

External Benchmarking

Policy and Procedure

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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

This policy includes processes and actions that will guide ACHW to ensure:

1. continuous monitoring, review and improvement of academic delivery is a part of institutional quality assurance;
2. aspects of its operations are compared externally to ensure internal processes are continually improved and developed

This policy and procedures align with the TEQSA, Higher Education Standards Framework, (Threshold Standards) 2015, Standards 1.4.1, 1.4.3, 1.4.4, 5.3.1, 5.3.4, 5.3.7.

PURPOSE

This document provides policies and procedures to guide staff of ACHW in the external referencing process in order to ensure compliance with TEQSA Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015, standards 1.1, 1.4, 3.1, 3.3, 5.3, 7.3.

The purpose of this policy and process guideline on external referencing is to:

1. monitor, reviewing and improve internal processes by comparing external processes;
2. establishing or fostering collaborative improvements and information sharing across providers;
3. learning and comparing to other providers and adopting best practices;
4. compare other offerings and ways of operating;
5. ensure standards and expectations are met when undertaking external referencing

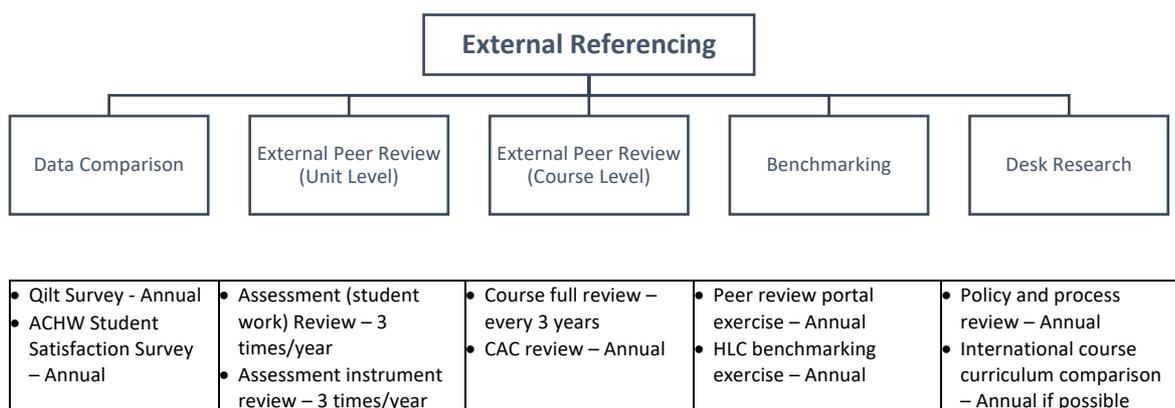
SCOPE

This External Referencing Policy and Procedure applies to staff and academic governance committees to ensure quality processes, courses, student outcomes, operations and governance.

SECTION 2 – POLICY

EXTERNAL REFERENCING FRAMEWORK

The range of external referencing processes is widespread. The process can occur at different levels and in different areas of operation both internally and externally. The framework presented below demonstrates types of external referencing. The framework also demonstrates ongoing external referencing initiatives as a part of institutional continuous improvement processes.



PRINCIPLES

The external referencing policy and process is guided by the following principles:

- ACHW will identify and monitor standards and performance in order to improve ongoing practices, processes and outcomes;
- External referencing will be integrated into operations. Routine analysis of data collected and use of those outcomes will drive improvements. ACHW will use a number of approaches and techniques, such as benchmarking, peer review and external moderation, and will use both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Appropriate indicators will be selected, and these will be well defined and measured.
- ACHW’s external referencing may include benchmarking activities such as:
 - organisational benchmarking – comparisons at the organisational level, for example staff ratios, criteria for academic employment, financial information, student support services, etc;
 - course and subject benchmarking, including review of course and subject design, learning outcomes, assessment construction, course admission criteria and student performance;
 - process benchmarking, which involves – comparisons of ACHW practices and processes,
 - outcomes benchmarking relating to the comparison of outcomes data, especially student outcomes – for example attrition, retention and completion rates; and
 - best-practice benchmarking in which ACHW selects comparator/s thought to be at the forefront in the area to be benchmarked – for example the benchmarking of policies, procedures and 3rd party providers’ performance to determine their efficiency and cost effectiveness

