# Benchmarking Policy

## Scope

This policy applies to all staff, contractors and consultants engaged in work for the Kaplan Australia and New Zealand Group across all of its registered higher education providers including Kaplan Business School, Kaplan Professional and Kaplan Higher Education pathway colleges, referred to jointly as “Kaplan” and individually as a “School”.

## Purpose

Kaplan conducts benchmarking activities to provide a comparison of performance in governance, teaching and learning, quality assurance and operational areas (collectively referred to as “operations”) against relevant internal and external benchmarks. The outcomes of benchmarking should confirm Kaplan’s areas of strength and reaffirm best practice, indicate areas for further improvement and identify gaps that have yet to be met by other providers and which subsequently serve as opportunities for innovation at Kaplan.

Benchmarking activities inform quality improvement by providing internal and external reference points that enable Kaplan to measure the effectiveness with which performance objectives are achieved. Benchmarking activities also inform the processes of strategic planning and decision-making through the identification of strengths and weaknesses in practices and performance.

## Definition(s)

**Benchmark** refers to a reference point against which an aspect of Kaplan’s operations may be measured and used as a comparison to an external comparator(s).

**Benchmarking activity** refers to the formal and structured process of external referencing of Kaplan’s operations with that of external comparators. Comparing Kaplan’s operations to relevant comparators allows Kaplan to identify areas of improvement, adopt best practice and capitalise on opportunities that other providers have overlooked. Benchmarking activities are integral to Kaplan’s commitment to the ongoing review, development and enhancement of all aspects of Kaplan’s operations and practices.

**Outcome(s)** refer to the final result or determination of benchmarking activities.

## Principles

Kaplan adheres to the following principles in relation to benchmarking activities:

- A systematic and institution-wide commitment to continuous improvement and quality assurance.
- Credible and reliable benchmarking across comparable institutions – both nationally and internationally – is an essential avenue through which comparative strengths and weaknesses are identified, thereby improving performance, leveraging opportunities for innovation and adopting best practice.
- Kaplan’s benchmarking practices accord with Standards 1.4 and 5.3 of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (“HESF”) while also extending beyond the academic domain to encompass any aspects of Kaplan’s operations for which comparative data of relevance is able to be accessed.
- Evidence-based reviews underpinned by the judicious collection and analysis of relevant and valid data reinforce the currency and appropriateness of Kaplan’s operations.
- Strategic planning processes, such as the setting of key performance indicators (KPIs) and the prioritised implementation of various initiatives, are additionally informed by the findings and recommendations produced by external referencing (i.e., comparative benchmarking).
- The template for Kaplan’s comprehensive course reviews is enforced by the Academic Board and mandates the multifaceted integration of benchmarking to ensure the overall performance of every course is consistently and objectively evaluated in the context of relevant sector-based comparators.
- Kaplan’s benchmarking activities are overseen by peak academic governance bodies, principally the Academic Board and the Teaching & Learning Committee.

- All student data is securely stored, accessed only by authorised personnel and treated with the highest standards of confidentiality.
- All substantive improvements arising from benchmarking activities are recorded in the appropriate Continuous Improvement Register to ensure transparency, accountability and ongoing monitoring.

# Benchmarking Expectations

## Types of Benchmarking Activities

Consistent with the requirements set out in the HESF, Kaplan engages in the following broad types of benchmarking:

- **Institutional benchmarking:**
    - This may include, but is not limited to, the review and comparison of staff-to-student ratios, employee engagement, campus facilities, critical incidents, course offerings, sustainability, agent performance and third-party arrangements.
- **Course-related benchmarking:**
    - This may include, but is not limited to, learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, assessment methods, emerging innovations, modes of delivery, entry requirements, industry involvement, integration of technology, advancements in the field of education, changes to students' needs, and risks to quality.
- **Student-centred benchmarking:**
    - This may include, but is not limited to, the cohort-based monitoring of student performance (particularly subgroup analyses of attrition, retention, progression and rates of completion), student satisfaction, support services, student wellbeing, diversity and inclusion (such as first-in-family, socioeconomic status and international students), academic integrity, attendance / absenteeism, scope and effectiveness of interventions, and non-submission of assessments.
- **Academic benchmarking:**
    - This may include, but is not limited to, scholarship obligations, continuous professional development, teaching practices, course supervision, academic leadership, student evaluations of their teachers and criteria for academic appointments.
- **Operational benchmarking:**
    - This may include, but is not limited to, admission processes, recognition of prior learning procedures and information management systems.
- **Graduate benchmarking:**
    - This may include, but is not limited to, employment outcomes, median salaries, employer satisfaction, alumni engagement and enrolment in further education.
- **Governance benchmarking:**
    - This may include, but is not limited to, policy development, course accreditation frameworks, regulatory compliance and quality assurance systems.
- **Financial benchmarking:**
    - This may include, but is not limited to, tuition fees, conversion rates and scholarships.

