

Higher Education Benchmarking

Policy and Procedure

Code and Version Control:	5.0
Policy Owner:	Director of Higher Education
Date Approved by Academic Board:	12 November 2025
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Related Policies and Documents:	APAC Benchmarking and Review Schedule APAC Strategic Plan APAC Teaching and Learning Plan APAC Course Development Policy and Procedure APAC Course and Unit Review Policy and Procedure APAC Policy Framework Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) APAC Quality Assurance Framework Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (TEQSA Act)

Legislative and Regulatory Compliance

APAC undertakes benchmarking and external referencing in accordance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021, specifically 1.4.1, 5.3.1-5.3.4, 5.3.7 and TEQSA’s *Guidance Note: External Referencing (including Benchmarking)* to support continuous improvement and assure quality across all educational and operational domains.

Purpose

To guide the planning, execution, and review of benchmarking activities that support academic and operational excellence through evidence-based comparison with external providers, partners, or sector best practice.

Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to all staff, contractors, consultants and members of decision-making and advisory groups engaged in benchmarking activities.

Policy

Benchmarking at APAC is a strategic process that underpins quality assurance and continuous improvement. It contributes to institutional planning, informs curriculum development, enhances student learning outcomes, and ensures alignment with regulatory requirements.

Benchmarking activities are carried out in a transparent, confidential, and systematic manner. These activities are supported by formal benchmarking proposals, standardised templates, and structured reporting mechanisms to ensure consistency, integrity, and accountability in outcomes and practice. APAC benchmarking activities include:

- *Course and Student Performance Benchmarking* – internal and external referencing of course and unit design, learning outcomes, student results, feedback and graduate outcomes

- *Policy and Process Benchmarking* – desktop reviews of internal policy frameworks and their efficacy, compared with similar providers.
- *Operational Benchmarking* - comparisons of institutional performance metrics and practices (e.g. staff ratios, appointment criteria, course costs).

Procedure

A Benchmarking and Review Schedule is developed by the Director of Higher Education in alignment with the *Course and Unit Review Policy and Procedure* and in consultation with the CEO, for approval by the Academic Board.

Benchmarking initiation

- benchmarking Proposals are developed using the APAC template and define:
 - Scope and objectives
 - Areas of performance to be examined
 - Methodology and timeline
 - Required resources and stakeholders
 - Whether a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is required.
- academic benchmarking proposals are approved by the Academic Board. Non-academic proposals are approved by the Board of Directors.
- for longer-term benchmarking partnerships, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) may be formalised for approval by the Board of Directors.
- benchmarking proposals, MOUs, datasets and reports are listed in APAC's Benchmarking Register.

Operational Benchmarking

- undertaken in accordance with benchmarking schedule
- led by the CEO
- focus areas include: Staff-to-student ratios, criteria for academic appointments and professional equivalency, market demand for educational offerings, financial data (course, unit and administration fees)

Course and Unit Monitoring and Review

- undertaken in accordance with benchmarking schedule and *Course and Unit Review Policy and Procedure*
- led by the DoHE in collaboration with Heads of Discipline and other relevant stakeholders
- comparative analysis is undertaken against similar courses and units, focusing on:
 - Course structure
 - Admission criteria
 - Curriculum
 - Pedagogy
 - Assessment (including peer review)
 - Resources and learning facilities
 - Academic outcomes and cohort performance
 - Student engagement and survey responses
 - Feedback from students and staff

- Graduate outcomes (e.g., employment, further study, salary data)
- Unit-level comparisons and other relevant data

Course and Student Performance Benchmarking

- undertaken in accordance with benchmarking schedule and *Course and Unit Review Policy and Procedure*
- led by the DoHE and implemented by the Teaching and Learning Working Group
- key performance indicators include:
 - Attrition, retention, progression
 - Completion rates and timeframes
 - Student engagement and survey responses
 - Graduate outcomes (e.g., employment, further study, salary data)

Policy and Process Benchmarking

- undertaken by the Director of Operations and Student Services or Document Owner
- informal benchmarking via desktop review policies, procedures or documents from comparable providers against APACs in line with APAC's Policy Framework.
- occurs during the development and scheduled review of policies, procedures, or documents. The process will include reviewing the policies, procedures or documents from comparable providers against APACs in line with APAC's Policy Framework.
- formal benchmarking reports are not generally required for the benchmarking of policies and processes, unless requested by a governing body, the document owner.