- In accordance with TEQSA guidance, ACHW recognises that the purpose of external referencing and benchmarking is not to standardise all courses and all assessment outcomes, but to accept variations, and establish whether those variations are of an individual nature or from variations in quality or academic standards

SECTION 3 – DEFINITIONS

Benchmarking

Benchmarking can be defined as a structured, collaborative learning process for comparing practices, processes or performance outcomes. Its purpose is to compare strengths and weaknesses, as a basis for developing improvements in academic quality or performance. Benchmarking can also be defined as a quality process used to evaluate performance by comparing institutional practices across the sector.

Expectations

In the context of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015 (HES Framework), external referencing means that through a process, which a higher education provider compares an aspect of its operations with an external, for example comparing the design of a course and/or student achievement of learning outcomes with that of a comparable course from another provider.

Learning Outcomes

The intended learning outcome is provided in writing, in the unit outline, prior to the commencement of teaching the unit. Learning outcomes serve as a reference point for the pre-assessment moderation of assessment tasks.

MyACHW

MyACHW is the learning management system (LMS) and a software application platform for administration, documentation, tracking, reporting and delivery of educational courses or training programs at ACHW. Both the academic staff and students must have access to MyACHW to participate in the assessment moderation process.

Partnering

Benchmarking is typically conducted via a mutually beneficial relationship with one or more institutional partners on terms agreed by both parties involved. Depending on the nature and goals of the relationship, the costs, benefits and improvements involved may be shared.

Study Period

Study period is the time between when class starts and when the study term ends. Typically, a study period includes class start date, census date, assessment submissions, class finish date and release of grades. All units of studies are offered within a study period. ACHW has 6 study periods/year.

SECTION 4 – PROCEDURE

The ACHW Academic Board will commission benchmarking and external referencing initiatives and will task the Teaching and Learning Committee to execute these initiatives. The TLC will engage and oversee relevant academic committees such as Assessment Review Committees, Course Review Committee and Course Advisory Committee

TYPE	BENCHMARKING AREA OR FUNCTION	POTENTIAL PARTNER/S	GUIDANCE NOTES	PLAN EXECUTION
Organisational benchmarking	Governance	One or group of private HEP or university/ies. Given the niche market size of aesthetics, ACHW may benchmark against relevant aspects only.	1.Establish relationships for collaboration with similar organisations and these may include: Torrens University, Endeavour, Victoria University 2. Use Helen’s benchmarking services if necessary	Comparison of governance structures and practices every three years from 2021
Organisational benchmarking	Comparisons of staff ratios, criteria for academic employment, financial information, student support services, etc;	One or group of private HEP/s or university/ies. Given the niche market size of aesthetics, ACHW may benchmark against relevant aspects only.	1.Establish relationships for collaboration with similar organisations and these may include: Torrens University, Endeavour, Victoria University 2. Use Helen’s benchmarking services if necessary	Comparison of governance structures and practices every three years from 2021

TYPE	BENCHMARKING AREA OR FUNCTION	POTENTIAL PARTNER/S	GUIDANCE NOTES	PLAN EXECUTION
Organisational benchmarking	Business structure, capacity and capability, policies, procedures and 3rd party providers' performance to determine their efficiency and cost effectiveness	One or group of private HEP/s or university/ies. Given the niche market size of aesthetics, ACHW may benchmark against relevant aspects only. This can include an institute that may not offer similar courses but can be relevantly benchmarked against to inform generic and non-generic business practices	1. Establish relationships for collaboration with similar organisations and these may include: Torrens University, Endeavour, Victoria University 2. Use Helen's benchmarking services if necessary 3. Consultancy firms that are engaged by	Comparison of business and operation models every three years from 2021 to inform best practice and maximise positive student outcomes
Course benchmarking	Course –design, implementation, and national and international accreditations	Helen Lawrence Consulting	A highly ranked competitor or non- competitive institution Private accredited institution offering courses similar to ACHW	2021 & then every five years benchmark with partner or competitor (benchmarking some individual units during the five-year period)
Assessment and Outcomes	Assessment (student work)	Collaboration. with a similar HEP or university via peer-to-peer review	A highly ranked non- competitive institution. One national and one international	3 times/year. International comparison once per year

