External Referencing - Academic Policy

1. Purpose of policy

1.1 To mandate the University's approach to external referencing activities, including peer review of assessment and benchmarking.

1.2 To support the quality of learning and teaching through external comparisons, with a view to informing improvements in line with the University Quality and Standards Framework.

1.3 To ensure that the University is meeting the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards).

2. Policy scope and application

2.1 This policy applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs and courses, with a particular focus on program and course design, assessment methods and student performance data.

2.2 This policy does not apply to national benchmarking activity undertaken by the Reporting and Analytics, Information and Analytics Unit.

3. Definitions

Please refer to the University's Glossary of Terms for policies and procedures. Terms and definitions identified below are specific to this policy and are critical to its effectiveness:

Benchmarking: Typically consists of focused improvement through relationships with a benchmarking partner or partners but can also include comparisons against publicly-available information and market intelligence.

External Peer Review of Assessment:

An activity conducted with one or more higher education providers participating in reviews of assessment practices, in selected courses, by academics delivering similar programs. The activity can be singular or reciprocal.

4. Policy Statement

4.1 The University is committed to ensuring the quality of its programs through external referencing and to complying with the requirements of the *Higher Education Standards Framework 2015.*

5. Principles

5.1 External referencing

5.1.1 External referencing involves comparing our operations and practices against those of other higher education providers or against external reference points.

5.1.2 External reference points may include, but are not limited to:

(a) the *Australian Qualifications Framework;*

(b) the University's strategic plan;

(c) the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards);*

(d) relevant Codes of Practice;

(e) discipline learning outcome standards;

(f) external professional accreditation standards and requirements;

(g) employer feedback and input from External Program Advisory Committees;

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(h) the requirements for postgraduate study in the discipline or profession concerned; and

(i) learning outcomes for equivalent programs and courses at other institutions.

5.1.3 The intention of external referencing is to evidence the quality of the University's programs and courses and to inform improvements.

5.1.4 There are a variety of methods for external referencing, including benchmarking, peer review of assessment and moderation.

5.2 External referencing and the program review cycle

5.2.1 The University's quality assurance processes for all programs are centred around the program review cycle, with all programs undergoing external review every five years.

5.2.2 The schedule for program benchmarking will be developed in accordance with the External Referencing: Program Benchmarking – Procedures.

5.2.3 Peer review of assessment must be undertaken at a minimum for at least three courses per five year program review cycle.

5.2.3 A schedule of peer review of assessment activities will be developed in accordance with the External Referencing: Peer Review of Assessment - Procedures.

5.2.4 Benchmarking of the following data must be undertaken for each coursework program at least once per five year review cycle:

(a) attrition, progression and completion times and rates, including where applicable by location of delivery: and

(b) expected program learning outcomes (except those programs which have undertaken such benchmarking over the previous five years as part of the professional accreditation process).

5.2.5 It is recommended that coursework programs also benchmark graduate outcome data.

5.2.6 Benchmarking under Section 5.2.6 could be undertaken either against national field of education data for the discipline (where this is available at sufficient granularity), and/or against equivalent program(s) at other provider(s).

5.2.7 To further quality improvement, staff involved in academic activities are encouraged to undertake additional peer review of assessment and benchmarking activities and can refer to the Peer Review of Assessment Procedures and the Benchmarking Procedures for information on approach and methodology.

END

RELATED DOCUMENTS

• Assessment: Courses and Coursework Programs - Academic Policy

• External Referencing: Peer Review of Assessment - Procedures
• External Referencing: Program Benchmarking - Procedures
• Information Management - Governing Policy

LINKED DOCUMENTS

• External Referencing: Peer Review of Assessment - Procedures

• External Referencing: Program Benchmarking - Procedures

RELATED LEGISLATION / STANDARDS

• Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Cth)
• Australian Qualifications Framework