

External Referencing Policy

Document

Document Name	External Referencing Policy
Brief Description	The purpose of this policy is to articulate the principles and practices that underpin the process of external referencing (including benchmarking) within the organisation.
Responsibility	Academic Director
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Version Control

Date/Approval	Version No.	Summary of Changes	Reviewer Name and Department/Office
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Related Documents

Name	Location
Learning and Teaching Plan	
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (TEQSA Act 2011)	Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (legislation.gov.au)
TEQSA Guidance Note: External Referencing (including Benchmarking)	Guidance Note: External referencing (including benchmarking) Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (teqsa.gov.au)



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1. Purpose

- a) The External Referencing Policy establishes the requirements for external referencing and benchmarking at the Sydney Institute of Business and Technology (SIBT) to evidence quality assurance and inform quality enhancement in relation to academic programs, business operations and governance.

2. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Benchmarking	A structured, collaborative learning process for comparing practices, processes or performance outcomes with identified good practices across the sector (definition from <u>TEQSA Guidance Note: External Referencing</u>). Its purpose is to identify comparative strengths and weaknesses, as a basis for developing improvements in academic quality or performance.
External Referencing	A process through which a higher education provider compares an aspect of its operations with an external comparator(s) e.g., comparing the design of a program of study and/or student achievement of learning outcomes with that of a program from another provider. (Definition from <u>TEQSA Guidance Note: External Referencing</u>)

3. Application

- a) The External Referencing Policy applies to external referencing activities and benchmarking relating to the organisation, its programs and operations including:
 - i. Higher education coursework awards and units;
 - ii. Non-award programs, short courses, or micro credentials; and
 - iii. SIBT policies, procedures and operations relating to learning and teaching.

4. Policy Statement

4.1 Key Principles

- a) In the context of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* (HES Framework), external referencing means a process through which a higher education provider compares an aspect of its operations with an external comparator e.g., comparing the design of a program of study and/or student achievement of learning outcomes with that of a program from another provider.
- b) The purposes of external referencing typically include:
 - i. Providing evidence of the quality and standing of a provider's operations;
 - ii. Offering an external evidence base as context for the development of internal improvements, especially to student outcomes;
 - iii. Establishing or fostering collaborative improvement efforts across providers.
- c) SIBT is committed to fostering a culture of continuous improvement and will use external referencing processes to compare its performance and standards within the organisation and with other education providers.

- d) SIBT will draw on relevant, reliable, and recent data and use external referencing to inform planning, determine areas for future development or growth and for review using comparisons of:
- i. Program and unit design;
 - ii. Cohort analysis of student performance and achievement of outcomes; and
 - iii. Policy, procedure, and operations relating to learning and teaching.

4.2 Types of External Referencing

- a) SIBT may use a variety of internal benchmarking and external referencing approaches to monitor academic performance and standards, including but not limited to:
- i. Organisational benchmarking in which comparisons are made at the organisational level (institution, discipline, program, and unit levels). This may include comparisons of student experience, measured through external surveys, responses to internal surveys, or through other tools.
 - ii. Program benchmarking, including program and unit design, assessment and student performance. Program benchmarking may include comparisons of program components such as program structures, entry requirements, delivery modes, assessment, and learning outcomes.
 - iii. Process benchmarking involving comparisons of particular processes and practices e.g., efficiency, delivery modes.
 - iv. Outcomes benchmarking relating to the comparison of outcomes data, including cohort analysis of student outcomes such as retention, progression, attrition, and completion rates. Cohorts can include the following:
 - Pre-identified: cohorts identified by factors such as location, international students, Third Party Arrangements, annual intakes, field of education program groups, diversity groups, at-risk groups, students with substantial academic credit or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
 - Data-driven: detected risk areas such as clusters of under-performance, significant breaches of academic integrity, slow progression/completion or attrition with a common factor (agent, country of origin, admission entry pathway, mode of study, market niche, location).
 - v. Best-practice benchmarking in which SIBT selects a comparator thought to be at the forefront in the area to be benchmarked.

4.3 Outcomes of Benchmarking and External Referencing

- a) Outcomes of benchmarking and external referencing will be used to guide and evaluate enhancements to improve the standard of learning and teaching including, but not limited to:
- i. Assessment design;
 - ii. Graduate attributes;
 - iii. Program, unit and curriculum design;
 - iv. Program structures;
 - v. Credit arrangements;
 - vi. Delivery modes;

- vii. Use of institutional systems and technologies;
- viii. Admissions standards;
- ix. Third party arrangements; and
- x. Policy, procedure and operations.

4.4 External Referencing and Benchmarking Partners

- a) Depending on the nature of the external referencing and benchmarking activity, the Quality and Compliance Manager will identify partners for non-academic proposals and the Program Convenors, or the Academic Director, may identify partners for academic proposals.
- b) An external referencing and benchmarking partner should:
 - i. Be a recognised institute of higher education;
 - ii. Have a comparable mission, vision and objectives;
 - iii. Be a comparable size with a similar student demographic;
 - iv. Offer similar programs;
 - v. Have a willingness to share; and
 - vi. Demonstrate a record of good performance in the area(s) to be benchmarked.

5. Responsibility

- a) The Academic Board is responsible for:
 - i. Monitoring compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021;
 - ii. Considering and approving recommendations for external referencing raised by its committees in relation to academic matters, or that include arrangements with external organisations;
 - iii. Setting the expectation that reviews on academic governance and quality include external referencing, and that any recommendations on changes to programs, units, learning and teaching should consider this data;
 - iv. Overseeing the implementation of improvements arising from external referencing recommendations.
- b) The Academic Director is responsible for:
 - i. Ensuring there are appropriate processes and resources in place to undertake the required activities to meet the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021;
 - ii. Considering and approving proposals for external referencing in relation to academic matters, including proposals to partner with other organisations;
 - iii. Reporting progress and outcomes of such external referencing activities to the Learning and Teaching Committee;
 - iv. Working with to monitor the implementation of improvements arising from external referencing report recommendations.
- c) The Program Convenors are responsible for:
 - i. Developing proposals for external referencing in relation to academic matters;

- ii. Considering external referencing data when overseeing periodic reviews of program curricula and delivery; and when reviewing the outcomes of the delivery performance of each individual program;
 - iii. Making recommendations to the Learning and Teaching Committee on improvements or changes to the design and delivery of programs, including improvements to assessment strategies, tasks, marking criteria and processes;
 - iv. Working with staff to monitor the implementation of improvements arising from external referencing report recommendations;
 - v. Prepare proposals and reports for external referencing as required;
 - vi. Lead and manage external moderation and benchmarking activities as required.
- d) The Learning and Teaching Committee is responsible for:
- i. Monitoring and reporting on external referencing activities in relation to learning and teaching matters;
 - ii. Reviewing external referencing data when considering recommendations made by its subcommittees, before endorsing and submitting to the Academic Board; and
 - iii. Evaluating benchmarking and external referencing activities to determine the effectiveness of the activity.
- e) The Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee will report on the results, outcomes and recommendations from the external referencing activity to relevant management, committees and governance bodies to identify common themes, trends and drive improvements.
- f) The Quality and Compliance Manager is responsible for providing support to adhere to this policy.