TYPE	BENCHMARKING AREA OR FUNCTION	POTENTIAL PARTNER/S	GUIDANCE NOTES	PLAN EXECUTION
Assessment and Outcomes	Assessment instrument review. Collaborating one external moderation / benchmarking of student assessment	Collaboration. with a similar HEP or university via peer-to-peer review	A highly ranked non- competitive institution. One national and one international	Once per year
Outcomes benchmarking	Student performance data/ outcomes – retention, completion rates, etc.	Collaboration. with a similar HEP or university	A highly ranked competitor or non- competitive institution	Annually
Process benchmarking	Face to face and blended learning	Collaboration. with a similar HEP or university via peer-to-peer review	A highly ranked non- competitive institution. One national and one international	Once per year on learning pedagogy – webinars, blogs, assessments
Outcomes benchmarking	Student performance data/ outcomes – retention, completion rates, etc.	Collaboration. with a similar HEP or university	At least 2 highly ranked competitor or non- competitive institution	Annually
Best practice benchmarking	Major aspects overall, including balance of scholarship/research /teaching Major aspects overall of a similar but high ranking international institution	Collaboration. with a similar HEP or university via peer-to-peer review	At least 2 highly ranked competitor or non- competitive institution	2021 then every 2 years

SECTION 5 – RESPONSIBILITY

Academic Board is responsible for:

- considering and approving proposals for external referencing in relation to academic matters, including proposals to other organisations; and
- overseeing the implementation of improvements arising from external referencing recommendations.

ABS Teaching and Learning Committee is responsible for:

- monitoring the implementation, outcomes and scheduled review of this policy;
- monitoring and reporting on external referencing activities in relation to academic matters;

The Head of School is responsible for:

- developing and implementing external referencing activities for academic programs and governance controls;
- liaising with external benchmarking partners
- establishing Memorandums of Understanding with benchmarking partners;
- ensuring that outcomes of external referencing activities are appropriately recorded and reported to enable informed decision-making and support effective implementation of improvements;
- reporting progress and outcomes of such external referencing activities to the Teaching and Learning Committee, Academic Board and Corporate Board as required; and
- working with staff to monitor the implementation of improvements arising from external referencing recommendations.

The Program Managers are responsible for:

- preparing proposals and reports for external referencing as required;
- leading external moderation and benchmarking activities as required at an institute and peer-to-peer level;
- working with staff to monitor the implementation of improvements arising from external referencing recommendations;
- reporting to the Head of School on the progress of relevant external referencing activities;
- cultivating an appreciation amongst staff and students of external referencing activities.

The Registrar is responsible for:

- participating and contributing to external referencing activities;
- providing qualitative and quantitative data for external referencing activities.

SECTION 6 – DOCUMENT DETAILS

POLICY OWNER

Name:	External Benchmarking Policy and Procedure
Endorsed by:	Director ACHW
Approved by:	Head of Quality Assurance
Date Approved:	10.07.2017
Implementation Owner	Head of Quality Assurance
Maintenance Owner	Head of Quality Assurance
Review Date	15.01.2021

CHANGE HISTORY

Version	Approval date	Approved by	Approved by	Change
V1.0	10.07.2017	Head of Compliance	Director ACHW	Initial document review after purchase of MHMHE
V2.0		For approval by Academic Board on 18/01/2021		General update on process and responsibilities