



Benchmarking Policy

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Benchmarking Policy

Scope

This policy applies to all stakeholders engaged in work for the ZCW.

Purpose

ZCW 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 ZCW’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 ZCW. Benchmarking activities inform quality improvement by providing internal and/or external reference points that enable ZCW 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 ZCW’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 ZCW’s operations with that of an external comparator(s). Comparing ZCW’s operations to relevant comparators will allow ZCW to identify areas of improvement, adopting best practice and capitalizing on opportunities that other providers have overlooked. Through benchmarking activities, ZCW participates in the ongoing review, development, and enhancement of the quality of all aspects of ZCW’s operations and practices related to the delivery of ZCW courses. Outcome(s) refer to the final result or determination of benchmarking activities.

Principles

ZCW 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, and leveraging opportunities for innovation.



- Evidence based reviews are founded on the principle of collecting and analyzing data appropriate to the aspect of ZCW'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

ZCW will engage in the following five broad types of benchmarking:

- **Organizational benchmarking** in which comparisons are made at the organizational level.
 - o Organizational 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.
 - o 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.
 - o 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.
 - o 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.
 - o 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.

o 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 ZCW's strategic objectives.

Benchmarking Partners

ZCW'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

- Benchmarking activities be conducted as part of comprehensive course reviews, occurring at least once every Five years.
- For academic matters, the 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 Head of the Board of Directors 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 Academic Policies Committee.

For nonacademic matters, a report should be provided to the Head of the Board of Directors.

- All information gathered as part of the benchmarking activity is to be treated as confidential. Permission must be sought and granted from the Dean or equivalent (for academic matters) and/ or the relevant Head of the Board of Directors (for other matters) before any external communication relating to benchmarking outcomes takes place.
- Wherever possible, benchmarking activities should include national and international comparators.