



BENCHMARKING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Purpose

Benchmarking activities are essential to the quality assurance and continual improvement of Lincoln Education Australia's (LEA) higher education courses and operations, allowing LEA to ensure it continues to meet industry and academic best practice. LEA will conduct benchmarking in a coherent manner that yields useful information for organisational planning processes.

This *Benchmarking Policy and Procedures* identifies the benchmarking principles and procedures that LEA will implement, including management and approval of both external and internal benchmarking projects, and the process through which improvements will be implemented.

POLICY

Scope

This policy applies to all academic staff, staff involved in non-academic activities and all members of Boards and Committees involved in benchmarking activities.

Principles

LEA is committed to ensuring the high quality and rigor of its higher education operations and course delivery through regular internal and external benchmarking activities.

Benchmarking activities will be a key quality assurance mechanism. Benchmarking is critical to establishing and improving LEA's higher education course offerings, internal processes and operations in order to be in line with best practice, both locally and globally.

It also establishes LEA's comparability and competitiveness with other similar providers in the sector.

Data, results, and recommendations arising from benchmarking activities are essential to the development and review of LEA courses, as stated in the *Course Development and Approval Policy*, and the *Course Review and Continual Improvement Policy*.

LEA will conduct internal and external benchmarking against local and international offerings at similar institutions with regard to the following areas:

- i. Courses of study, delivery, and outcomes, including:
 - student admission and entry requirements



- attrition rates
 - progression rates
 - student retention
 - completion times
 - completion rates
 - final year course outcomes
 - student satisfaction
 - student assessment trends
- ii. Operational processes, including:
- policies and procedures
 - governance, committee structures and oversight
 - research performance
 - academic quality indicators
 - staffing and professional development
 - student support provisions
 - levels of library and learning resource provision
 - learning and teaching infrastructure.

Benchmarking activities will be structured to include the following elements:

- Alignment with the strategic direction, missions, and values of LEA
- Clearly defined purpose and timeline
- Clearly defined processes, including implementation, monitoring, review, and improvements
- Defined, comparable and measurable benchmarking criteria
- Confidentiality for benchmarking partners
- Mutual benefit between benchmarking partners

PROCEDURES

Approval of Benchmarking Projects

Benchmarking of any given course and academic operations shall be approved by the Academic Board.

Benchmarking for non-academic operations shall be approved by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Oversight of Benchmarking Projects



The parties involved in the benchmarking activities shall sign an agreement regarding what information may be accessed and utilised, the specific benchmarking criteria, and any conditions of the project.

Non-academic benchmarking exercises are generally internal and will be managed by the relevant members of the Executive Management.

The Academic Board will generally have oversight of benchmarking of courses and academic operations. The Academic Board may require LEA to participate in benchmarking exercises undertaken by a peak body or a group of comparable higher education providers.

A full report of any benchmarking project will be provided to the Corporate Governance Board and Academic Board. The report may also be made available for staff.

External Benchmarking

The following aspects of course offerings may be benchmarked against courses offered by comparable providers:

- Entry requirements and admissions processes
- Study modes and delivery locations
- Course fees
- Course structure
- Course content
- Course and subject learning outcomes
- Course Assessments
- Grading Criteria
- GPA Calculation
- Work-Integrated Learning
- Student attrition, progression, retention and completion rates
- Final year course outcomes
- Completion times
- Data from student feedback surveys

External benchmarking for operational indicators, may include:

- Staffing levels
- Recruitment criteria
- Promotion criteria
- Staff satisfaction
- Institutional and individual Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
- Governance and committee structures and oversight
- Academic quality indicators
- Levels of library and learning resource provision
- Student support provisions



- Learning and teaching infrastructure
- Learning and teaching practices/ methods
- Overall research performance
- Policies and procedures and the effectiveness of their implementation.

External Benchmarking Partners

External benchmarking partners shall:

- Be a reputable organisation with good outcomes that align with industry best practice
- Have a comparable size and scope of operations
- Be willing to share information and data about their higher education operation, practices and student outcomes

LEA will also conduct benchmarking against the standards of high-level institutions that embody best practice and academic standards in the Australian higher education context.

Internal Benchmarking

LEA will conduct internal benchmarking with regard to:

- Assessment tasks and pedagogical tools used across different courses
- Student attrition, retention, progression and completion rates
- Completion times
- Final year course outcomes
- graduate destinations
- Student survey feedback data across different courses
- Staff satisfaction across different areas of operation
- Staffing levels and promotion criteria across different areas of operation
- Policies, procedures, and processes utilised by different areas of operation

Improvements

Recommendations arising from benchmarking activities will be carefully considered for implementation by the relevant Boards and Committees as part of ongoing review and improvement cycles.

Any decision against implementing recommendations shall be communicated to all parties with reasons for the decision.

Compliance

All staff members at LEA are required to comply with this policy and its procedures, and with related policies and respective procedures. Non-compliance may result in disciplinary action.



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| File Number | LEA-GEN-COR-70012-D |
| Responsible Officer | Chief Executive Officer |
| Contact Officer | Academic Dean |
| Legislative Compliance | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015</i>• <i>Australian Qualifications Framework (2013)</i>• <i>Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011</i> |
| Supporting Documents | |
| Related Documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Governance Framework</i>• <i>Course Development and Approval Policy and Procedures</i>• <i>Course Review and Continual Improvement Policy and Procedures</i> |
| Superseded Documents | |
| Effective Date | 1 January 2022 |
| Next Review | 3 years from the effective date |

Definitions

Academic Board: Governing body responsible for academic matters, including learning and teaching, course approval, workforce planning, academic staff appointments, research and professional development, academic policies and procedures, overseeing student grievances and appeals processes.

Academic Staff: Staff employed at LEA in learning and teaching capacity.

Benchmarking: Process of comparing practices, processes and performance outcomes for the purpose of identifying comparative strengths and weaknesses in order to develop and improve academic quality and performance.

Chief Executive Officer: Head of the executive management team and is responsible for the management of the day-to-day operations of LEA, its people and its resources.

Corporate Governance Board: Governing body responsible for oversight of all higher education operations, including the ongoing viability of LEA and the quality of its higher education delivery. The Corporate Governance Board guides the Management and delegates responsibility for academic matters to the Academic Board.

Course Coordinator: Academic staff member responsible for the delivery of a specific course at LEA. The Course Coordinator is responsible for the planning and development of a course, particularly subject curriculum information, and works in conjunction with other senior academic staff.

Course Advisory Committee: Committee dedicated to developing the initial proposal of new higher education courses at LEA, including external benchmarking and external input.



Executive Management: High-level management team led by the Chief Executive Officer that manages operational matters for provision of higher education at LEA.

Teaching and Learning Committee: Committee of the Academic Board that is responsible for monitoring the quality of learning and teaching at LEA, interpreting and reporting data on student performance and courses, monitoring progress towards achieving the objectives of the *Teaching and Learning Plan* and the adequacy of all forms of support for learning and teaching at LEA.

Review Schedule

This policy shall be reviewed by the Academic Board every three years.

| Version History | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Version number: | Approved by: | Approval Date: | Revision Notes: |
| 1.0 | Academic Board | 13/08/2020 | New policy |
| 1.1 | Academic Board | 29/11/2021 | Benchmarking requirements revised |
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