

## Benchmarking Policy

### 1. Purpose and Scope

The policy provides a framework for benchmarking of The Performing Arts Conservatory's higher education curriculum and teaching and learning practices. It serves to promote best practice and compare outcomes that lead to continuous improvement across all aspects of courses delivered by The Performing Arts Conservatory.

This policy applies to all members of the Conservatory's higher education community.

### 2. Objectives

This benchmarking policy will outline the processes for undertaking benchmarking activities, and the type of activities that will occur. This policy acknowledges the overview of benchmarking provided in the 'TEQSA Guidance Note Benchmarking':

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

*The purpose of benchmarking is not to standardise all courses and all assessment outcomes, but to reveal variations, and establish whether those variations arise from the individual nature of the courses or the student cohorts, or from variations in quality or academic standards.*

The Conservatory is committed to:

- identifying partner institutions to carry out benchmarking activities
- regularly comparing its teaching and learning outcomes against other higher education providers (HEPs)
- embracing continuous improvement to strive for best practice
- regularly benchmarking its higher education courses to ensure that they are innovative and remain current

### 3. Implementation

The Conservatory will undertake:

- course Benchmarking of its courses every three years to ensure currency and maintain innovation
- outcomes Benchmarking annually to compare student outcomes data against other HEPs

#### 3.1. Course Benchmarking

The Academic Board will implement cyclical reviews of the curriculum as per the Course Review Policy. A Course Advisory Committee may be appointed for this purpose. A comparative analysis will be undertaken against other similar courses and include:

- course structure

- course content and assessment
- course resources
- any other matters identified from student performance data and student and lecturer feedback
- other data to inform the course benchmarking exercise

The Teaching and Learning Plan should also be used to inform this exercise, taking account of the strategies and measures listed in the Teaching and Learning Plan, and to determine if the Teaching and Learning Plan should be reviewed in light of findings arising from the course review process.

### **3.2. Outcomes Benchmarking**

Benchmarking of course outcomes and teaching and learning outcomes will be undertaken annually and may include participation in an external benchmarking consortium, such as the ACPET Benchmarking Consortium, or similar activity. The aim will be to compare teaching and learning outcomes from a range of non-university higher education providers and use the results to identify areas for improvement, and acknowledge good practice.

The findings from outcomes benchmarking should be analysed in conjunction with the strategies and measures in the Teaching and Learning Plan, particularly areas relating to student satisfaction survey measures and attrition and retention rates.

### **3.3. Other Benchmarking**

The Conservatory may undertake other benchmarking activities such as comparisons of processes and practices, non-academic benchmarking, or specific best practice activities.

## **4. Procedures**

The Academic Board will have oversight of academic benchmarking activities, and is the approving authority for any proposals put forward by the Head of School outside of regular scheduled activities. On completion of the benchmarking exercise, the Academic Board should review and endorse the Benchmarking Report.

A benchmarking partner or partners should be selected and a Memorandum of Understanding prepared. Ideally a benchmarking project manager will be appointed to oversee the project. The elements to be benchmarked should be outlined in a proposal.

Benchmarking proposals to the Academic Board should:

- outline the purpose and scope of the benchmarking activity
- identify whether the benchmarking activity is a one-off project or an annual activity
- identify the areas of performance to be benchmarked
- include the planned approach and methodology
- list partner institutions
- identify resources required to complete the exercise
- include information on the assessment, evaluation and reporting of findings, including how recommendations will be actioned

A Benchmarking Report should be prepared which includes strengths and opportunities for improvement. Priorities for action should be identified and aligned to the Conservatory's goals. A Project Plan including financial resources should be prepared for large projects.

The Governance Board is responsible for identifying any non-academic benchmarking activities, which may be delegated to Executive Management.

## 5. Definitions

**Benchmarking:** is a learning process structured so as to enable those engaging in the process to compare their services/activities/products and thus identify their comparative strengths and weaknesses as a basis for self-improvement and/or self-regulation.

**Benchmark:** is a point of reference against which something may be measured.

## 6. Related Documents

The following policies and procedures are related to this policy:

- Course Review Policy
- PAE Strategic Plan
- Teaching and Learning Plan
- TEQSA Guidance Note Benchmarking

## 7. Review

Three years from commencement.

## 8. Accountabilities

The Academic Board is responsible for review and approval of this policy.

The policy is to be implemented via induction and training of staff and distribution to students and the Conservatory's higher education community via the website and other publications.

## 9. Revision History

Approval Authority	Contact Person	Revision Due Date	Revision Date	Approved Date	Version No.	Revision Description
Academic Board	Chair	30/11/19		18/12/15	1	New document
Academic Board	Chair	30/11/20	9/6/17	9/6/17	1.1	Current
Academic Board	Chair	18/12/23	18/12/20	18/12/20	2.0	Current