UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

Teaching Excellence and Subject Level TEF

Professor Janice Kay CBE
Provost, University of Exeter,
@JaniceKay10

The Context of TEF

We operate in a regulatory environment

- A Mechanism of Accountability
- A Way of Identifying and Measuring (Differential) Quality
- An Enhancement Mechanism: driving excellence and innovation in learning?
- Information for

STUDENTS AS CHANGE AGENTS

Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education Survey

the National Student Survey
www.thestudentsurvey.com

A phased approach to TEF development

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Assessment level	Provider level 'meets expectations' awards	Provider level trial	Provider level + Subject level pilots	Provider level + Subject level pilots	Subject level (ratings at provider and subject level)
Continuous improvement		Lessons learned exercise		Independent review	Informed by independent review

Institutional TEF vs Subject Level

- Underlying design is the same for both exercises
- Same core metrics and benchmarking/flagging system – although at SL benchmark is within subjects
- Assessors and panels involved in both exercises
- Supplementary metric in Subject Level pilot - trialling measure of ‘teaching intensity’ (input rather than output)
- Split metrics are consistent apart from ethnicity is only reported at SL at the higher of two levels used at Provider level.
- LEO metrics are used in both but additionally suppressed at SL to ensure individual students can not be identified.

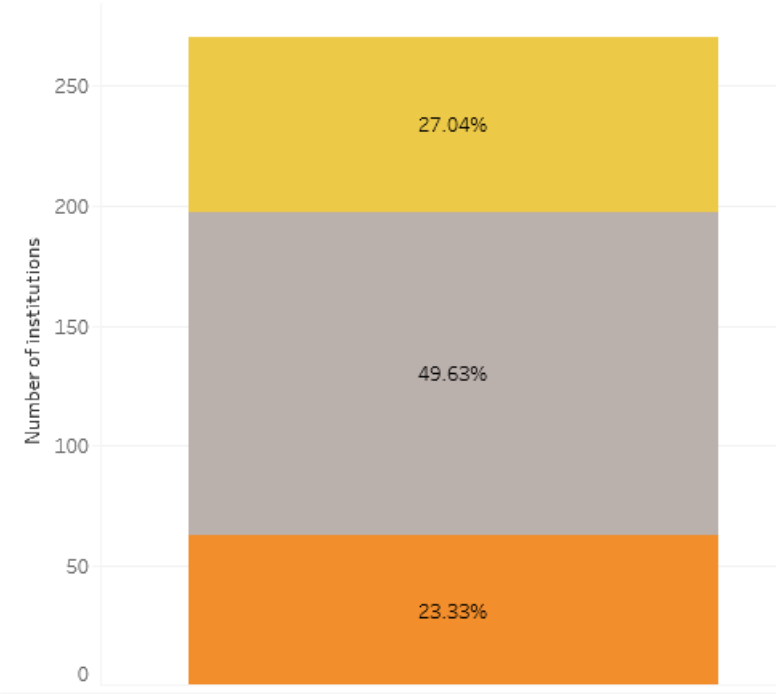
TEF after Year 3

- 86 Institutions received an award (26 new)

- 269 Institutions are current TEF award holders, 27 Provisional
  - 73 (27%) Gold
  - 134 (50%) Silver
  - 62 (23%) Bronze
  - 27 Provisional

- **43 of 60 resubmissions received a higher award:**
- **17 Universities resubmitted, 11 higher**

TEF 2 & 3



Institutional TEF: Observations 1

- Criticism that TEF is too metrics-driven, wrong metrics, metrics with changed weightings
- Scope for metrics and their usage to evolve
- But, it has caused institutions to focus on data about their students and understand the data better
- In particular, metrics split by 'disadvantage' have caused surprises to some institutions, and galvanised action

Institutional TEF: Observations 2

- TEF is not only a metrics-driven exercise
- It is a judgment based on peer review: a judicious mix of evidence from metrics and written submission
- Student Engagement, Valuing Teaching, Rigour and Stretch, Scholarship, Research & Professional Practice, Employability <u>are not directly measured and have to come from what Institutions say about themselves</u>
- Importance of student engagement: in Submissions and in Process

