

## Health Education and Training Institute Higher Education External Referencing and Benchmarking Policy

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<b>Risk Assessment</b>	As per Attachment 1 to this document

**Issued under the authority of the Health Education and Training Institute Higher Education Governing Council**

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# Health Education and Training Institute Higher Education External Referencing and Benchmarking Policy

## Policy Statement

Higher Education Training Institute (HETI) Higher Education undertakes external referencing and benchmarking in relation to publicly available government data and with internal and external national and international comparators as part of its *Academic Quality Assurance Framework* in order to ensure the continuous improvement of its courses in accordance with the requirements of the Higher Education Standards (2015).

External referencing and benchmarking may involve comparisons of courses, the success of student cohorts against comparable courses of study, especially in reference to progression rates, attrition rates, completion times and rates and the assessment methods and grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes for selected units of study within courses (Higher Education Standard 5.3).

The HETI *Academic Quality Assurance Framework* also mandates benchmarking with external organisations in relation to policy coherence and teaching practices.

The type and nature of external referencing and benchmarking may vary from time to time in accordance with HETI Higher Education's strategic goals and priorities.

HETI Higher Education uses the results of regular external referencing and benchmarking to mitigate future risks to the quality of the education provided and to guide and evaluate improvements to its courses (Higher Education Standard 5.7).

## Aims and Objectives

1. This policy outlines principles and procedures for staff engaging in external referencing and benchmarking activities on behalf of HETI Higher Education.
2. This policy applies to all staff involved in external referencing and benchmarking activities on behalf of HETI Higher Education.

## Definitions

3. Benchmarking: '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). In the context of HETI Higher Education, according to the Quality Assurance Policy, 'benchmarking means the comparison of performance and process against best practice and performance in the higher education sector or elsewhere, with the aim of improving Health Education and Training Institute Higher Education courses, programs and teaching. Wherever possible, national and international reference points will be used.'

4. 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' (TEQSA, *Guidance Note: External referencing, including Benchmarking*, p. 1).

## Overview

5. External referencing and benchmarking are core elements within the HETI Higher Education *Academic Quality Framework* and the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle of management that underpins the quality management process.
6. External referencing and benchmarking activities are tools designed to implement HETI Higher Education's *Academic Assurance Quality Framework* goals (page 3) of promoting 'a climate of continuous reflection on the relevance and effectiveness of the educational programs being offered' by questioning 'the beliefs and mindsets, values, traditions and habits underpinning our educational practices' thus 'linking quality assurance with quality enhancement.'

## Principles

7. HETI Higher Education undertakes external referencing and benchmarking activities to facilitate continuous improvement by:
  - a. providing evidence of the quality of HETI Higher Education's academic operations
  - b. providing external evidence for the development of internal improvements
  - c. establishing or fostering collaborative improvement efforts across providers
  - d. providing academic scrutiny of courses of study prior to approval for submission for accreditation or renewal of accreditation with regulatory and professional registration bodies.

8. External referencing activities provide a comparison of performance in the key leadership, operational and educational areas identified by HETI Higher Education as strategic and educational priorities and in accordance with its obligations under the Higher Education Standards (2015).
9. The outcomes or results of external referencing and benchmarking are used to provide evidence of the validity of current practice and/or to clearly indicate areas for further improvement as well as to inform strategic planning and decision-making.

## Areas required for benchmarking

15. The Higher Education Standards (2015) require benchmarking including external referencing of the following areas:
  - a. course design, learning outcomes and content, including assessment methods
  - b. student performance data, especially the success of student cohorts against comparable courses of study in relation to progression rates, attrition rates, success rates, completion times and rates and moderation of assessment.
16. HETI Higher Education may enter into external referencing and benchmarking projects in areas other than those required in Clause 15 in accordance with its strategic goals and priorities for the purpose of continuous improvement.

## Types of external referencing and benchmarking

17. In its *Guidance Note: External Referencing, including Benchmarking*, TEQSA outlines the broad types of benchmarking including:
  - a. **Organisational benchmarking** in which comparisons are made at the organisational level (institution, faculty/department, school, course and unit levels).
  - b. **Course benchmarking** of course design and student performance.
  - c. **Process benchmarking** involving comparisons of particular processes and practices e.g. of cycle times, efficiency.
  - d. **Outcomes benchmarking** relating to the comparison of outcomes data, especially student outcomes such as attrition and completion rates.
  - e. **Best-practice benchmarking** in which the provider selects a comparator thought to be at the forefront in the area to be benchmarked.

## Data Sources

18. *External* referencing and benchmarking may be carried out in relation to the following sources of data:

- a. Commonwealth Government comparative data collections, such as *Higher Education Statistics*, which provides student data on attrition, success and completion, the performance of equity groups, student-staff ratios and student load, and *Quality Indicators of Learning and Teaching*, which provides data on student satisfaction with courses, graduate employment and employer satisfaction
- b. Other Higher Education providers
- c. Sector-wide benchmarking projects and networks
- d. Professional associations in relevant disciplines
- e. Internal data sets, especially for comparison of courses, quality of teaching, student performance and satisfaction.

19. *Additional* data sources relevant to the goals of HETI Higher Education may be explored as they arise over time.

### **Principles for the selection of external referencing and benchmarking partners**

20. At HETI Higher Education, partners selected for external referencing and benchmarking should demonstrate the following features:

- a. Similar vision, objectives and discipline field
- b. Similar but not competing set of courses
- c. Similar size and student demographic
- d. A willingness to exchange information and to engage in constructive discussion of the results
- e. A good record of performance in the areas to be externally referenced and benchmarked.

