

BENCHMARKING PROCEDURE

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Policy Lead	Chief Executive Officer/Principal
Approving Authority	Board Of Directors
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Relevant legislation or external requirements	National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (National Code) Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (HESFs: 1.4.1, 1.4.3, 1.4.4, 5.3.1, 5.3.4, 5.3.7) Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (Cth) (ESOS Act) Education Services for Overseas Students Regulations 2019 (Cth) (ESOS Regulations) Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (TEQSA Act) Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) requirements Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
Related ASA Documents	Policy Framework Quality Assurance Framework Risk Management Framework Benchmarking Procedure

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Procedure is to outline the processes and practices involved with Benchmarking Policy, the intent of which is to establish the requirements for external referencing and benchmarking of organisational practices and processes, academic material and delivery, and student experience and outcomes for continuous improvement and to meet best practices.

2. Scope

This Procedure applies to all staff, directors, officers, external appointees on any ASA Institute of Higher Education (**ASA**) board or committee, volunteers, and contractors.

3. Procedure

The following procedures outline the steps involved in the following types of benchmarking;

- External Benchmarking – Course Design
- External Benchmarking – Quality Assurance
- External Referencing – Non-Academic
- Internal Benchmarking

3.1 Benchmarking

An external referencing activity that typically consists of focused improvement through relationships with a benchmarking partner or partners, but can also include comparing course design against publicly-available information and market intelligence. Benchmarking may vary depending on context.

ASA follows the six phases of benchmarking to investigate the interaction of processes and outcomes.

- a. Concept - deciding what type of benchmarking to use, how to undertake it and with whom.
- b. Plan and design – establishing benchmarking objectives, scope, schedule, allocation of tasks, timelines and deliverables.
- c. Self-review – planning self-review activities, identifying key stakeholders, writing up institutional context statements for peer review workshop, collecting evidence and gathering data from a range of sources, e.g. surveys, interviews, focus groups.
- d. Peer review – benchmarking with peer review activities to identify areas of good practice, improvement, sharing and collaboration.
- e. Communicate and implement improvements – communicating and reporting findings from the peer review activities to appropriate governing bodies for approval and implementing of improvements.
- f. Evaluate and review – evaluation of the benchmarking process to identify what were the outcomes, how useful were they and were they implemented.

3.1.1 Steps in Benchmarking of the ASA as a whole include:

- a. ASA will identify necessary areas for external benchmarking and arrange partnerships with other higher education providers. These will link to the Quality Assurance Framework elements.
- b. Liaise with partners to set parameters of benchmarking, such as:
 - i. Establishing which institution will take the lead and carry out data analysis;
 - ii. The level of confidentiality and anonymity of data;
 - iii. Establishing what data will be used, how it will be analysed and how it will be segmented and shared; and
 - iv. Set and agree on timeframes and tasks to be completed.
- b. Request approval from relevant approving authority to carry benchmarking within the agreed parameters with consideration of confidentiality and competitive advantage.
- c. Report on benchmark outcomes with all benchmarking partners. Permission from all participating partners must be received before sharing reports with external or publicly.
 - i. Once reports have been agreed upon between all partners, the report will be submitted to the appropriate governance committee/s for action and approval.
 - ii. Development of actions plans and recommendations for quality assurance and continuous improvements should be submitted to the appropriate governance committee/s for approval.
- d. Monitoring of the implementation of actions and recommendations should be carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies or interventions.

The following lists different sets of benchmarking contexts currently conducted as ASA.

3.2 External Benchmarking – Course Design

ASA will engage in External Benchmarking to further strengthen our strategic initiatives in course design, and to ensure that the courses on offer at ASA are in line with best practice as regards the following;

3.2.1 Delivery

This includes nominal hours, assessment types, learning outcomes, course structure, self-directed hours, modality and all comparable elements to inform ASA's proposed course design initiatives.

3.2.2 Outcomes Benchmarking

This includes course, unit, and graduate objectives to inform ASA's course design initiatives.

3.2.3 Industry/Stakeholder engagement

This includes industry participation and context, external accreditation standards and WIL and Internship implications.

3.2.4 Technology and resources

This includes the comparison of technological and content resources across programs.

3.2.5 Best Practice

This includes content types, design choices, engagement and study activities for comparison to ASA's proposed course design initiatives.

In all cases listed above, the benchmarking practice will take place via research driven by the Director of Learning and Innovation, as well as the Academic Dean, and is included in all course proposals for reference via a *Benchmarking Matrix*. The matrix will serve as a reference point for all crucial design elements listed above, and also serve to highlight from a course development perspective which areas require more scrutiny, and further evaluation.

