BENCHMARKING POLICY

Approving Authority	Academic Board
Purpose	This policy outlines the principles and approach to the benchmarking of the Institute's practices, processes and performance.
Responsible Officer	Academic Dean
Next Scheduled Review	September 2026
Document Location	R:\Managers\OIHE\Policies
Associated Documents	Assessment Moderation Policy and Procedure Course and Unit Development, Approval and Review Policy and Procedure Policy Development and Review Policy Procedure Development and Review Policy Quality Management Framework Benchmarking Procedure

1. PRINCIPLES

Ozford Institute of Higher Education (hereafter referred to as the "Institute") adopts a policy of self-evaluation, and it benchmarks its performance targets, staffing, learning and teaching activities, outcome indicators, course structures, processes and practices with data from comparable Higher Education providers by way of benchmarking activities.

Benchmarking enables the Institute to:
- discover new ideas for achieving the Strategic Plan;
- provide an evidence-based framework for change and improvement;
- confirm the quality and standing of the Institute's courses and operations;
- improve student outcomes and Institute processes and practices;
- inform planning and goal setting;
- improve decision-making through referencing comparative data. .

The Institute regards benchmarking as the overarching term to describe all external referencing activities designed to identify comparative position (strengths and weaknesses), as a basis for developing improvements in academic and other quality or performance.

The quality framework of the Institute is an enabler to this policy. Benchmarking assists the Institute to measure its effectiveness in achieving its performance objectives and to place these achievements in a broader context.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Institute staff, consultants, peer reviewers and stakeholders involved in benchmarking of the Institute's practices, processes and performance.

3.   DEFINITIONS

Benchmark
A Benchmark is defined as a point of reference against which something may be measured (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). Benchmarking can be defined as a quality process used to evaluate performance by comparing institutional practices to sector good practice (TEQSA, 2018).

Benchmarking
Benchmarking is a form of external referencing and typically consists of focused improvement through relationships with a benchmarking partner or partners and also includes comparing course design against publicly available information and market intelligence.

External referencing
In the context of *Threshold Standards*, external referencing means a process through which a higher education provider compares an aspect of its operations with an external comparator(s) e.g. comparing the design of a course of study and/or student achievement of learning outcomes with that of a course from another provider. A number of approaches and techniques can be used for external referencing, such as benchmarking, peer review, moderation or information from publicly available sources.

Partnering
Partnering occurs when the Institute enters into a formal agreement with one or more other comparable Higher Education Providers to compare data for a defined range of institutional outcomes.

Peer review
Peer review is an impartial and independent assessment by an external person with expertise in the same or a related field. It is usually an activity conducted by intendent experts or external experts, usually who are involved in delivery of or have delivered similar accredited courses.

Stakeholder reviews
A stakeholder review is an independent review by an industry, professional organisation or government stakeholder with specific knowledge and expertise in the area subject to benchmarking.

Student performance data
Student performance data measures the success of student cohorts. Data may include student progression, attrition, completion times and rates and different locations of delivery. Some examples include:
- grades distribution per program of study over a calendar year;
- attrition rates per program of study;
- completion rates per program.

4.   POLICY

4.1   The Institute's planning, review and improvement activities include regular benchmarking to:
- inform planning and goal setting
- improve decision-making
- inform and improve Institute policies procedures and guidelines, teaching and learning

- provide an evidence base for changes and improvement
- provide an external focus to internal activities.

4.2 The Institute will confirm the positioning of its offerings through undertaking comparisons against both peers and other providers that have achieved good practice.

4.3 The Institute will regularly benchmark student performance data against comparable courses of study. This benchmarking is a means of continuous improvement that determines the Institute's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities and ensures that the Institute meets the Threshold Standards.

4.4 The Institute's benchmarking will draw on relevant, reliable and recent data and information.

4.5 The Institute's benchmarking approach may include:
- desktop review of publicly available data and information of comparative providers including:
  - comparison of external policies and practices to inform development of policies and processes;
  - comparison with national survey outcomes;
  - review against externally recognised benchmarks such as discipline standards;
  - comparison against accepted professional and industry standards, which may or may not result in certification or accreditation.
  - Industry, government or commission reports i.e., Royal Commissions reports, reports on trends from industry.
  - TEQSA Guidelines and communications.
- partnering to undertake benchmarking with higher education providers of similar standing that is collaborative, open, and constructive or participating in suitable benchmarking groups.
- peer review, engaging with stakeholders about the benchmarking topic including:
  - independent experts and external experts with higher education knowledge and expertise
  - staff involvement in professional associations and external review activities that facilitate identification and sharing of practices