Institutional TEF: Observations 3

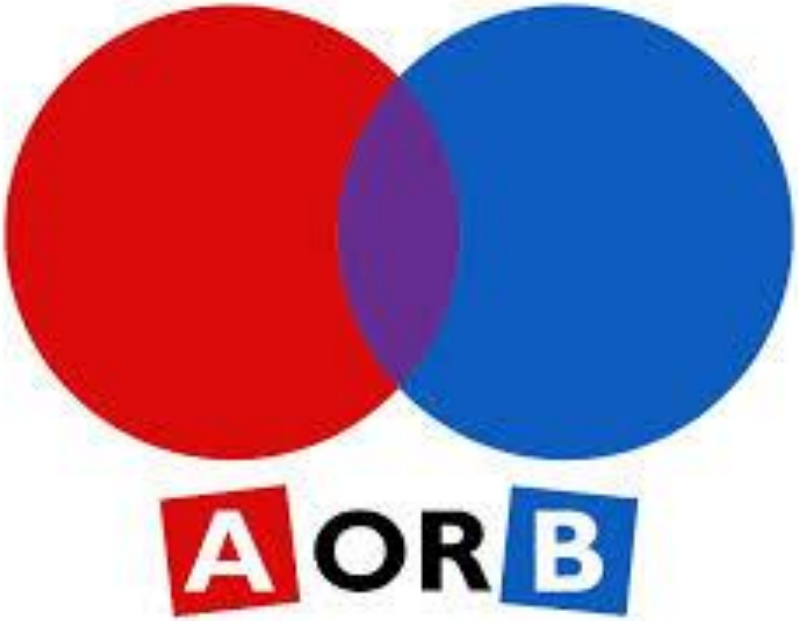
- TEF might induce less risk taking, more playing it safe – to the ultimate detriment of students: Some evidence to the contrary
- TEF might introduce more gaming: Is uplift in TEF3 due to playing the game better or evidence of genuine improvement?
- TEF might have unintended consequences (programme closures, for example): But equally so could any ‘measurement’ of data