3.3 External Benchmarking – Quality Assurance

Additionally, ASA will engage in external benchmarking to maintain and curate our own quality assurance requirements. This can include but is not limited to:

- Validation practices
- Moderation practices
- Unit review practices
- Peer review of teaching capacities
- Data sharing – outcomes benchmarking (involving metrics such as completion, attrition, results, retention etc.)
- Student engagement practices
- Student success metrics

All of the aforementioned categories will be driven by relationships with comparable delivery partners. This includes organisations which are aligned with ASA by;

- Delivery style and modality – ASA currently delivery our programs in 8-week intakes, with no exams. Part of our benchmarking is focused on data sharing to determine the efficacy of this style of delivery and assessment.
- Course alignment – ASA will focus our benchmarking primarily on courses which align with our current offerings, of Technology Management, Business and Accounting.
- Strategic alignment – ASA will also establish partnerships which include our strategic imperatives for expansion, including organisations that also deliver in other fields of study, such as Information Technology, Teaching Early Childhood, Project Management, and Hospitality.

ASA will engage via the agreement on the terms of the benchmarking via an MOU. This will include details which will inform the practices thereafter. ASA and our benchmarking counterparts will engage in structured workshops, to share best practice, and network for future engagement.

3.3.1 Data Sharing

All benchmarking partnerships will be entered into with the proviso that there will be formal data sharing, in which we compare course quality metrics such as pass rates, grade distributions, attrition, retention and engagement, and any other agreed upon pertinent data. These data sets will contribute to ASA's *Annual Academic Report*, furnished to the Academic Board each year.

3.3.2 Workshops

All benchmarking partnerships will be entered into with the proviso that there will be a minimum of two *Academic Workshops* per calendar year. These workshops will involve the sharing of best practice across the organisations, as well as the mechanics of the aforementioned Quality Assurance practices, such as Moderation, Validation and Unit review. These serve as Professional Development seminars for all parties, as well as the opportunity of the expansion of collegial behaviours, such as context sharing and networking.

3.4 External referencing – Academic and Non-Academic

External referencing involves comparing ASA operations, practices, and plans against other higher education providers or against external reference points.

External reference points may include, but are not limited to:

- Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF),
- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) (HESFs),
- Codes of Practice,
- Course and Unit Learning Outcomes of other providers,
- Professional accreditation standards and requirements; and
- Operational processes.

3.4.1 Steps in External Referencing of ASA courses

- a. External Referencing of ASA courses will be conducted on a regular basis of a cycle of five years or within two years of re-accreditation which forms a Comprehensive Course Review. This will include:
 - i. Establish Partnership agreements;
 - ii. Establish proposed referencing activities;
 - iii. Establish how referencing activities are to be completed; and
 - iv. Proposed timeframes.
- c. Receive approval for benchmarking activities from the approving authority within the agreed parameters with consideration of confidentiality and competitive advantage.
- d. Course materials will be selected, prepared, and provided to the partners for benchmarking.
- e. Reviewers should be provided templates to complete responses to the benchmarking tasks.

- f. Report on benchmark results with all benchmarking partners. Permission from all participating partners must be received before sharing reports with external or publicly.
 - i. Once reports have been agreed upon between all partners, the report will be submitted to the appropriate governance committee/s for action and approval.
 - ii. Development of actions plans and recommendations for quality assurance and continuous improvements should be submitted to the appropriate governance committee/s for approval.
- g. Monitoring of the implementation of actions and recommendations should be carried out evaluate the effectiveness of strategies or interventions.

3.5 Responsibilities

The Board of Directors and Academic Board are responsible for leading the key strategy of institutional organisational change and approval of benchmarking and external referencing activities, implementation of improvements.

The Senior Executive Management team are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of improvements after approval.

The Director Quality and Compliance will review policy requirements and ensure all benchmarking requirements are carried out in a timely fashion.

4. Version Control

This Procedure has been reviewed and approved by the ASA Board of Directors as at February 2025 and is reviewed every three years.

The Procedure, with associated Policy, are published and available on the ASA website <https://www.asahe.edu.au/policies-and-forms/>.

Change and Version Control				
Version	Authored	Brief Description of the changes	Date Approved:	Effective Date:
2025.1	Academic Dean	Details around specific benchmarking contexts included, including categorisations, mechanics and output.	18/02/2025	06/03/2025
2024.1	Quality and Policy Officer	Document formatting updated to reflect change of Trading Name to ASA Institute of Higher Education.	28/06/2024 by CEO	01/07/2024
2023.1	Director Learning and Innovation	New procedure to supplement the associated policy.	12/12/2023	18/12/2023