QAF155 Benchmarking Policy

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1. Purpose

HELI is committed to providing high quality higher education award courses in conformity with the Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF2021) and the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF2013). This policy outlines principles and procedures for external referencing and benchmarking activities that HELI follows in conducting external referencing and benchmarking of the Institute's higher education operations.

The purpose of this policy and procedures is to ensure:
- that evidence is used to inform decisions, drive continuous improvement, and adopt best practice in academic and operational activities.
- conformity with the Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF2021) and the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF2013).
- that procedures are designed to support and guide the collection and analysis of evidence, implementation of improvements and inform organisational and strategic decision making.
- The outcome to be compared with the target set and for continuous improvement of the processes, outcomes, procedures, and student satisfaction and to demonstrate our commitment to strategic objectives, vision and mission.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all external referencing and benchmarking activities conducted by or on behalf of HELI. The policy applies to all award courses.

3. Definitions

External Referencing: A process through which a higher education provider compares an aspect of its operations with an external comparator(s); e.g. comparing the design of a course of study and/or student achievement of learning outcomes with that of a course from another provider. External referencing includes peer reviews and moderations as well as benchmarking.

Benchmarking: Benchmarking is an external referencing process[1] that utilises '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 or performance. Benchmarking can also be defined as a quality process used to evaluate performance by comparing institutional practices with identified good practices across the sector (TEQSA, *Guidance Note: External referencing, including Benchmarking*, p. 6).

4. Policy Statement

HELI is committed to ensuring that the student experience and outcomes are informed by evidence and benchmarked against best practice in the sector and in the wider higher education community locally and internationally.
This policy and procedure, which is aligned to HELI's Quality Framework, is designed to meet our commitment to students and other internal and external stakeholders. The outcomes or results of external referencing and benchmarking provide evidence of the validity of current practice and/or to clearly indicate areas for further improvement as well as to inform course reviews, strategic planning, and decision-making.
This policy and procedures is designed to meet Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 – Standards 1.4.1, 1.4.3, 1.4.4, 5.3.1, 5.3.4, 5.3.7 6.3.1, and 6.3.2.

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[1] *TEQSA Guidance Note: External Referencing (including Benchmarking)*

5.   External Referencing and Benchmarking Activities

Types of external referencing and benchmarking activities can include peer reviews, external moderations, partnerships, and desktop reviews. Whether the activity is classified as external referencing or benchmarking will depend on the context. For example, peer review can be classified as an external review activity when comparing student outcomes with nationally published student outcomes (eg QILT data). Peer review is classified as a benchmarking activity when done with a benchmarking partner. The academic and operational areas include Courses quality, Student performance monitoring, teaching quality, student learning outcomes, Student satisfaction, graduate outcomes, research and scholarship, and organisational/operational processes. The activities will be applied to the areas of HELI's academic and operational processes as in the *Benchmarking Plan*.

6.   Roles and responsibilities
It is the responsibility of the *Dean, Registrar, and Assoc Dean Learning and Teaching* to:
- Implement and manage external referencing and/or benchmarking activities identified by the relevant governing body (or its committee).
- Identify, review, follow up and ensure the completion and reporting of ongoing review activities.
- Identify appropriate external referencing and benchmarking partners
- Submit their proposal to the Academic Board for approval
- Formulate a partnership agreement, contact relevant personnel in the benchmarking partner organisation and initiate the collection and exchange of data.
- Manage and monitor the benchmarking project
- Provide reports on the project, including planned improvements to the course derived from the benchmarking data
- Manage and report the implementation of approved improvements to the course.

It is the responsibility of the *Learning and Teaching Committee* to:
- Evaluate the proposal
- Submit the proposal to the Academic Board for approval
- Report the outcome of the benchmarking programmes, activities, and outcomes to the Academic Board

It is the responsibility of the *Academic Board* to:
- Approve the proposal and partners for benchmarking projects
- Evaluate the results of benchmarking projects
- Report the results of benchmarking projects to the Board of Directors.

7.   Reporting
The scope and results from all benchmarking projects will be reported to the Academic Board as a part of their normal monitoring and quality assurance responsibilities.

8.   Related Documents

- Course Design Policy
- Quality Framework
- Benchmarking Plan

9. Related legislation

- Higher Education Support Act 2003
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Act 2011
- TEQSA Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
- TEQSA Guidance Note: External Referencing (including Benchmarking)
- Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000
- Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).
- National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018
- Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Cth)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

10. Version Control

Document ID	HELI Benchmarking Policy
Category	Quality
Document Owner	Assoc Dean Learning and Teaching
Approved by	Academic Board

Version	Summary of changes	Approval date	Next review date
1.0	The policy was developed as a result of Academic Governance review and the existing benchmarking plan was included with the policy	Academic Board: 30 November 2022	November 2024