

## EXTERNAL REFERENCING PROCEDURE

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<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Head of School		
<b>Related Documents</b>	External Referencing Policy AIHE Strategic Plan AIHE Risk Register AIHE Quality Assurance Framework Academic Progress, Enrolment and Graduations Policy (and related Academic Progress Procedure) Assessment Policy (and related Procedure) Course Development, Approval, Review and Withdrawal Policy (and related Procedure) Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (TEQSA Act 2011) TEQSA Guidance Note: External Referencing (including Benchmarking), Version 2.5 (16 April 2019)		

*\* Unless otherwise indicated, this procedure will still apply beyond the review date.*

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## 1. PURPOSE

1.1 The External Referencing Procedure gives effect to the Adelaide Institute of Higher Education (AIHE) External Referencing Policy and sets out the processes and actions that guide AIHE's external referencing and benchmarking activities to evidence quality assurance and quality enhancement in relation to academic programs, business operations and governance.

## 2. SCOPE

2.1 The External Referencing Procedure applies to staff and governing bodies of AIHE in relation to the quality assurance and quality enhancement of AIHE's academic programs, student outcomes, business operations and governance.

## 3. INFORMAL EXTERNAL REFERENCING

3.1 Informal external referencing, including benchmarking, will occur wherever possible during the development of policies, procedures and other AIHE documents.

3.2 Informal external referencing will include reviewing the policies, procedures and other related content from comparable higher education providers against those of AIHE.

3.3 A record will be maintained of the other providers that informal external referencing was conducted against.

## 4. COURSE AND SUBJECT-LEVEL EXTERNAL REFERENCING

4.1 Formal external referencing of courses across comparable higher education providers will be used to ensure the quality, comparability and consistency of AIHE courses.

4.1.1 Formal course and subject reviews will include a component of external benchmarking, with selected subjects within courses being externally referenced against those in comparable courses of study (refer Course and Subject Development, Approval, Review and Withdrawal Policy and related Procedure).

4.1.2 Feedback from external referencing will be used by the Head of School and Course Coordinators to enhance the quality of teaching and mitigate future risks to the quality of education.

4.2 External peer review of teaching and assessment will:

- be used to gather evidence about the quality and validity of assessment, and quality and consistency of AIHE practices and courses;
- contribute to the ongoing evaluation and enhancement of learning and teaching at AIHE; and
- contribute to the professional development of participating staff and the formation of disciplinary and cross disciplinary communities of practices.

4.2.1 Colleagues will provide and receive feedback on one another's subject outlines, assessment tasks and marking criteria to ensure that assessment is aligned to intended learning outcomes and includes a calibration process to ensure comparability of achievement standards and an opportunity for professional learning.

4.3 AIHE will seek to develop and maintain relationships with external partners for the purposes of course and subject-level external referencing.

4.3.1 The Head of School will manage inquiries from institutions approaching AIHE for engagement in external peer review projects and will implement external referencing activities in relation to appropriate courses.

## **5. EXTERNAL REFERENCING OF ASSESSMENT STANDARDS**

5.1 Assessment standards will be externally referenced through an external peer review of assessment process, conducted with at least one other institution.

5.2 External peer review of assessment will be used to provide evidence that assessment methods and student grading are: appropriate; aligned to the subject and course learning outcomes; and are broadly comparable with those in similar courses offered in the Australian higher education sector.

5.3 In conjunction with the formal five yearly Course Review cycle, assessment standards for selected subjects within the course will be externally referenced against those in comparable courses of study.

5.3.1 The Head of School will ensure that as a minimum there is external peer review of assessment methods and grading for subjects that assure the attainment of course learning outcomes within their course.

5.3.2 The Course Coordinator will identify subjects in which external peer review of assessment methods and grading will be undertaken and institutions with comparable courses.

5.3.3 The Course Coordinator will manage all activities relating to the review, including communication with peer review partners, identification of assessment tasks for review, sharing documents, assessment of achievement standards and preparation of a report for the Head of School.

5.3.4 The Course Coordinator will involve appropriate academic staff in the assessment of achievement standards and other external peer review of assessment activities as appropriate.

5.3.5 The Head of School will report progress and outcomes of external referencing of assessment standards to the Teaching and Learning Committee and Academic Board, consider the review reports and implement modifications and changes as appropriate.

5.3.6 The Teaching and Learning Committee will consider the outcomes of external referencing of assessment standards in the Course Review.

5.4 The Teaching and Learning Committee will report on the use and effectiveness of external peer review of assessment in Course Reviews and recommend improvements to the external peer review of assessment and Course Review processes.

## **6. EXTERNAL REFERENCING OF STUDENT OUTCOMES**

6.1 On a semester basis AIHE will:

- benchmark progress rates, attrition rates and completion times/rates using publicly available data (e.g. Higher Education Statistics published by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training); and
- review and analyse enrolment and student achievement of learning outcomes, including through cohort analysis of student performance data.

6.1.1 The processes set out in clauses 6.2-6.3 will be followed.

6.2 The Course Coordinator will de-identify and prepare reports on student performance, progress rates, attrition rates and completion times/rates, and make recommendations to the Teaching and Learning Committee on improvements to address any issues arising from the data.

6.2.1 Data will be prepared for student cohorts as relevant to AIHE, such as:

- students with special needs, international students, low SES students and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; and
- commencing and continuing students.

6.3 The Teaching and Learning Committee will:

- review and analyse the data;
- prepare and discuss initial findings;
- investigate any insights where AIHE has a high or low performance for a metric;
- discuss benchmarking methodology and analysis;
- document areas for improvement where relevant;
- develop specific Action Plans;
- provide a report to Academic Board.

