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 ("KBS"), Kaplan Professional "(KP") and The University of Adelaide College (UoAC), 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/or external benchmarks. The outcomes of benchmarking should confirm Kaplan's areas of strength and reaffirm best practice, indicate areas for further improvement and/ or 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/or 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 an external comparator(s). Comparing Kaplan's operations to relevant comparators will allow Kaplan to identify areas of improvement, adopting best practice and capitalising on opportunities that other providers have overlooked. Through benchmarking activities, Kaplan participates in the ongoing review, development, and enhancement of the quality of all aspects of Kaplan's operations and practices related to the delivery of Kaplan courses.

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 commitment by staff members to contribute to the principles of continuous improvement activities.
- Benchmarking against comparable institutions as a means of identifying comparative strengths and weaknesses, improving performance, leveraging opportunities for innovation and adopting best practice in accordance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 ("HESF").
- Evidence based reviews are founded on the principle of collecting and analysing data appropriate to the aspect of Kaplan's operations that are under review and to establish the extent of improvement and/ or innovation required.
- Planning and goal setting are informed through referencing comparative performance in areas of strategic importance.

Benchmarking expectations

Types of benchmarking activities

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

- Organisational benchmarking in which comparisons are made at the organisational level.
    - Organisational benchmarking may include, but is not limited to, the review and comparison of measures such as staff ratios, criteria for academic appointments, product range and financial information such as course, subject and administrative fees.
- Course benchmarking of course design and student performance.
    - Course design may include, but is not limited to, a review of subjects within a course, learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, assessments, course admission criteria, student performance and student engagement of learning and teaching surveys (SELTS).
    - Student performance may include, but is not limited to, tracking of student cohort data including attrition, retention, progression and completion.
- Process benchmarking involving comparisons of processes and practices.
    - Process benchmarking may include, but is not limited to, a review of admission processes, recognition of prior learning practices, student support services including student wellbeing and policy development.
- Outcomes benchmarking that is focused on the comparison of outcomes data, such as graduate or further education outcomes.
    - Outcomes benchmarking may include, but is not limited to, employment outcomes for graduates including salary medians, percentage of graduates in full-time employment and further education outcomes.
- 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, cost effectiveness and relevance to Kaplan's strategic objectives.

Benchmarking Partners

Kaplan's benchmarking partners should normally:

- have a similar student demographic
- offer courses within the same field of education
- have a similar mode of delivery
- have a record of good performance in the area(s) to be benchmarked.

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 will be appropriately recorded and reported to ensure informed decision-making and to support effective implementation of identified improvements and/ or 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 gathered as part of the benchmarking activity is to be treated as confidential. Permission must be sought and granted from the Academic Dean or equivalent (for academic matters) and/ 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.

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
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (TEQSA Act)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

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
1.0	Academic Quality and Governance Team	New Policy replaces Continuous Improvement Policy.	06.09.2017 & 07.09.2017 respectively.	30.09.2017
1.1	Quality, Regulations and Standards Team	Updated provider category to *Institute of Higher Education* Updated role titles.	N/A	13.07.2021
2.0	Quality, Regulations and Standards Team	Major review Updated definitions Updated purpose Updated principles Addition of Related Policies Addition of Relevant Legislation	06.10.2021	13.10.2021