## Benchmarking Partners

Kaplan's benchmarking partners should:

- teach a similar student demographic
- offer courses within the same field of education
- have similar modes of delivery
- maintain a record of positive performance in the area(s) to be benchmarked

- remain registered as a higher education provider within the same TEQSA category as the Kaplan school in question, or higher (e.g., Kaplan Business School, as a self-accrediting authority, should prioritise external referencing with other self-accrediting authorities, University Colleges or Universities).

## Benchmarking Standards

- The HESF requires benchmarking activities be conducted as part of comprehensive course reviews, occurring at least once every seven years.
- For academic matters, the Academic Dean or equivalent is responsible for initiating a benchmarking project, including the timing of the project and the approval of benchmarking partners.
- For non-academic matters, the Business Unit Head / General Manager responsible for a particular function can initiate a benchmarking project and approve the project's timing and partners.
- Benchmarking outcomes are appropriately recorded and reported to ensure informed decision-making and to support effective implementation of identified improvements and innovations. For academic matters, a report should be submitted to the Teaching & Learning Committee. For non- academic matters, a report should be provided to the Business Unit Head / General Manager.
- All information collected as part of any benchmarking activity is treated as confidential. Permission must be sought and granted from the Academic Dean or equivalent (for academic matters) or the relevant Business Unit Head / General Manager (for other matters) before any external communication relating to benchmarking outcomes takes place.
- Wherever possible, benchmarking activities should include national and international comparators.

## Methods of Benchmarking

Kaplan recognises that benchmarking is most effective when undertaken through a variety of complementary methods that draw on both internal and external sources of evidence, such as the following examples:

- **Peer Review** – Systematic evaluation of academic programs, teaching practices and institutional processes.
- **Moderation** – Cross-institutional and internal reviews of grading standards and constructive alignment.
- **Professional Accreditation** – External validation of courses by industry bodies (e.g., CPA, Chartered Accountants ANZ, Australian Computer Society).
- **Industry Engagement** – Formalised consultations via Course Advisory Committees.
- **Sector Publications** – Case studies, reports, awards and exemplars of recognised best practice.
- **Market Intelligence** – Rankings, government reports and competitor prospectuses.
- **Collaborations** – Joint benchmarking projects, consortia or data-sharing arrangements with other providers.
- **Involvement with Peak Bodies** – Active participation with IEAA, IHEA and English Australia.
- **Collaborations with Employers or Industry** – Direct partnerships and work-integrated learning.
- **Student Representation** – Structured engagement to benchmark student perceptions and priorities.
- **National and International Frameworks** – Engagement with QILT surveys and OECD data.
- **Internal Cross-Campus Comparisons** – Comparison of courses and student outcomes across Kaplan's own campuses to ensure equity and consistency.

## Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following related Kaplan policies:

- Academic Quality and Governance Framework
- Continuous Improvement Policy
- Course and Subject Development and Review Policy
- Learning Facilities and Resources Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Student Record Management Policy

## Relevant Legislation

As a registered education provider, Kaplan operates under strict laws and regulations. Policies and Procedures are in place to ensure compliance with such laws. Below, please find the most relevant legislation which apply to this policy:

- Australian Qualifications Framework
- ELICOS Standards 2018
- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- TEQSA Guidance Note: Academic monitoring, review and improvement
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (TEQSA Act)

## Version Control and accountable officers

It is the joint responsibility of the Implementation Officer and Responsible Officer to ensure compliance with this policy.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Policy Category** | Academic |
| **Responsible Officer** | Vice President, Academic |
| **Implementation Officer(s)** | Academic Dean or equivalent (for academic matters) and/or the relevant Business Unit Head/General Manager |
| **Review Date** | September 2023 |
| **Approved by** | |
| KBS and KHE Academic Boards | |

| Version | Authored by | Brief Description of the changes | Date Approved | Effective Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.0 | Quality, Regulations and Standards Team | •Major review Updated definitions Updated purpose Updated principles<br>•Addition of Related Policies Addition of Relevant Legislation | 06.10.2021 | 13.10.2021 |
| 3.0 | Academic Dean | •Refresh of Principles<br>•Clarify benchmarking partners<br>•Insertion of new section: Methods of benchmarking | 19.09.2025 | 19.09.2025 |