GUIDELINE

BENCHMARKING GUIDELINE

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PURPOSE

This Guideline outlines CQUniversity's commitment to self-evaluation, self-accreditation and enhancement in practice to enable measurement and comparisons of our professional standards to be evaluated and to review performance for continuous improvement.

Benchmarking activities are aligned with the University's strategic objectives, and can be applied to all aspects of the University's teaching and learning, research and enterprise functions.

Benchmarking projects serve to strengthen recognition of individual and area performance as well as contributing to the University's overall quality performance.

EFFECTIVE DATE   19 August 2015

SCOPE

This Guideline applies to all staff of the University and its controlled entities. They are intended for use by the CQUniversity community to facilitate successful benchmarking activities as ongoing self-evaluation, as a structured learning process to improve practices and a means of measurement against the strategic goals of the University.

While there is no prescribed methodology for conducting benchmarking exercises, the University expects staff to comply with the core principles described below.

1   BENCHMARKING PRINCIPLES

1.1   Benchmarking and evaluation activities inform the University's quality processes through provision of internal and external reference points. Benchmarking assists CQUniversity to measure its effectiveness in achieving its performance objectives (benchmarks) and to place these achievements in a broader environmental context. It informs strategic planning and decision-making through the identification of strengths and weaknesses in practices and performance.

1.2   Benchmarking is an important and integral element within the quality management process of the Plan, Do, Check, Act and is a core element within the Quality Enhancement Framework.

1.3   These are the underlying principles for benchmarking at CQUniversity:
- Planning and goal setting are informed through referencing comparative performance in areas of strategic importance,

- Informing and enhancing performance – regular review and enhancement in all CQUniversity activities are realised through self-evaluation, reflective practice, and external input. Comparisons and collegial endeavours identify areas where performance should be enhanced,
- Evidence-based review of practices and procedures are founded on benchmarking approaches of collecting and analysing data appropriate to the practice under review and to establish the extent of improvement required, and
- Benchmarking partnerships adhere to internationally accepted standards in conducting benchmarking activities. Adherence to this code contributes to efficient, effective, and ethical benchmarking.

2   BENCHMARKING AS AN EMBEDDED PRACTICE

2.1   Benchmarking should be embedded in practice within all key areas of the University and demonstrated within the establishment of standards of practice, comparators for performance and evidence of continuous improvement.

2.2   The development and monitoring of the Strategic and Operational Plans requires benchmarked data for comparative and performance indicator development, monitoring and review.

3   BENCHMARKING PROJECTS AND CATEGORISATIONS

3.1   Benchmarking may also be undertaken as a specific project to compare specific practices and performance measures as part of a process of reflective practice to learn, adapt and improve performance.

3.2   Benchmarking can be generally categorised into one or more of the following:
- Sector Benchmarking – enables comparison of performance against others in the higher education sector in Australia. Sector benchmarking enables the University to ensure the quality and performance of its programs, research, demographic trends and organisational efficiency, and/or
- Institutional (Collaborative) Benchmarking – enables comparison of performance and practices with a partner institution/s, and/or
- International Benchmarking – enables a wider focus to compare performance and practices with international entities or within international league assessments, and/or
- Discipline Benchmarking – enables comparison of relative performance within a specific discipline area, this includes within teaching, research and professional practices, and/or
- Standards-Based Benchmarking – enables analysis of processes, practices and outcomes against a generally agreed set of standards, and/or
- Internal Benchmarking – enables comparison of practices and processes between areas within the University as part of a process for continued improvements in processes and practices, and/or
- Generic Benchmarking – enables identification of best practice in a range of areas from organisations that will enable CQUniversity to learn from their processes, procedures or practices, and/or
- Individual Benchmarking – comparison activities that may be undertaken by an individual academic or professional staff member to compare performance in core function activities, and/or
- Unit/Group Benchmarking – enables comparisons of core unit/group performance and practices such as School, Faculty, Research Centre/Institute or Directorate.

4   RESPONSIBILITIES

Governance

4.1   Good Practice and Benchmarking inform corporate strategic planning activities through the integrated planning framework of the University as detailed in the Planning and Reporting Policy. The components of the integrated planning framework provide targets (benchmarks) aligned to the strategic aspirations of the University.

Management

4.2   It is the responsibility of members (or nominee) of the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee and those with management roles to ensure that strategic and operational activities, measurements (including benchmarks),

review and reporting are undertaken in accordance with the relevant policies, regulations and guidelines and the various planning and reporting schedules.

Individuals

4.3 The Performance Review, Planning and Development (PRPD) process is a formal tool to facilitate discussions between staff and their supervisors in order to cooperatively plan, set goals (both individual and organisational) and align actions and behaviour to the Strategic and Operational Plans of the University. Benchmarking can form a key component of these discussions through consideration of individual performance and contribution to performance targets of the organisational unit and whole of University.

5   RESOURCES FOR BENCHMARKING

5.1 Resourcing of benchmarking projects is the responsibility of the relevant School, Directorate, Division, Centre or Institute. The annual sector benchmarking is the responsibility of the University but the collection and reporting of data and information may be a delegated function within an operational area.

Information Resources

5.2 A Benchmarking Website provides staff with guidance and broad advice including areas for consideration, types of benchmarking activities, a Benchmarking Key Activities Checklist for Benchmarking Projects and referrals to data sources, such as CQUniversity's information dashboards.

Benchmarking Register

5.3 A Benchmarking Register for CQUniversity benchmarking projects is included on the website. Reports lodged or linked to the register provide guidance and information for current and future reference.

6   COMPLIANCE AND MONITORING

The overarching aim of benchmarking is to contribute to continuous improvement of the University's performance, to which all staff have a responsibility.

Monitoring will be undertaken through planning and reporting processes.

DEFINITIONS

Benchmark: A point of reference against which something may be measured (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), cited in Stella & Woodhouse 2007, p 14.)

Benchmarking: Benchmarking is the formal and structured learning process for identifying practices which enhance performance, for observing and exchanging information about them, adapting or incorporating practices to meet the needs of one's own organisation, and the implementation of the amended practice.

Refer to the University glossary for the definition of terms used in this policy and procedure.

RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

- CQUniversity Benchmarking Website
- Quality Enhancement Framework
- Planning and Reporting Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Risk Management Framework and Guidelines
- Learning and Teaching Quality Policy and Principles
- CQUniversity Strategic Plan
- CQUniversity Corporate Plan
- Key Performance Indicators
- Planning and Reporting Schedule

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor and President
Advisory Committee to Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee
Administrator	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Research)
Next Review Date	15/07/2018

Approval and Amendment History	Details
Original Approval Authority and Date	Vice-Chancellor and President 19/09/2011
Amendment Authority and Date	Vice-Chancellor and President 15/07/2015