Data Collection

- a benchmarking template is used to standardise data collection.
- information gathered is treated as confidential.
- permission for external communications must be obtained from the DoHE (academic) or CEO (non-academic).

Analysis and Reporting

- benchmarking reports are completed using a standard template which includes:
 - Purpose and scope
 - Summary of methods and consulted stakeholders
 - Findings, including risks, non-compliance, or good practice
 - An action plan outlining improvement strategies and resource requirements.
- academic benchmarking reports and the subsequent action plans are submitted to the Course Advisory Committee for endorsement and the Academic Board for approval. Non-academic benchmarking reports and action plans are approved by the Board of Directors.

Monitoring

- the Teaching and Learning Working Group implement benchmarking activities relating to teaching and learning
- Course Advisory Committee monitors implementation, and provides recommendations for endorsement/approval by the Academic Board
- the Academic Board ensures benchmarking activities proceed according to schedule and that compliance risks or improvement recommendations are addressed.

- reports may be distributed to relevant teams to support implementation and monitoring of outcomes.

Responsibilities

The Board of Directors

- approves all Memoranda of Understanding's (MOU) with other entities or organisations
- approves non-academic benchmarking reports and action plans
- receives benchmarking reports from the Academic Board to confirm that benchmarking outcomes are being used to maintain or improve quality.

The Academic Board

- having oversight of academic benchmarking activities and approving academic benchmarking reports
- endorsing formal benchmarking proposals
- monitoring continuous improvement activities, specifically as they relate to academic matters.

Course Advisory Committee

- monitors implementation, and provides recommendations for endorsement/approval by the Academic Board
- ensures benchmarking informs course review and development

The Teaching and Learning Working Group

- implement benchmarking activities and ensure preparation of information for benchmarking
- prepare benchmarking reports for the Course Advisory Committee and Academic Board

The Director of Higher Education

- initiating academic benchmarking activities
- in collaboration with the Heads of Discipline, identify benchmarking partners for academic activities
- the facilitation of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between benchmarking partners for reporting, with Academic Board endorsement and Board approval
- ongoing monitoring and reporting to the Academic Board on relevant benchmarking activities and practices

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

- initiating non-academic and operational benchmarking activities
- the identification of benchmarking partners for non-academic activities
- the facilitation of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between benchmarking partners for reporting and Board Approval
- ongoing monitoring and reporting to the Board of Directors on relevant benchmarking activities and practices.

Director of Operations and Student Services

- undertaking desktop review to facilitate the benchmarking of policies and processes under development or review.

Heads of Discipline

- contribute to quality assurance and quality improvement, including participating constructively in benchmarking activities.
- in collaboration with the Director of Higher Education, identify benchmarking partners for academic activities

Definitions

- **Benchmarking** is recognised as a means by which an entity can: demonstrate accountability to stakeholders; improve networking and collaborative relationships; generate management information; develop an increased understanding of practice, process or performance; and garner insights into how improvements might be made. Its purpose is to identify comparative strengths and weaknesses, as a basis for developing improvements in quality. Benchmarking can also be defined as a quality process used to evaluate performance by comparing institutional practices to sector good practice. ‘Internal benchmarking’ against other relevant programs offered by the provider may also be undertaken.
- **Desktop Review/Survey:** is a benchmarking activity that involves gathering and analyzing data from existing sources, such as a website to evaluate and compare performance, practices, and processes of different organizations or industries without physically visiting them. It is a cost-effective way to gather insights and identify opportunities for improvement or best practices.
- **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** is a document that records the common intent of two or more parties where the parties do not wish to assume legally binding obligations. An MOU provides a framework and set of principles to guide the parties in undertaking a project or working arrangement.

Version Control and Document Owner

Policy Category	Academic	Approval Date	12 November 2028	
Document Owner	Director of Higher Education	Approval Authority	Academic Board	
Audience	Staff	Review Date	November 2028	
Revision History				
Version	Author	Change Summary	Date Approved	Date Effective
1.0	APAC	New document.	18 December 2015	
1.1	APAC	Current.	09 June 2017	
2.0	APAC	Current.	18 December 2020	
3.0	DVE Business Solutions Pty Ltd	Review and update of the policy and procedure.	16 September 2022	
4.0	DVE Business Solutions Pty Ltd	Addition of MOU management and initiation to Board, DOHE and CEO responsibilities. Updated definition for “Benchmarking”.		08 May 2023
5.0	APAC	Review and update of the policy and procedure to make the procedure clearer.	12 November 2028	12 November 2028