



## Governance

# Benchmarking Policy

### Background

Mayfield Education has the obligation to ensure that it demonstrates high standards of performance in teaching and learning. This commitment to excel is underpinned by an efficient and robust system that aims to support the continued improvement of its outcomes and processes. Benchmarking with relevant partners enables Mayfield Education to evaluate and compare its performance. This process enables Mayfield Education to monitor its standards, compare practices and make quality improvements.

### Purpose

Mayfield Education encourages benchmarking together with other comparable institutions as a method of improving teaching and learning standards and assuring excellent academic performance. This policy ensures a more systematic and coordinated benchmarking approach that supports institutional educational planning and also supports setting performance targets.

### Audience

The policy is intended for all staff members of Mayfield Education.

### Definition

**Benchmarking:** A process of two or more parties comparing their products or services against one another. This allows for the identification of each party's strengths and weaknesses, with the intention of improving their overall educational services and outcomes.

### Policy

#### Benchmarking Principles

Any benchmarking project that is undertaken by Mayfield Education will:

- Support Mayfield Education's mission, strategic priorities and goals as per the Academic Governance Policy.
- Be characterised by a positive commitment to learning from best practices, and implementing improvements that indicate potential and that arise from benchmarking findings as per the Course Development and Approval Policy and the Course Review and Continual Improvement Policy.
- Monitor the standards and performances of Mayfield Education against its peers and make changes if necessary to meet external standards and performances.
- Use a combination of qualitative and quantitative data to undertake benchmarking.
- Use both competitive and generic organisations for their benchmarking activities.
- Be well-balanced in terms of the value that is received compared to the costs that are involved in undertaking the said projects.
- Be approved by the relevant managers and course coordinators.

#### Features to be Considered When Exchanging Information:

- Confidentiality: All exchanges involving benchmarking must be treated in a confidential manner. External publication of any communication of particular findings should not occur without the consent of all partners involved in a particular project.
- Exchange: The level or the type of information that is exchanged should be effectively comparable amongst the partners that are benchmarking together.

- Intellectual property: The rights that relate to any intellectual property that has been developed during the course of a particular benchmarking activity should be recorded and negotiated by the parties involved.
- Agreement: If a particular benchmarking agreement is arrived at, issues that relate to intellectual property, confidentiality, type, and the level of information that needs to be exchanged must be included in the said agreement.

## Procedures

### Selecting Benchmarking Partners

The process of selecting benchmarking partners is crucial for successful benchmarking. A good external benchmarking partner should:

- Have a willingness to share information.
- Have a commitment to the improvement of quality.
- Demonstrate a good performance record in areas that require benchmarking.

For the benchmarking, the partner should have compatible values, objectives and missions and the benchmarking project should also:

- Be of a comparable size.
- Have a discipline mix that is similar.

### Project initiation

- The register for benchmarking must be checked before commencing any project. This aims to ascertain whether similar projects are or have been undertaken.
- The concerned head of the unit must approve benchmarking projects that involve the formal request for information from another organisation.
- If the project scope affects two or more areas, consultation and agreement between the affected areas should come before the project has commenced.

### Project Management

- The head of a unit that approves a project is responsible for assigning a project manager.
- Any contact with partner organisations should be through the head of the responsible unit unless an alternative project manager has been assigned.

Any written agreements made with other colleges or organisations should be first approved by the legal services unit and signed by the head of the unit.

A benchmarking project must be funded by the area that the project is concerned with. If there are any central funds required, as in the case of large projects, a submission must be made through the budgeting and planning process.

- Benchmarking projects should be recorded by type, name, outcomes and objectives on the benchmarking register provided by Mayfield Education.
- Each year, a report summarising all benchmarking projects that have been undertaken by a particular unit or committee must be submitted. This forms part of the yearly Academic Board review report.

### Project Scoping

This activity will consist of deciding upon the nature and ranges of the following:

- What is to be benchmarked e.g. a school, process, activity and/or compliance activity?
- How it will be benchmarked e.g. by data comparison, case study, and detailed investigation.
- Context of the investigation e.g. part or whole of an organization. Type of relationship e.g. a formal or informal review
- Purpose e.g. how it will align with the planning, strategic and quality objectives of Mayfield Education
- Budgetary requirements e.g. how it will be financed and resourced.

## **Project Structure**

This activity will consist of deciding how benchmarking will be undertaken and will include a range of the following:

- a) Self-Review
- b) Peer Review
- c) Reviewing information

## **Communicating Findings**

- Ideally, plans for the implementation process must describe the actions that arise from benchmarking reports. This should include responsibilities, timelines and resources. Any progress against these particular plans must be monitored regularly.
- Any benchmarking reports must be lodged with the quality strategic planning office by the areas that undertake any benchmarking projects.

## **Integration with Quality Improvement Systems**

Benchmarking projects are most successful if they are integrated with other processes and initiatives designed to improve results within Mayfield Education. Findings from benchmarking processes should influence the creation of plans made by the unit, Academic Board, or any other operational reports and plans.

## **Benchmarking Frequency**

General academic benchmarking should take place once every 7 years, however, it can be conducted more regularly if needed. Benchmarking should also take place prior to commencing training for any new qualification.

## **Policy Oversight**

The overall authority for the development and maintenance of benchmark policies rests with the Higher Education Academic Board (HEAB).

## **Review**

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually by HEAB to be in line with the current conditions of Mayfield Education. However, the policy may be reviewed more frequently if Mayfield Education deems it necessary.