

BENCHMARKING POLICY

Policy Code	GOV05
Policy Owner	Chief Executive Officer/Principal
Approving authority	Board Of Directors
Approval date	18 February 2025
Commencement date	06 March 2025
Next Review Date	December 2026
Version	2025.1
Relevant legislation or external requirements	National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (National Code) Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (HESFs: 1.4.1, 1.4.3, 1.4.4, 5.3.1, 5.3.4, 5.3.7) Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (Cth) (ESOS Act) Education Services for Overseas Students Regulations 2019 (Cth) (ESOS Regulations) Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (TEQSA Act) Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) requirements Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
Related ASA Documents	Policy Framework Quality Assurance Framework Risk Management Framework Benchmarking Procedure

1. Purpose

ASA Institute of Higher Education (**ASA**) is committed to providing a high standard of performance in learning, teaching, research and associated activities. This policy establishes how ASA seeks continuous improvement of the institution's position as a quality higher education provider by undertaking various external benchmarking and referencing activities.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, directors, officers, external appointees on any ASA board or committee, volunteers, and contractors.

3. Principles

Benchmarking should:

- support ASA's vision and strategic objectives.
- reflect a commitment to continual improvement.
- provide evidence to support the quality and standards of ASA.
- foster collaborative improvement between ASA and other providers.
- be cost-effective and provide value for ASA, its staff and students.

4. Definitions

Term	Definition
academic quality assurance	A framework that provides principles and processes directed to ensure the academic quality aligns with the overall strategic planning and policy of the provider.

Term	Definition
benchmarking	An external referencing activity that typically consists of focused improvement through relationships with a benchmarking partner or partners, but can also include comparing course design against publicly-available information and market intelligence. Benchmarking may vary depending on context. For example, in the context of course accreditation, benchmarking involves comparing performance outcomes and/or processes of similar courses of study delivered by other providers. 'Internal benchmarking' against other relevant courses offered by the provider may also be undertaken.
Best Practice Benchmarking	Is the continuous process of comparing business processes and performance metrics to industry bests and/or best practices from other comparators.
Chief Executive Officer (CEO) / Principal	The Chief Executive Officer is the highest organisational role for ASA and performs the role of Principal as well as their other duties.
Course and Unit Benchmarking	Is the process of the comparison of course and unit design, learning outcomes, assessment construction and student performance.
external referencing	External referencing means a process through which a higher education provider compares an aspect of its operations with an external comparator(s) e.g., comparing the design of a course of study and/or student achievement of learning outcomes with that of a course from another provider.
Operational Benchmarking	Are comparisons at organisational level of institution, department, course, and unit. This includes most non academic processes and implications within the organisation.
Outcomes Benchmarking	Is the practice of comparing student outcomes data of progression, retention, attrition, and completion rates for trend analysis and quality assurance purposes. In course design, this can include unit, course and graduate outcomes.
Process Benchmarking	Involves comparison of specific processes and practices.

5. Policy Statement

ASA is committed to benchmarking as an essential component in effective quality management. Benchmarking assists in continuous improvement and ensuring best practice models are adopted across the organisation. Benchmarking cycles ensure that information is regularly gathered and analysed as a part of its continuous improvement processes. Benchmarking includes the following:

- External Benchmarking – Course Design
- External Benchmarking – Quality Assurance
- External Referencing – Non-Academic (operational benchmarking)
- Internal Benchmarking

5.1. External Benchmarking – Course Design

ASA will engage with external benchmarking to inform their course design choices and initiatives. This external benchmarking will include consideration of the following elements:

- Delivery – This includes nominal hours, assessment type, learning outcomes, course structure, self-directed hours, modality and all comparable elements to inform ASA's proposed course design initiatives.