Subject Level TEF Pilot

Model A
'By exception' model
19 providers

Model B
'Bottom up' approach
19 providers

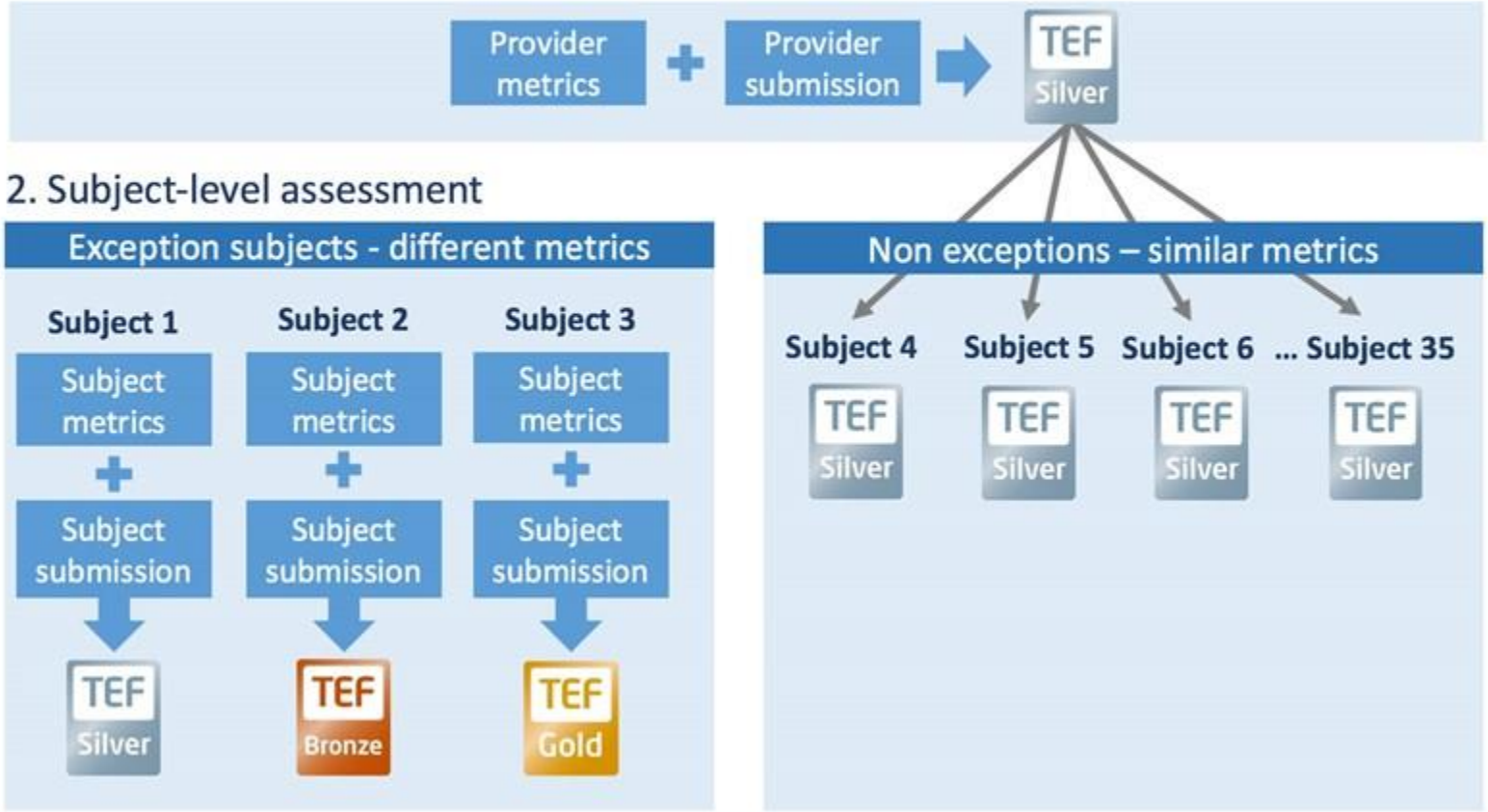
Both
12 providers



Individual outcomes will not be published

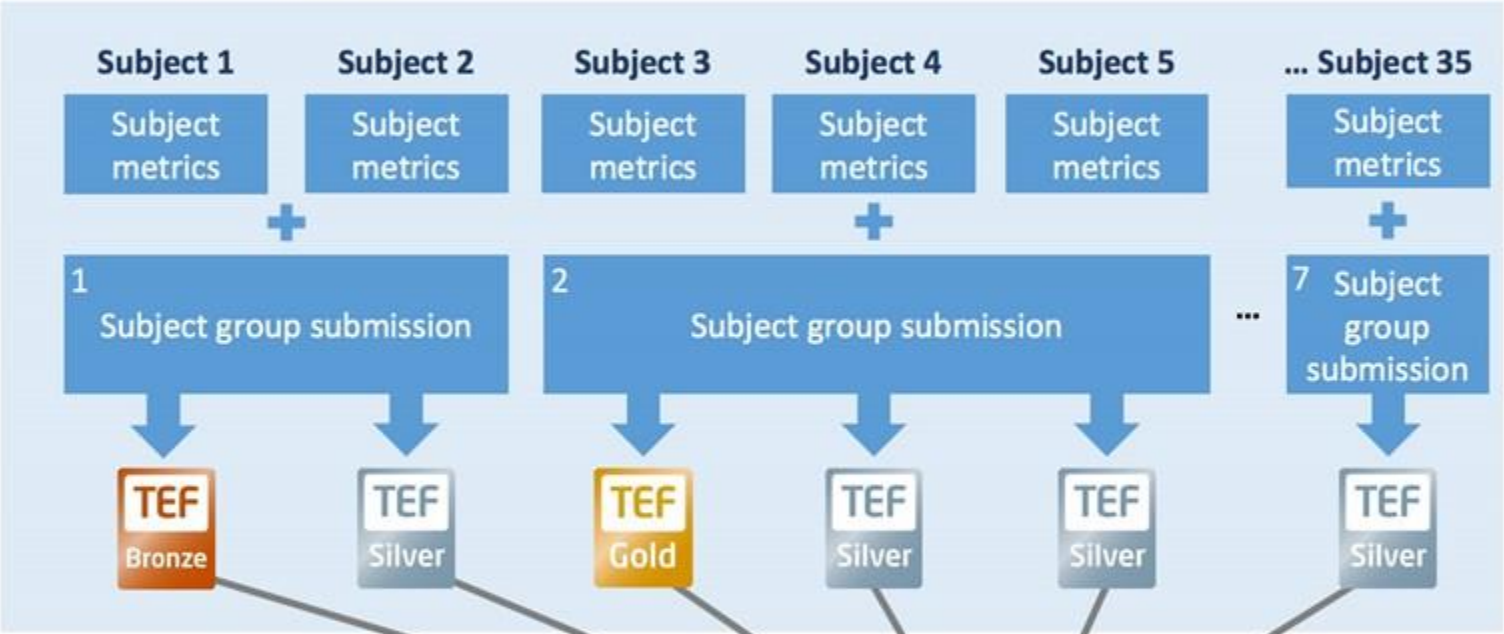
Model A assessment

1. Provider-level assessment



Model B assessment: bottom up

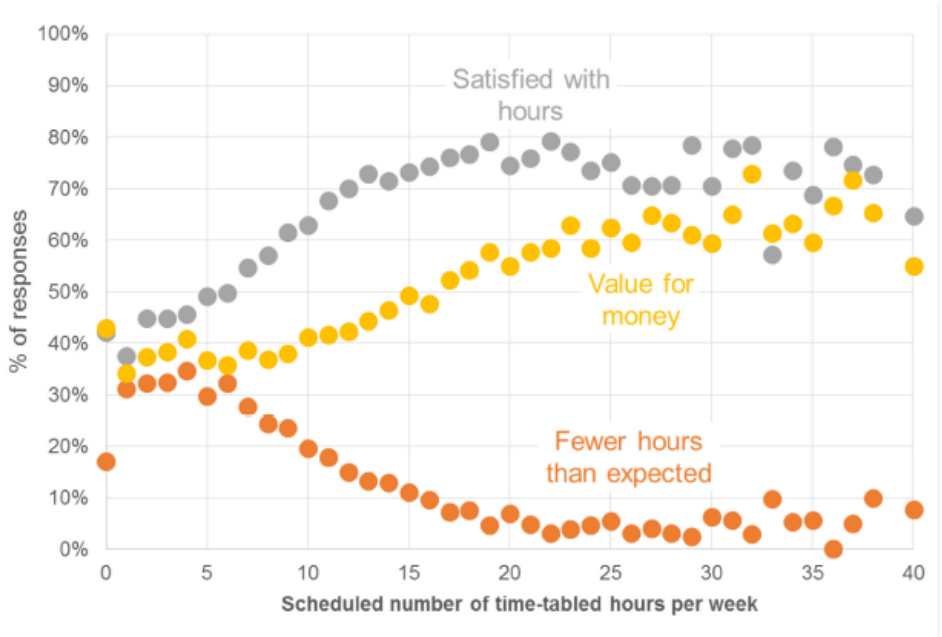
1. Subject-level assessment



2. Provider-level assessment

Testing Teaching Intensity Pilot

- ‘contact hours matter to students perceptions of their studies’ Pilot Spec
- Two methods piloted: provider declaration (hours & size), student survey
- Consultation invites views on best methods



Source: HEPI-HEA Student Academic Experience Survey 2012-16. There are at least 20 responses in each group, and more than 100 for nearly all groups.

Subject Level Pilot: Observations 1

- Model A: ‘Inheriting’ or indeed not inheriting the rating of your institution may be problematic for particular subjects
- Model A: If a subject is not an ‘exception’, it will not have a written submission – how would this help student choice?

Subject Level Pilot: Observations 2

- Model B: Subjects are grouped into 7 Subject areas and have a collective written submission – is there enough information about a subject to avoid ‘metrics capture’
- Model B: Is more refinement of subject classification (CAH2) is probably needed
- Model B Is the way of calculating Institutional rating too complex?

Subject Level Pilot: Observations 3

- Is Teaching Intensity useful information?
- Can we deal effectively with Interdisciplinary Programmes?