6.4 The Head of School will implement Action Plans as recommended by the Teaching and Learning Committee.

6.5 Academic Board will note reports provided by the Teaching and Learning Committee and monitor progress of implementation of Action Plans.

## 7. ORGANISATIONAL AND PROCESS EXTERNAL REFERENCING

7.1 The General Manager will coordinate an annual cycle of the external referencing of organisational matters, governance controls, business operations, processes and practices.

7.2 Following collection of data, the General Manager will:

- review and analyse the data;
- prepare and discuss initial findings;
- investigate any insights where AIHE has a high or low performance for a metric;
- discuss benchmarking methodology and analysis;
- document areas for improvement where relevant;
- develop specific Action Plans;
- provide a report to Council.

7.3 Council will note reports provided by the General Manager and monitor progress of implementation of Action Plans.

## 8. EXTERNAL REFERENCING AND BENCHMARKING PROCESS

8.1 AIHE will follow recognised sector best practice when undertaking external referencing and benchmarking.

8.1.1 AIHE will adopt and adapt the six phases of benchmarking set out in Appendix B of the TEQSA Guidance Note: *External Referencing (including Benchmarking) Beta version*

2.2 (11 October 2017) in conducting benchmarking activities (refer to Attachment 1 to this Procedure).

8.2 AIHE will maintain a register of external referencing activity (refer to Attachment 2 to this Procedure).

## 9. BENCHMARKING PARTNERS

9.1 AIHE recognises the value of partnering with other organisations in external referencing and benchmarking activities, and will endeavour to establish mutually beneficial relationships for this purpose.

9.1.1 The Head of School will lead the exploration of suitable partnering opportunities and will develop proposals for Academic Board consideration.

9.2 When AIHE is approached by another higher education provider with a proposal to partner with them in external referencing activities, the Head of School will review the request and develop a proposal for Academic Board consideration.

9.3 Academic Board will take into consideration the potential benefits presented to AIHE by the proposed partnership arrangement, the appropriateness of the organisation as a benchmarking partner, and confidentiality matters as partnering requires the sharing of confidential information.

## 10. DEFINITIONS

10.1 See the AIHE Glossary of Terms for definitions.

### Document Control

Version #	Date	Key changes
1.0	20/02/2018	Procedure approved by General Manager
1.1	9/04/2019	Reviewed; formatting only
1.2	4/06/2020	Reviewed; minor edits; next review aligned with Policy Review Schedule
1.3	9/12/2022	Reviewed; minor edits; next review updated to align with revised policy review date and reference to TEQSA Threshold Standards updated to 2021

## Attachment 1. Benchmarking Process Steps

The TEQSA Guidance Note: *External Referencing (including Benchmarking) Version 2.5 (16 April 2019)* provides detail on benchmarking practice in Appendices A and B.

In conducting its external referencing activities AIHE will adopt and adapt the six phases of benchmarking set out in Appendix B as follows<sup>1</sup>.

### Phase 1: Concept and scope

This phase is about deciding what type of benchmarking to use, how to undertake it and with whom. Providers need to have a shared commitment and understanding of benchmarking goals.

### Phase 2: Plan & design

This phase is critical in identifying and agreeing on the benchmarking project's objectives, scope (as well as what is not in scope), schedule, allocation of tasks, timelines and deliverables and development of a project plan, project team, reference group, and communication plan.

### Phase 3: Self-review

This phase includes:

- planning self-review activities
- identifying key stakeholders to answer particular sections
- writing up institutional context statements for peer review workshop
- collecting evidence from as many sources and stakeholders as possible
- triangulating the evidence using focus groups, surveys and interviews to gather data for analysis and consideration.

### Phase 4: Peer review

A common and useful element of the review process is to conduct a peer review workshop (face-to-face and/or online) with the benchmarking partners comparing processes and data. The key aims of the workshop are:

- to identify areas of good practice
- to identify areas for improvement
- to identify areas for sharing and collaboration.

The peer review workshop is also an external validation and calibration exercise to assist providers to understand the quality of their processes.

### Phase 5: Communicate and implement improvements

This phase is about communicating the findings from the peer review workshop and implementing improvements. Discussions need to consider who is responsible for carrying out these improvements and whether these improvements carry significant budget implications. Reports need to be submitted to the appropriate academic governance body or manager.

### Phase 6: Evaluate and review

This phase is about evaluating the effectiveness of the benchmarking exercise. Providers should ask themselves:

- What were the outcomes?
- How useful were they?
- Were they implemented?

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<sup>1</sup> Noting that the External Referencing Guidance Note is a consultation draft, Attachment 1 will be updated upon the release of subsequent versions as required.

## Attachment 2. External Referencing Register Template<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1: Benchmarking Partnerships (Formal and Informal)**

Description/Title	With Whom	Date	Purpose	Type	Responsibility	Comments
LEARNING AND TEACHING						
e.g. Teaching Quality Indicators			Identify indicators for, and develop processes to support teaching quality	process, AIHE wide, external, formal		
e.g. Assessment			Compare processes for assessment at the subject level	process, AIHE wide, external, formal		
ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT SERVICES						
e.g. Academic promotions						

**Table 2: External Referencing Activity**

Description/Title	With Whom	Date	Purpose	Type	Responsibility	Comments
e.g. Course experience questionnaire	sector			outcome, sector		
e.g. Student and teacher survey results				outcome, internal		
e.g. Assessment standards						

<sup>2</sup> The *Benchmarking Register* of the University of Tasmania is acknowledged.