistants, technicians, assessors)	88.9%	8
Administration staff (e.g. data analysts, business managers, legal)	88.9%	8
Additional costs linked to further education college representation (£)	44.4%	4

Annex D: Staff role groupings and salary data

Tables D1 and D2 show the average gross salaries paid to employees, broken down by staff role groups, in institutions and colleges.

Table D1: Higher education institution role groupings

Higher Education Statistics Agency role name	Median salary (full-time equivalent) (£)	Survey role group name	Group average salary (£)	Group daily salary (£)
Head of Institution – vice-chancellor / principal / equivalent	228,000	Head of institution e.g. vice-chancellor / principal / equivalent; or deputy vice-chancellor; pro-vice-chancellor; chief executive officer	184,958.50	711.38
Deputy vice-chancellor / pro-vice-chancellor / chief operating officer / registrar / secretary	141,917			
Director of major function / group of functions, e.g. finance, corporate services, human resources	102,500	Director of major function e.g. finance, corporate services, human resources; or director of major academic area	102,098.50	392.69
Head / director of major academic area	101,697			
Head of a distinct area of academic responsibility centre size 1, e.g. head of school / division / department	86,909	Head of an academic area or centre, e.g. head of school / division / department; function head; or professor	79,760.43	306.77
Professor	84,119			
Senior function head	81,733			
Head of a distinct area of academic responsibility centre size 2, e.g. head of school / division / department	81,078			
Head of a distinct area of academic responsibility centre size 3, e.g. head of school / division / department	77,798			
Head of a subset of an academic area/director of a small centre	73,609			

Higher Education Statistics Agency role name	Median salary (full-time equivalent) (£)	Survey role group name	Group average salary (£)	Group daily salary (£)
Function head	73,077			
Non-academic staff section manager Senior lecturer (pre-1992 ¹⁹) Principal lecturer (post-1992 ²⁰) Reader Principal research fellow	67,259	Non-academic staff: section manager or team leader (professional, technical, administrative); or academic staff: senior lecturer, reader or principal research fellow	60,050.00	230.96
Section / team leader (professional, technical, administrative) Lecturer B (pre-1992) Senior lecturer (post-1992) Senior research fellow	52,841			
Senior professional / technical / staff Lecturer A (pre-1992) Lecturer (post-1992) Research fellow Researcher / senior research assistant Teaching fellow	41,814	Senior professional staff; lecturer; or researcher	38,658.00	148.68
Professional / technical / senior administrative staff Research assistant Teaching assistant	35,502			

¹⁹ 'Pre-1992' is defined as institutions holding university status pre-1992.

²⁰ 'Post-1992' is defined as institutions (many of which were previously polytechnic colleges) that were granted university status following the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

Higher Education Statistics Agency role name	Median salary (full-time equivalent) (£)	Survey role group name	Group average salary (£)	Group daily salary (£)
Assistant professional staff Administrative staff	29,240	Administrative staff, assistant professional staff	26,977.50	103.73
Junior administrative staff clerical staff technician / craftsman operative	24,715			
Routine task provider	21,543			
Simple task provider	21,400			

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency 2022-23 staff annual salary record.

Note: Median salaries are the full-time equivalent salary for all staff at each **contract level**, including both academic and non-academic staff.²¹

²¹ See Higher Education Statistics Agency, [Staff record 2022-23: Combined levels](#).

Table D2: Further education college role groupings

Survey role group name	Median salary (£)	Daily salary (£)
Senior leaders (e.g. principal; vice-principal; chief executive officer; managing director)	66,569.00	256.03
Managers (e.g. faculty leads, head of department, head of major function e.g. finance, corporate services, human resources)	42,398.00	163.07
Teaching staff (e.g. lecturers, practitioners, instructors)	34,708.00	133.49
Support staff (e.g. teaching assistants, technicians, assessors)	23,626.72	90.87
Administration staff (e.g. data analysts, business managers, communication support, employer engagement, legal)	24,875.00	95.67

Source: DfE 2022/23 dataset for further education workforce²²

²² DfE 2022-23 dataset for further education workforce, available at Gov.UK, [Further education workforce: Academic year 2022-23 – Explore education statistics \(Appendix A\)](#).



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