- We need to recognise that there are a number of causes of ‘non-reportable’ metrics and understand how to deal with them effectively
- We need to balance ‘burden’ against the ability to make more robust judgments about subjects
- Balancing scaling up, burden and costs

Sector Views on Subject Level TEF

“ 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.”

Sam Gyimah, March 2018

Subject-level TEF’s good intentions could have unintended consequences

Neil Power, WonkHE, April 2018

University degree courses to be ranked in 'MoneySuperMarket' style system, minister says

The Independent, March 2018

New university rankings ‘put nursing and social work degrees at risk’

Guardian, March 2018

Student understanding of the TEF

- 2018 UCAS cycle the first complete year students could use TEF to inform their decisions. Of 85,000 students surveyed:
- UK applicants are twice as likely to know what TEF is (19%) compared with EU/outside of the EU (9% and 10% respectively)
- 58% students who knew about TEF said the awards were important or extremely important in deciding where to apply
- Those who know about TEF are more likely to apply to a TEF Gold institution
- Awareness is relatively low but it is emerging as a factor in student decision making

Excellence in the Future?

- Can TEF be used like REF to drive forward UK standing in global HE market for education?
- How do we raise awareness of TEF to ensure it better informs student choice?
- Further evolution and refinement of TEF process and metrics

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

Teaching Excellence and Subject Level TEF

Professor Janice Kay CBE
Provost, University of Exeter,
@JaniceKay10