



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**NOTRE DAME**  
A U S T R A L I A

# Policy:

## Benchmarking

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Assurance

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## 1 OBJECTS OF THE UNIVERSITY

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The University's Objects are defined in Section 5 of its Act of Parliament:

The Objects of the University are:

- (a) the provision of university education, within a context of Catholic faith and values; and
- (b) the provision of an excellent standard of -
  - i. teaching, scholarship and research;
  - ii. training for the professions; and
  - iii. pastoral care for its students.

## 2 PURPOSE

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- 2.1** The University encourages benchmarking with comparable institutions nationally and internationally as a means of:
  - (a) Supporting its Objects and Strategic Plan.
  - (b) Improving performance and assuring standards.
- 2.2** This Policy provides for a coordinated, considered and systematic approach to Benchmarking.

## 3 SCOPE

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- 3.1** This Policy applies to all areas and Schools across the University.
- 3.2** This Policy does not apply to processes used on an informal and ad hoc basis to compare practices with other institutions, such as by networking or through peer review activities.

## 4 PRINCIPLES

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- 4.1** The University undertakes Benchmarking in accordance with the following principles:
  - 4.1.1 Benchmarking processes support the University's Objects and Strategic Plan.
  - 4.1.2 Benchmarking activities are well planned, and objectives are clear and achievable. Where relevant, Benchmarking is aligned to accepted standards and good practice across the sector.
  - 4.1.3 Benchmarking processes focus on learning from shared good practices, implementing potential improvements from findings, and promoting mutual interest and benefit for all parties involved.
  - 4.1.4 Benchmarking activities are properly project managed, and all parties have a clear understanding of responsibility, deliverables, deadlines, scope, and goals.
  - 4.1.5 Proposed Benchmarking indicators and measures are clearly documented and reviewed for alignment to structures, processes and terminology to ensure that meaningful comparisons may be made.
  - 4.1.6 Benchmarking activities are (prior to inception) assessed for balance in terms of the value received from undertaking a Benchmarking process and the costs involved (including Staff time, logistics and implementation costs).
  - 4.1.7 Benchmarking results are reviewed and include identification of good practices as well as recommendations for improvement.
  - 4.1.8 Benchmarking results are reported to the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic or delegate

(for academic matters) or to the Head of Campus (for non-academic matters) and strategies implemented to support improvement at the University. In the case of benchmarking of institutional wide data or processes, results are reported to Executive Council and strategies for improvement implemented as directed by the Vice Chancellor.

- 4.1.9 An evaluation of the Benchmarking methodology is undertaken to inform future Benchmarking activities
- 4.1.10 Benchmarking is most effective when undertaken as an ongoing exercise with a view to embedding it in key processes, including governance processes relating to accreditation and re-accreditation of courses, course review process and the annual course monitoring process. Standards Benchmarking is also embedded in external accreditation by relevant professional bodies.

## 5 APPROACHES TO BENCHMARKING

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- 5.1 **Focus of comparison** may involve comparisons of processes, policies, standards and/or performance data. Data may relate to, for example, enrolment trends; student attrition and retention rates; pass rates; grade distributions; Student feedback results (such as from the Australian Graduate Survey); staffing profile (numbers, employment types and/or qualifications); course structures; Staff satisfaction results; research publications; scholarships; and research grants.
- 5.2 Benchmarking activities may be focused at a course level, discipline (or Field of Education) or at the institutional level. Comparisons may be made on a state, national, or international basis and may involve all other providers in the sector, a sample of other providers or a single institution. Alternatively, a Benchmarking partner may be outside the tertiary education sector if such an organisation demonstrates better practice.
- 5.3 Alternatively internal benchmarking across Schools or areas of the University may also be undertaken in relation to Staff or Student feedback results.

## 6 AUTHORISATION

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- 6.1 Authorisation for undertaking formal Benchmarking activities is set out in the University's *Standing Delegations of Authority*.
- 6.2 The Benchmarking process to be followed is set out in the *Guideline: Benchmarking at Attachment 1*.

## 7 EXTERNAL INSTITUTIONS AND/OR ORGANISATIONS

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- 7.1 A legal agreement or Memorandum of Understanding ('**Agreement**') must be entered into for formal Benchmarking activities involving a proposed arrangement with one or more external institutions or organisations and an exchange of information involving information about the University's activities that:
  - 7.1.1 may be deemed commercial in confidence or sensitive information (including relating to privacy and intellectual property); and/or
  - 7.1.2 has the potential to cause reputational damage to the University; and/or
  - 7.1.3 relates to institutional wide activities.

- 7.2** Pursuant to Clause 7.1, the Agreement must:
- 7.2.1 clarify the purposes for which information is to be used, role and responsibilities of the institutions involved and mutual objectives;
  - 7.2.2 ensure the information can only be used for the express purpose set out in the Agreement;
  - 7.2.3 ensure confidentiality, in particular that there should be no external communication of benchmarking findings without the express written permission of all parties;
  - 7.2.4 provide for equal access to information between all parties; and
  - 7.2.5 clarify intellectual property ownership of the Benchmarking findings/results.

## 8 RECORDING

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- 8.1** A central register of all formal Benchmarking Agreements will be maintained by the Secretariat on the National drive.

## 9 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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- 9.1 Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic** (or their delegate) has responsibility for implementing improvement strategies based on Benchmarking results for academic matters.
- 9.2 Head of Campus** has responsibility for implementing improvement strategies based on Benchmarking results for non-academic matters.
- 9.3 Executive Council** are responsible for implementing institution-wide strategies for improvement based on Benchmarking results, as directed by the Vice Chancellor.

## 10 RELATED DOCUMENTS

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- 10.1** *Policy: Institutional Review Framework*
- 10.2** *Guideline: Course Monitoring, Review and Re-Accreditation*
- 10.3** *Guideline: Benchmarking*
- 10.4** *Standing Delegations of Authority*

## 11 DEFINITIONS

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- 5.1 For the purpose of this Policy, the following definitions apply:**

**Benchmarking** means a structured and formal comparison of services, activities, or performance data in order to identify relative strengths and weaknesses. Benchmarking goals at the University include improving processes and performance, demonstrating accountability, improving collaborative relationships, generating management information or developing an increased understanding of practices, processes or performance.

**Benchmark** means a point of reference against which a matter may be measured.

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date of approval</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Amendment</b>
1	16 March 2015	Vice Chancellor	Effective date – new Policy.
2	11 July 2019	DVC, Academic	Minor amendments - updated nomenclature and reformatting to new template.