AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE
OF HIGHER EDUCATION

External Moderation and Benchmarking Policy

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Related Documents	Academic Quality and Governance Framework Quality Assurance Framework Academic Continuous Improvement Policy Academic Continuous Improvement Procedure Course Design Policy Course Design Procedure Student Assessment Policy Student Assessment Procedure Staff Code of Conduct

1. Purpose

This Policy seeks to establish the requirements for external moderation and benchmarking as a core element of the Course and Unit review cycles at the Australian Institute of Higher Education Pty Ltd ('the Institute') and to ensure higher education operations at the Institute meet national standards and are comparable to other higher education institutions. This Policy is an extension of the *Quality Assurance Framework*.

2. Principles

Key principles informing this Policy and the associated Procedure are:

- The Institute encourages benchmarking and external moderation with comparable institutions as a means of identifying comparative strengths and weaknesses, improving performance and assuring quality and standards;
- The Institute will take both quantitative and qualitative approaches in its benchmarking and external moderation activities; and
- External moderation and benchmarking outcomes will be recorded and reported in order to inform decision-making and improvements.

The key principles informing this Policy are embedded in the *Quality Assurance Framework*.

3. Context

This Policy has been developed in order to ensure a more coordinated, considered and systematic approach to benchmarking and external moderation activities.

4. Scope

This Policy applies to all staff members and external contributors involved in external moderation or benchmarking activities and to the external moderation and benchmarking activities.

5. Definitions

See the *AIH Glossary of Terms* for definitions.

6. Policy details

6.1 External Moderation

A least once every three years, the Institute will arrange for each unit of study to be externally moderated to broaden the scope and reliability of the internal moderation process. For further information on the internal moderation process, refer to the *Student Assessment Policy* and associated Procedure.

External moderators will review the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of each unit of study to ensure they are a consistent and reliable reflection of student achievement.

6.2 Benchmarking

The Institute will engage in four broad types of benchmarking:

- **Institutional benchmarking** – this involves the benchmarking of the institution and departments (E.g. staff ratios, criteria for academic appointments, financial information, student support services, etc.).
- **Course and Unit benchmarking** – this involves the benchmarking of course and unit design, learning outcomes, assessment construction and student performance.
- **Policy and Process benchmarking** – this involves the benchmarking of the Institute's policies and procedures and their efficiency.
- **Performance benchmarking** – this involves the benchmarking of student outcomes (E.g. attrition, retention and completion rates).

The timings of the benchmarking activities will be agreed upon by the Executive Dean in consultation with the Academic Board. The four broad types of benchmarking will be conducted at least once every three years.

6.3 External Moderation and Benchmarking Partners

An external moderation or benchmarking partner should:

- Have a comparable mission, vision and objectives;
- Be a comparable size with a similar student demographic;
- Offer similar courses;
- Have a commitment to quality improvement;
- Have a willingness to share; and
- Demonstrate a record of good performance in the area(s) to be benchmarked.

6.4 Confidentiality

All information gathered as part of an external moderation and benchmarking exchange should be treated as confidential. Permission must be granted before any external communication relating to external moderation or benchmarking activities takes place.

Any breaches of confidentially by employees of the Institute will be handled in accordance with the *Staff Code of Conduct*.

7. Legislation

This Policy and the associated Procedure comply with Higher Education Standards Framework Standard 5.3 (Monitoring, Review and Improvement), which specifies (in summary) that:

- All accredited courses of study are subject to periodic (at least every seven years) comprehensive reviews that are overseen by peak academic governance processes and include external referencing or other benchmarking activities.
- Review and improvement activities include regular external referencing of the success of student cohorts against comparable courses of study.
- The results of regular interim monitoring, comprehensive reviews, external referencing and student feedback are used to mitigate future risks to the quality of the education provided and to guide and evaluate improvements, including the use of data on student progress and success to inform admission criteria and approaches to course design, teaching, supervision, learning and academic support.

This Policy and the associated Procedure also comply with Higher Education Standards Framework Standard 1.4 (Learning Outcomes and Assessment), which specifies (in summary) that:

- The expected learning outcomes for each course of study are specified, consistent with the level and field of education of the qualification awarded, and informed by national and international comparators.

8. Version Control

This Policy has been endorsed by the Australia Institute of Higher Education Academic Board as at April 2017 and is reviewed every 3 years. The Policy is published and available on the Australian Institute of Higher Education website http://www.aih.nsw.edu.au/ under 'Policies and Procedures'.

Change and Version Control				
Version	Authored by	Brief Description of the changes	Date Approved:	Effective Date:
2017-1	Registrar	New Policy	19 April 2017	20 April 2017