



External Moderation and Benchmarking Policy and Procedure

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Related Documents	Quality Assurance Framework Academic Continuous Improvement Policy Academic Continuous Improvement Procedure Course Design Policy Course Design Procedure Student Assessment Policy Student Assessment Procedure Staff Code of Conduct
HESF (Threshold Standards) 2021	1.4.1; 5.3.1; 5.3.2; 5.3.3; 5.3.4

1. Purpose

This Policy and Procedure seeks to establish the requirements for external moderation and benchmarking as a core element of the course and unit review cycles at the Australian Institute of Higher Education Pty Ltd ('the Institute') and to ensure higher education operations at the Institute meet national standards and are comparable to other higher education institutions. This Policy and Procedure is an extension of the **Quality Assurance Framework**.

2. Principles

Key principles informing this Policy and Procedure are:

- The Institute encourages benchmarking and external moderation with comparable institutions as a means of identifying comparative strengths and weaknesses, improving performance and assuring quality and standards;
- The Institute will take both quantitative and qualitative approaches in its benchmarking and external moderation activities; and
- External moderation and benchmarking outcomes will be recorded and reported in order to inform decision-making and improvements.

The key principles informing this Policy and Procedure are embedded in the Quality Assurance Framework.



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3. Context

This Policy and Procedure has been developed in order to ensure a more coordinated, considered and systematic approach to benchmarking and external moderation activities.

4. Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to all staff members and external contributors involved in external moderation or benchmarking activities and to the external moderation and benchmarking activities.

5. Definitions

See the *AIH Glossary of Terms* for definitions.

6. Policy details

6.1 External Moderation

A least once every three years, the Institute will arrange for each unit of study to be externally moderated to broaden the scope and reliability of the internal moderation process. For further information on the internal moderation process, refer to the Student Assessment Policy and Procedure.

External moderators will review the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of each unit of study to ensure they are a consistent and reliable reflection of student achievement.

6.2 Benchmarking

The Institute will engage in four broad types of benchmarking:

Institutional benchmarking – this involves the benchmarking of the institution and departments (E.g. staff ratios, criteria for academic appointments, financial information, student support services, etc.).

Course and Unit benchmarking – this involves the benchmarking of course and unit design, learning outcomes, assessment construction and student performance.

Policy and Process benchmarking – this involves the benchmarking of the Institute’s policies and procedures and their efficiency.

Performance benchmarking – this involves the benchmarking of student outcomes (E.g. attrition, retention and completion rates).

The timings of the benchmarking activities will be agreed upon by the Dean in consultation with the Academic Board. The four broad types of benchmarking will be conducted at least once every three years.

6.3 External Moderation and Benchmarking Partners



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An external moderation or benchmarking partner should:

- Have a comparable mission, vision and objectives;
- Be a comparable size with a similar student demographic;
- Offer similar courses;
- Have a commitment to quality improvement;
- Have a willingness to share; and
- Demonstrate a record of good performance in the area(s) to be benchmarked.

6.4 Confidentiality

All information gathered as part of an external moderation and benchmarking exchange should be treated as confidential. Permission must be granted by all parties before any external communication relating to external moderation or benchmarking activities takes place.

Any breaches of confidentiality by employees of the Institute will be handled in accordance with the Staff Code of Conduct.

7. Actions and Responsibilities

7.1 Roles and Responsibilities

7.1.1 Academic Staff

Academic staff will be responsible for:

Participating in external moderation and benchmarking activities as required;
Prepare external moderation and benchmarking reports as required; and
Providing qualitative and quantitative data for external moderation and benchmarking activities as required.

7.1.2 Unit Coordinators/Program Managers

Unit Coordinators and Program Managers will be responsible for:

Lead and manage external moderation and benchmarking activities as required;
Preparing external moderation or benchmarking proposals as required;
Reporting to the Dean on the progress of moderation and benchmarking activities;
Cultivate an appreciation amongst staff and students of moderation and benchmarking activities; and
Prepare external moderation and benchmarking reports as required.

7.1.3 Dean

The Dean is responsible for:

Ensuring moderation and benchmarking activities are adequately resourced;
Assigning a coordinator of external moderation or benchmarking activities;
Approving external moderation and benchmarking proposals;
Reporting progress and outcomes of moderation and benchmarking activities to the Teaching and Learning Committee, Academic Board and other Committees as required; and
Work with staff to monitor the implementation of moderation and benchmarking report recommendations.