### **Conditions for external referencing and benchmarking partnership agreements and the exchange of information**

21. The following conditions must apply to external referencing and benchmarking partnership agreements and the exchange of information entered into by HETI Higher Education:

- a. If a benchmarking agreement is entered into, a Memorandum of Understanding outlining requirements concerning confidentiality, intellectual property, use and the type and level of information to be exchanged should be included in the agreement.
- b. All benchmarking operations and exchanges of information are confidential between the partners unless all partners involved in the project agree otherwise.

- c. Benchmarking information should be used only for the specific purpose for which it was obtained unless all partners involved in the project agree otherwise.
- d. The type or level of information exchanged should be comparable between the external referencing and benchmarking partners.
- e. All rights relating to any intellectual property developed in the course of any external referencing and benchmarking activity need to be negotiated and recorded by the relevant partners.

## **Procedures**

- 22. In accordance with the requirements of the HESF (2015) and the strategic priorities of HETI Higher Education, the Learning Pathways Manager is responsible for:
  - a. Identifying priority focus areas for which external referencing and benchmarking data would be appropriate
  - b. Identifying appropriate external referencing and benchmarking partners
  - c. Formulating an external referencing and/or benchmarking proposal
  - d. Submitting the proposal to the Director Education and Training and/or the Director Psychiatry and Mental Health Programs for review
  
- 23. The Director Education and Training and/or the Director Psychiatry and Mental Health Programs are responsible for:
  - a. Evaluating and amending where necessary the proposal of the Learning Pathways Manager
  - b. Submitting the proposal to the Executive Director for review and progression for approval.
  
- 24. The Executive Director is responsible for rejecting, approving and/or requiring amendments to the proposal.
  
- 25. On endorsement by the Executive Director, the proposal is submitted to the Academic Board and the Governing Council for progression to the HETI Chief Executive for final approval.
  
- 26. On final approval, the Executive Director or an officer delegated by the Executive Director is responsible for contacting the proposed partner with a view to establishing a formal partnership, the criteria and conditions of the external referencing and benchmarking exercise and the signing of a formal agreement between HETI and the other organisation that would be signed off by the Chief Executive.

27. On the formulation of a partnership agreement, the Learning Pathways Manager is responsible for:
  - a. Contacting relevant personnel in the external referencing and benchmarking partner organisation and initiating the collection and exchange of data
  - b. Managing and monitoring the external referencing and benchmarking project
  - c. Providing reports on the project, including proposed improvements to the course derived from the external referencing and benchmarking data, to the Director Education and Training and/or the Director Psychiatry and Mental Health Programs.
28. Procedures for proposed improvements to courses based on external referencing and benchmarking projects must be made in accordance with the HETI Higher Education Course Monitoring and Review Policy
29. On approval of proposed improvements to courses based on external referencing and benchmarking projects, the Learning Pathways Manager is responsible for managing, monitoring and reporting to the Directors the implementation of approved improvements to the course.
30. The Director Education and Training and/or the Director Psychiatry and Mental Health Programs are responsible for submitting reports on the progress and results of the external referencing or benchmarking project to the Executive Director.
31. Reports and results concerning the progress and results of the external referencing or benchmarking project are reported to the Academic Board and the Governing Council.

## **Related Documents**

- Health Education and Training Institute Higher Education *Academic Quality Assurance Policy*
- Health Education and Training Institute Higher Education *Academic Quality Assurance Framework*

## DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Issued	Status	Author	Reason for Change
v0.1	December 2018	Draft	David Baxter	External consultant review by David Baxter
v0.1	4 February 2019	Draft	Silke O'Callaghan	Endorsed by the Teaching and Learning Committee
v0.1	28 February 2019	Draft	Rhonda Loftus	Endorsed at the Academic Board
V0.1	27 March 2019	Draft	Rhonda Loftus	Approved by the Governing Council
V1.0	24 April 2019	Final	Jana Chadid	Format amendments, updated TRIM reference, published version
v1.1	03 February 2020	Noted	Susan Grimes	Organisational changes; new position title, and responsibilities. Noted by the T&L Committee.
v1.1	14 February 2020	Final	-	Published



## IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST – COMPLIANCE SELF ASSESSMENT

Assessed by:	Date of Assessment:		
IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS	Not commenced	Partial compliance	Full compliance
1.			
	Notes:		
2.			
	Notes: Relevant Director		
3.			
	Notes: TRIM reference number -		
4.			
	Notes:		
5.			
6.			
	Notes:		

## RISK ASSESSMENT

<Document Title>

1.	Policy/Process being assessed	Notes
	Document Number	
	Publication date	
	Scheduled review date	
	Date of this risk assessment	
	Name & position of assessing officer	
2.	Summary of policy purpose (from PD Cover Page)	
3.	Agency (HETI) key roles & responsibilities as per PD	
4.	Risk Assessment	
4.1	<b>Identification of risks</b> – what might happen & how?	
	1.	
	2.	
4.2	<b>Analysis of risks</b> – combined estimate of the consequence & likelihood of the risk, using NSW Health Risk Matrix (attached)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consequence:</li> <li>• Likelihood:</li> <li>• Risk rating :</li> </ul>	
4.3	<b>Evaluation of risks</b> – comparison of the level of risk as determined against a predetermined criteria to determine whether a level of risk is acceptable or needs to be treated. Risk level assessed after implementing treatment:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consequence:</li> <li>• Likelihood:</li> <li>• Risk rating :</li> </ul>	
	Evaluation –	

### Risk Assessment Approval

Name & position of approving T2 Officer:	
Date:	