Benchmarking Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose

This policy and procedure provides a systematic and structured support process to ensure the quality assurance and continuous improvement of EIA's educational offerings through the external referencing, monitoring and evaluation of practices, standards and performance indicators.

This policy complies with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015 in the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 by the Commonwealth of Australia, specifically Section 5.3.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all EIA staff who are responsible for course development.

3. Responsibility

The Academic Director is responsible for the implementation of this policy and procedure.

The Academic Director may delegate the responsibility or part of the responsibility to the Course Coordinator.

The Course Advisory Committee is responsible for reviewing and endorsing a benchmarking review.

The Academic Board is responsible for approving any recommendations provided by the Course Advisory Committee.

4. Definitions

Benchmarking: is defined as a structured, collaborative, learning process for comparing an organisation's practices, processes or performance outcomes according to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). Benchmarking and evaluation activities are applied to inform EIA, through the provision of internal and external reference points, to measure its effectiveness in achieving its performance objectives (benchmarks) and to place these achievements in a broader environmental context.

5. Policy

5.1 To meet its regulatory obligations and ensure standards are maintained, EIA undertakes regular benchmarking activities in the following areas:

- Teaching and learning activities;
- Student learning outcomes;
- Assessment tasks;

- Graduate attributes;

- Career outcomes;

- Course design and structure;

- Admission criteria;

- Academic standards.

5.2 The benchmarking activities at EIA must follow the following principles according to the Quality Assurance Framework, Policy and Procedure:

- Support EIA's mission, goals/objectives, and strategic planning;

- Identify good practice and enhance performance;

- Continuously improve educational offerings through self-evaluation, reflective practice and external input;

- Collect and analyse relevant data, use internal and external reference points, and apply measures/targets for improvement and evidence-based decision making.

5.3 The oversight of benchmarking activities is a shared responsibility.

5.4 The Board of Directors monitors the performance of the EIA's activities and delegates the responsibility of conducting reviews and generating benchmarking reports to Management to assure itself that standards are being met.

5.5 The Academic Board provides oversight through reports, reviews and performance analyses of the EIA's academic activities and is responsible for advising the Board of Directors and making recommendations to Management on academic matters.

5.6 Management and the Academic Director are responsible for initiating, approving, conducting and reporting benchmarking activities.

6.   Procedures

6.1 Types of benchmarking

6.1.1   Benchmarking may include but is not limited to:
   a) Data comparisons: the element in question are compared against a reference point or benchmark measure; this may be quantitative or qualitative
   b) Investigation: a detailed investigation is undertaken to analyse the element in question, the level of performance, the reasons for that performance, and means of improving and/or enhancing performance

6.1.2   Benchmarking takes place at the following levels (as relevant):
   a) External – enables a comparison of performance against others external to EIA to ensure the quality and performance of its courses, academic standards, teaching and learning, and student outcomes. This may be achieved through partnership arrangements.
   b) Internal – enables a comparison of performance trends and a comparison of practices.
   c) Discipline – enables a comparison of relative performance within a specific discipline area, this includes within teaching and professional practices.
   d) Standards-based – enables a comparison of processes, practices, and outcomes against a generally agreed set of standards.
   e) Individual/group or unit – enables comparisons of individual and/or core unit/group performance as against performance levels in core function activities.

f) Benchmarking may involve a partnership with one or more other organisations. Such partnerships may be established based on formal agreement, a membership agreement or a less formal arrangement.

6.2 Benchmarking procedures

a) Systematic Benchmarking relates to the regular collection and analysis of performance data that is reported regularly to the Academic Board. This includes:

- Admission criteria
  - The Academic Board review the EIA Teaching and Learning Plan Annual Progress Report by November annually.
- Student academic performance, including progression and completion rates
- Student retention and attrition;
  - the Unit Advisory and Student Results Review Group and Student At-Risk Group are responsible for collecting and analysing data and reporting to the Student Progress and Examination Committee every semester (July and November);
  - The Student Progress and Examination Committee meets every semester (August and December) and report to the Academic Board.
- Student satisfaction with teaching, study units, and courses;
  - The Registrar is responsible for conducting the unit evaluation survey every semester (week 8 to week 11) and report the data and results to the Student Progress and Examination Committee.
- Graduate outcomes including graduate satisfaction outcomes, graduate destinations, graduate employment and further study outcomes.
  - The Registrar is responsible for conducting the Graduate Destinations and Outcomes Survey (within three months after graduation annually) and the QILT Student Experience Survey (in September annually) and report the data and results to the Student Progress and Examination Committee.
- EIA management and governance bodies collect and analyse relevant data for continuous improvement in a schedule of meetings included in the Teaching Quality Review Calendar.

b) Investigative Benchmarking is a process of externally referencing, monitoring and evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the EIA's educational offering and requires the following six (6) steps:

Step 1: Proposal and plan for the benchmarking

- The Academic Director prepare the benchmarking plan which includes:
  - The rationale of the project (areas to benchmark, nature, and reason, etc.);
  - Purposes (in accordance with EIA's strategic goals and mission);
  - Type of benchmarking;
  - Benchmarking partners;
  - Timeframe for the project;
  - Methodologies and performance indicators;
  - Performance ratings;
  - Parties involved;
  - Responsibility allocation.

Step 2: Assessment and approval

The benchmarking proposal will be forwarded to the Course Advisory Committee for review and assessment

- The Course Advisory Committee may:
    - Support the proposal and recommend its implementation;
    - Request for further information regarding the proposal before making a final decision;
    - Reject the proposal and state reasons.

- The Academic Board is responsible for approving the benchmarking proposal after it receives support by the Course Advisory Committee.

Step 3: Undertake a review

- The Academic Director is responsible for undertaking a review.

- The review process considers internal and external benchmarking:
    - Internal review: identify areas of good practice and areas for improvement based on internal data sets and internally set criteria;
    - External review: compare and identify areas of good practice and areas for improvement based on data and criteria from other organisations.

Step 4: Report results

- The Academic Director is responsible for reporting all benchmarking activity to the Course Advisory Committee for their review and endorsement.

- Once endorsed, the Course Advisory Committee tables the report at the next Academic Board meeting for approval.

- All reports will be recorded and placed on the benchmarking register.

Step 5: Communicate and Implement recommendations:

- The Academic Director is responsible for developing an action plan on the outcomes, recommendations, and potential improvements after the review process. The action plan will cover the detailed actions, responsible person(s), budget, timeline and outcomes/measures expected of these actions. Outcomes and required actions are to be communicated to all relevant parties.

Step 6: Evaluation and review:

- The Course Advisory Committee is responsible for reviewing and endorsing the outcomes of the implemented actions against both the expected outcomes and any subsequent benchmarking results.

- The Course Advisory Committee is responsible for preparing the progress and completion reports to the Academic Board.

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