- Outcomes Benchmarking – This includes course, unit, and graduate objectives to inform ASA’s course design initiatives.
- Industry/Stakeholder engagement – This includes industry participation and context, external accreditation standards and WIL and Internship implications.
- Technology and resources – This includes the comparison of technological and content resources across programs.
- Best Practice – This includes content types, design choices, engagement and study activities for comparison to ASA’s proposed course design initiatives.

5.2. External Benchmarking – Quality Assurance

Additionally, ASA will engage in external benchmarking to maintain and curate our own quality assurance requirements. This can include but is not limited to:

- Validation practices
- Moderation practices
- Unit review practices
- Peer review of teaching capacities
- Data sharing – outcomes benchmarking (involving metrics such as completion, attrition, results, retention etc.)
- Student engagement practices
- Student success metrics

ASA will engage via the agreement on the terms of the benchmarking via an MOU. This will include details which will inform the practices thereafter. ASA and our benchmarking counterparts will engage in structured workshops, to share best practice, and network for future engagement.

5.3. External referencing (Non-Academic)

ASA will undertake operational and process external referencing with other organisations to inform planning and continuous improvement. This can include but is not limited to:

- Process harmonisation
- Communication strategies
- Student engagement strategies
- Wellbeing and student support practice and strategies.

5.4. Internal Benchmarking – Quality Assurance

ASA will undertake benchmarking activities within the structure of our own organisation, to confirm the efficacy of our processes, and to highlight areas for improvement. This will take place across the organisation via the following:

- Internal workshops
- Academic workshops
- Cross-departmental process seminars
- General staff meetings

6. Relevant HESFs

This Policy and the associated procedure comply with Higher Education Standards Framework which specifies that:

Standard 1.4 Learning Outcomes and Assessment

1. The expected learning outcomes for each course of study are specified, consistent with the level and field of education of the qualification awarded and informed by national and international comparators. [...]
3. Methods of assessment are consistent with the learning outcomes being assessed, are capable of confirming that all specified learning outcomes are achieved and that grades awarded reflect the level of student attainment.
4. On completion of a course of study, students have demonstrated the learning outcomes specified for the course of study, whether assessed at unit level, course level, or in combination

Standard 5.3 Monitoring, Review and Improvement

1. All accredited courses of study are subject to periodic (at least every seven years) comprehensive reviews that are overseen by peak academic governance processes and include external referencing or other benchmarking activities. [...]
4. Review and improvement activities include regular external referencing of the success of student cohorts against comparable courses of study, including:
 - a. analyses of progression rates, attrition rates, completion times and rates and, where applicable, comparing different locations of delivery, and
 - b. the assessment methods and grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes for selected units of study within courses of study. [...]
7. The results of regular interim monitoring, comprehensive reviews, external referencing and student feedback are used to mitigate future risks to the quality of the education provided and to guide and evaluate improvements, including the use of data on student progress and success to inform admission criteria and approaches to course design, teaching, supervision, learning and academic support.

7. Version Control

This Policy has been reviewed and approved by the ASA Board of Directors as at February 2025 and is reviewed every three years.

The Policy, with associated procedure, are published and available on the ASA website <https://www.asahe.edu.au/policies-and-forms/>.

Change and Version Control				
Version	Authored by	Brief Description of the changes	Date Approved:	Effective Date:
2025.1	Academic Dean	Updated policy to include more detail around the specific functions of benchmarking, including quality assurance, course design and collegial activity.	18/02/2025	06/03/2025
2024.1	Quality and Policy Officer	Document formatting updated to reflect change of Trading Name to ASA Institute of Higher Education.	28/06/2024 by CEO	01/07/2024

2023.1	Director Learning and Innovation	Updated policy to include HESF references, changes in regulatory compliances. Benchmarked against 6 other Higher Education Providers.	12/12/2023	18/12/2023
Previous version archived. New Policy code and numbering system implemented.				
3.0		Annual review – BoD approval	06/07/2021	
2.2		New course accreditation		
2.1		Board of Directors approval		
1.1		Governance restructure		
1.0		Council approval		