4.6 The areas in which the Institute can conduct benchmarking of both quantitative (e.g. attrition rates) as well as qualitative (e.g. course entry requirements) include:
- Admissions
  - course entry requirements
- Program delivery:
  - new course design
  - course reviews
  - learning and assessment;
  - academic and student support services;
- Student performance:
  - student performance data
  - academic integrity
  - student satisfaction

4.7 The Institute is committed to reviewing, developing, and coordinating quality standards with higher education providers of similar standing. The Institute's benchmarking partners should normally:
- be similar in size, vision, corporate strategy, and objectives;

- be comparable in terms of student demographics;
- offer similar existing and projected programs;
- be willing to share ideas and meet on a regular basis;
- ensure objective records of key performance indicators are maintained.

4.8 The Institute will analyse benchmarking information and:
- identify areas of good practice and those that require attention;
- consider reasons for any variation or commonality and underlying reasons;
- gain assurance of the quality of its courses and operations;
- identify enhancements or areas for improvement;
- inform strategy, planning and goal setting; and
- enhance organisational learning and decision making.

4.9 The Institute will report to the Education Committee, the Academic Board and Governing Board on:
- benchmarking activities and information
- actions and improvement strategies and
- progress reports on the action taken

Benchmarking records

4.10 Benchmarking records will be maintained as set out in the Records Management Policy and Procedure.

Reporting and monitoring

4.11 The Education Committee and the Academic Board will receive reports from the Academic Dean setting out outcomes and action taken in respect to the benchmarking processes each year.

4.12 The Education Committee and the Academic Board will also receive reports as set out in the *Course and Unit Development, Approval and Review Policy and Procedure* and the *Assessment Moderation Policy and Procedure*

5.   QUALITY ASSURANCE

To ensure that this policy is fit for purpose and meet the requirements of the HESF Threshold Standards, the policy will be:

5.1 internally endorsed by the Executive Management Team on development or review, prior to approval by Governing Board, or the Academic Board or other delegated authority;

5.2 externally reviewed as part of any independent review of the HESF Threshold Standards approved by the Governing Board;

5.3 internally reviewed by the Responsible Officer every three years from the date of approval (if not earlier); and

5.4 referenced to the applicable HESF threshold standard and/or other legislation/regulation.

6. FEEDBACK

Feedback or comments on this policy is welcomed by the listed responsible officer of the Institute.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This policy was developed with reference to the following:

- Charles Darwin University, Benchmarking and External Referencing Policy and Procedure, 2022 (Benchmarking and External Referencing Policy and Procedure / Governance Document Library (cdu.edu.au))
- Kaplan Australia, Benchmarking Policy, 2021 (https://www.kaplanprofessional.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Kaplan_Benchmarking_Policy_Oct_2021_Final.pdf)
- RMIT University, Program and Course External Referencing and Benchmarking Procedure, Not dated (https://policies.rmit.edu.au/download.php?id=252&version=1)
- S P J Global, Benchmarking Policy and Procedures, 2023 (Benchmarking-Policy-and-Procedures-29-04-20.pdf (spjain.edu.au))
- The University of Notre Dame, Guideline: Benchmarking, 2019 (GUIDELINE-Benchmarking.pdf (notredame.edu.au))
- University of Adelaide , Benchmarking webpage, 2023 (https://www.adelaide.edu.au/learning/quality-assurance/benchmarking#guidelines)
- University of the Sunshine Coast, External Referencing: Program Benchmarking – Procedures, 2021 (External Referencing: Program Benchmarking - Procedures | UniSC | University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia (usc.edu.au))
- Victoria University, Courses Lifecycle - External Referencing Procedure, 2021 (Courses Lifecycle - External Referencing Procedure / Document / Victoria University Policy Library (vu.edu.au))
- TEQSA, Guidance note: External referencing (including benchmarking), 2.5, 2019 (Guidance note: External referencing (including benchmarking) | Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (teqsa.gov.au))

8. VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date approved	Description	Approved by
1.0	14 August 2018	Initial version	AB
2.0	November 2021	Internal review	AB
3.0	September 2023	Internal review	AB
Related legislation/ regulation/standard	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Act 2011 (Cth) Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Cth) 5.3 (Monitoring, Review and Improvement)		

Notes:
TEQSA = Tertiary Education Quality & Standards Agency
AB = Academic Board