
Benchmarking Policy

Scope

This Policy applies to Kaplan's registered Higher Education Providers (HEPs); Kaplan Higher Education Pty Ltd and Kaplan Business School Pty Ltd and their associated entities Murdoch Institute of Technology and University of Adelaide College.

All staff members involved in formal benchmarking or external referencing projects related to learning, teaching or the student experience at Kaplan are expected to follow this Policy.

Purpose

The purpose of the Benchmarking Policy is to:

- establish the expectations and standards to be met when undertaking benchmarking at Kaplan
- ensure that benchmarking activities at Kaplan are approached in a coordinated, considered and systematic way
- ensure higher education operations at Kaplan are comparable to other Australian HEPs and that Kaplan's operations meet and where possible, exceed national and international standards and expectations
- encourage continuous improvement practice across all Kaplan academic activities.

Definition(s)

Benchmarking in this policy refers to the external referencing of Kaplan's practices, processes or performance outcomes with institutional comparators. Comparing Kaplan's activities to relevant peers allows Kaplan to contextualize its performance with regard to other institutions in the sector. Through benchmarking projects, Kaplan participates in the ongoing review, development and enhancement of the quality of all aspects of its operations and practices related to the delivery of Kaplan courses.

Benchmarking principles

Key principles informing this Policy are:

- Kaplan is committed to reviewing, developing and coordinating quality standards and continuous improvement initiatives across its academic entities.
- Kaplan encourages benchmarking or external referencing with comparable institutions as a means of identifying comparative strengths and weaknesses, improving performance and assuring quality and standards.

Benchmarking expectations

Types of benchmarking activities

Consistent with the requirements set out in the Higher Education Standards Framework 2015, (the Threshold Standards, Kaplan will engage in the following five broad types of benchmarking:

1. **Organisational benchmarking**, in which comparisons are made at the organisational level, such as at institutional, department, school, course or unit levels.
 - Organisational benchmarking may include, but is not limited to, the review and comparison of measures like staff ratios, criteria for academic appointments, financial information.
2. **Course benchmarking**, of course design and student performance within courses.
 - Course benchmarking may include, but is not limited to, a review of: individual subjects within a course, learning outcomes, assessment construction, assessment tasks, student work samples, assessment criteria, course admission criteria, student performance and outcomes.
3. **Process benchmarking**, involving comparisons of particular processes and practices.

- Process benchmarking may include, but is not limited to, a review of admission practices or student support services and processes.
- 4. **Outcomes benchmarking**, is about the comparison of outcomes data, such as graduate outcomes e.g. employment or further education outcomes.
- 5. **Best practice benchmarking** in which the provider selects a comparator thought to be at the forefront in the area to be benchmarked.
 - Best practice benchmarking may include, but is not limited to, the benchmarking of policies and processes to determine their efficiency and cost effectiveness.

Benchmarking Partners

Kaplan's benchmarking partners should:

- be comparable in size, vision and objectives
- have a similar student demographic
- offer similar but non-competing courses;
- have a willingness to share; and
- have a record of good performance in the area(s) to be benchmarked.

Benchmarking standards

- The Threshold Standards require benchmarking of the following at least once every seven years:
 - course design, learning outcomes and content, including assessment methods
 - student outcomes data, including the grading of achievement of learning outcomes.
- For academic matters, the Academic Dean or equivalent in liaison with the Academic Board or its delegate is responsible for initiating a benchmarking project, including its timing and the approval of benchmarking partners.
- Similarly, for non-academic matters, the Business Unit Head responsible for a particular function, e.g. Head of Student Services, in liaison with the Business Head can initiate a benchmarking project and approve the benchmarking project's timing and partners.
- Benchmarking outcomes will be appropriately recorded and reported to ensure informed decision-making and support effective implementation of improvements. For academic matters, a report should be submitted through the Academic Dean to the Academic Board and for other matters, a report should be provided to the Business Head.
- All information gathered as part of benchmarking exchange is confidential. Permission must be sought and granted from the Academic Dean or equivalent (for academic matters) and/ or the relevant Business Unit Head (for other matters) before any external communication relating to benchmarking outcomes takes place.

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 (for other matters e.g. operational or student service/ experience)			
Review Date	September 2020			
Approved by				
KBS and KHE Academic Boards				
Version	Authored by	Brief Description of the changes	Date Approved	Effective Date
1	Academic Quality and Governance Team	New Policy replaces Continuous Improvement Policy.	06.09.2017 & 07.09.2017 respectively.	30.09.2017