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7.2 Informal Benchmarking

During the development of policies, procedures or documents, informal benchmarking should occur where possible. The informal benchmarking process will include reviewing the policies, procedures or documents from other comparable providers against the Institution's. A record of the informal benchmarking conducted should be maintained.

7.3 Formal Benchmarking and External Moderation Process

Step 1: Benchmarking or External Moderation Proposal

Before any formal benchmarking or external moderation can commence, the scope and objectives of the proposed activities should be considered and a proposal prepared. The proposal should also consider:

- The nature of the benchmarking or external moderation activity;
- Whether there are specific areas of performance or compliance to be examined or themes;
- Timings of the project;
- Resources required to conduct the activities; and
- If a partnership is required with a comparable provider.

Step 2: Engage project participants

Once a proposal has been agreed upon and approved, project participants can be assigned and informed of the requirements.

If external partners are required, they can be sourced and approved by the Dean.

Step 3: Develop tools and templates

In conjunction with the project participants, tools and templates should be developed to gather comparable datasets for analysis.

The Institute may wish to use the partner provider's tools and templates.

Step 4: Perform Benchmarking or External Moderation Benchmarking

The benchmarking partner and/or participants will be provided with the required resources to perform the activity. The required tools and templates will then be populated for analysis.

External Moderation

The external moderator will receive a random de-identified sample of student assessment tasks representing all delivery locations. The assessment tasks selected must include at least one sample per grade. The external moderator will make a judgement regarding the quality of the academic grading of student work within the selected unit and that the marking of assessment is consistent, valid and reliable.

The external unit moderator will compile a post-assessment moderation report in the prescribed template setting out their findings and recommendations.

Step 5: Final Report

Once the benchmarking or external moderation activities have concluded, an analysis of the findings and the external partners report can be conducted with all participants in the project. A final report should be prepared for presentation at the required governance committee meetings.



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The final report should include:

- A list of what is working well;
- A list of areas requiring improvement; and
- The actions that will be taken as a result of the findings.

Step 6: Implement Improvements

Based on the recommendations in the benchmarking or external moderation report, and taking into consideration feedback from the governance committees, improvements can then be implemented. Progress is to be reported back to the governance committees.

8. Legislation

This Policy and Procedure comply with Higher Education Standards Framework Standard 5.3 (Monitoring, Review and Improvement), which specifies (in summary) that:

5.3.1 All accredited courses of study are subject to periodic (at least every seven years) comprehensive reviews that are overseen by peak academic governance processes and include external referencing or other benchmarking activities.

5.3.2 A comprehensive review includes the design and content of each course of study, the expected learning outcomes, the methods for assessment of those outcomes, the extent of students' achievement of learning outcomes, and also takes account of emerging developments in the field of education, modes of delivery, the changing needs of students and identified risks to the quality of the course of study.

5.3.3 Comprehensive reviews of courses of study are informed and supported by regular interim monitoring, of the quality of teaching and supervision of research students, student progress and the overall delivery of units within each course of study.

5.3.4 Review and improvement activities include regular external referencing of the success of student cohorts against comparable courses of study, including:

- a. analyses of progression rates, attrition rates, completion times and rates and, where applicable, comparing different locations of delivery, and
- b. the assessment methods and grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes for selected units of study within courses of study.

This Policy and Procedure also comply with Higher Education Standards Framework Standard 1.4 (Learning Outcomes and Assessment), which specifies (in summary) that:

1.4.1 The expected learning outcomes for each course of study are specified, consistent with the level and field of education of the qualification awarded and informed by national and international comparators.



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9. Version Control

This Policy and Procedure has been endorsed by the Australia Institute of Higher Education Academic Board as at October 2024 and is reviewed every 3 years. The Policy and Procedure is published and available on the Australian Institute of Higher Education website <http://www.aih.edu.au> under 'Policies and Procedures'.

Change and Version Control				
Version	Authored by	Brief Description of the changes	Date Approved:	Effective Date:
2017-1	Registrar	New Policy	19 April 2017	20 April 2017
2020.1	Dean	Minor Updates	2 December 2020	3 December 2020
2022.1	Registrar	Updated Higher Education Standards Framework [Threshold Standard] 2021	25 May 2022	26 May 2022
2022.2	CEO/Dean	3-year review cycle, no recommended changes	28 September 2022	29 September 2022
2024.1	Dean / Associate Dean	Updated Responsible Officer; combined Policy and Procedure	9 October 2024	10 October 2024