

HEPP40 Benchmarking Policy and Procedure

PURPOSE

This policy and procedure sets out the approach to benchmarking and the responsibilities of benchmarking at Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education).

SCOPE

This policy and procedure applies to all staff at Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education) including members of the Corporate and Academic Boards.

DEFINITIONS

SCEI-HE	Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education)
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework

POLICY

SCEI-HE benchmarking practices traverse the diversity of the Australian higher education sector. We seek benchmarking partners from providers with different missions, educational and student profiles, and scales of operation. We compare practices, processes and performance outcomes for continuous improvement in academic quality and overall best practice.

SCEI-HE's benchmarking is undertaken subject to the following principles:

- be in support of the mission, values and strategic plan;
- be committed to the learning and sharing of 'best practice';
- be undertaken only where the data is relevant and comparable and the results of which are anticipated to assist in Improving practice; and
- be undertaken confidentially across all stakeholders and parties at all times.

Benchmarking Objectives

1. To facilitate continuous improvement across operational, financial and academic realms.
2. To facilitate improvements in pedagogical and research quality.
3. To support state and federal government aspirations for Australia to become a knowledge-based economy.
4. Course design, student performance, student standards.
5. Outcomes benchmarking
6. To identify strengths and weaknesses that will provide learning's on how to improve all areas of our practice considering:
 - a) sound educational practice; and
 - b) relevant discipline expertise; and
 - c) current developments in relevant discipline; and
 - d) the requirements of the Threshold Standards; and
 - e) input from external stakeholders.

7. To provide public assurance and confidence that learning outcomes across all grades are of the highest standard and in line with leading higher education institutions globally.
8. Support marketing activities.

Benchmarking partners

1. Benchmarking partners shall be diverse higher education providers including those who are exponents of relevant best practice and may include professional bodies.
2. The marking partners shall be selected on the basis of their commitment to quality improvement and willingness to share information on mutually confidential basis and their record of good performance in the area(s) to be benchmarked.
3. The arrangements with benchmarking partners will be reflected in formal agreements which set out the purpose, the area(s) of benchmarking, the benchmarking processes employed, the possible outcomes, confidentiality issues and the permitted use of benchmarking information by the parties.

Performance Indicators and Measures

1. Teaching and Learning

This benchmark applies to the planning, execution, measurement and improvement of teaching and learning by Providers to enable them to discharge their constitutional objective of delivering a higher education course that meets the requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and TEQSA Threshold Standards (the Threshold Standards). The benchmark includes the governance and delegation of authority for all aspects of academic policy and procedure as they apply to teaching and learning.

Good Practice Statement

SCEI-HE has established governance structures, systems and policies which enable the planning, execution and measurement of quality learning and teaching based on its constitutional objectives and informed by the use of student learning outcomes data. SCEI-HE's teaching and learning objectives, policies and procedures enable it to deliver courses that meet the requirements of the AQF and Threshold Standards.

2. Achievement of Learning Outcomes

This benchmark applies to the design and implementation of assessment objectives, policies, procedures and practice and the achievement of specified student learning outcomes. It includes reference to good practice in assessment, weighting of learning outcomes, measurement of learning outcomes, professional outcomes, and the satisfaction of other external stakeholders (such as employers) with the achievement of learning outcomes.

Good Practice Statement

SCEI (Higher Education) has developed assessment policies, procedures and practices which facilitate learning and enable its students to acquire and demonstrate competence as required by the relevant profession and is able to assess the achievement of student learning outcomes in a manner that is valid, reliable, fair and accurate and gives both graduates and employers confidence that graduates have achieved the expected standard of an entry-level professional.

3. Course Development and Design

This benchmark applies to the planning, execution, measurement and improvement of course design to enable effective delivery of a course that meets the requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and the Threshold Standards. The benchmark includes the governance (and delegation of authority) for all aspects of course development and design as the foundation of learning and teaching. It includes the improvement of the educational practice of course development and design with particular emphasis upon objectives and outcomes.

Good Practice Statement

SCEI-HE has established governance structures, systems and policies which enable the planning, execution and measurement of high-quality course development and design which is informed by the use of student learning outcomes and other relevant data. SCEI-HE's course development and design systems, policies and procedures enable it to effectively deliver a course that meets the requirements of the AQF and the Threshold Standards.

PROCEDURE

Initiation and Management of Benchmarking

1. Senior management meet prior to benchmarking activities to ascertain whether there are any similar or overlapping benchmarking activities currently being conducted.
2. If a formal request for information from another institution is required, approval must be obtained by the relevant Faculty Head (or equivalent position holder) or in the case of an Institution-wide benchmarking activity the President or Managing Director (or equivalent position holder). If the scope of the benchmarking activities includes multiple areas, approval must be sought from the Head (or equivalent position holder) of each area prior to the commencement.
3. The responsibility for conducting benchmarking activities is the Academic Director
4. Formal agreements with other higher education providers with which the benchmarking undertaken must be completed through the SCE-HE's legal counsel.
5. Following agreement on the benchmarking goals a plan and design the project's objectives, scope, schedule, allocation of tasks, timelines and deliverables is written.
6. Conduct a self-review.
7. Conduct a peer review.
8. A working group consisting of staff whose work is directly relevant to the process is to be maintained and benchmarkers should:
 - 8.1. grade each element on the basis of evidence as to where SCEI-HE lies within the "Performance Measures (i.e., on a 1 - 5 scale);
 - 8.2. cite key reasons supporting the grading of each element of the Performance Indicators — the 'Rationale';
 - 8.3. list the data collected to support the grading of each element of the Performance Indicators — the 'Evidence'; and

8.4. identify action(s) needed to retain top grading or work towards it.

9. Benchmarking reports should be provided to the Academic and Corporate Board for consideration.

10. Conduct an evaluation and review.

Grading Scale

The grading scale used by SCEI-HE to grade performance indicators are:

5	Meets all elements of the performance indicator.
4	Meets most elements of the performance indicator and substantial work being done to implement the remainder.
3	Meets some elements of the performance indicator and signs of effective work being done to implement the remainder.
2	Meets a limited number of the elements of the performance indicator but some signs of effective work being planned to implement the remainder.
1	Meets none of the elements of the performance indicator and no signs of effective work being done to implement them.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

HEMIS11 Quality Assurance Framework

HEMIS12 Best Practice Benchmark Self-Assessment Template

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

TEQSA Guidance Note: Benchmarking

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011(Cwth)

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011

RESPONSIBILITIES

Academic Director

Responsible for the development, review and implementation of this policy and procedure.

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