Benchmarking Policy

Version number	3
Approved by	Corporate Governance Board
Date of approval	28/08/23

Purpose

Benchmarking activities are essential to the quality assurance and continual improvement of all higher education operations at Sydney Institute of Higher Education (**SIHE**). Benchmarking allows SIHE to ensure it continues to meet industry and academic best practice. SIHE will conduct benchmarking in a coherent manner that yields useful information for organisational planning processes.

This *Benchmarking Policy* identifies the benchmarking processes that SIHE will implement, including approval and management of both external and internal benchmarking projects, and the process through which improvements will be implemented. For the purpose of this policy, benchmarking processes are distinguished between those carried out before SIHE is a higher education provider and those intended to be carried out when SIHE is registered as a higher education provider.

Scope

This policy applies to all academic and non-academic staff and all members of Boards and Committees involved in benchmarking activities.

Principles

SIHE is committed to ensuring the high quality of its higher education operations and program delivery through regular internal and external benchmarking activities.

Benchmarking activities are a key quality assurance mechanism. Benchmarking is critical to improving higher education course offerings and internal processes and operations by bringing them in line with best practice and establishing SIHE's comparability and competitiveness with other similar providers.

The data, results, and recommendations arising from benchmarking activities are essential to the development and review of SIHE programs, as stated in the *Program Development and Approval Policy*, and the *Program Review and Continual Improvement Policy*.

SIHE will conduct internal and external benchmarking regarding the following areas:

- Programs of study delivery and outcomes, including
    - data on student retention
    - student progression

- student satisfaction
- student assessment trends
- admission and entry requirements
- Operational processes, including
    - policies and procedures
    - governance and committee structures and oversight
    - institutional research performance
    - academic quality indicators
    - staffing and professional development
    - student support provisions
    - levels of library and learning resource provision
    - learning and teaching infrastructure.

SIHE will continue to benchmark comparing publically available data from other higher education providers, as well as having formalised benchmarking partnerships to allow for the exchange of data not publicly available.

Benchmarking activities must be structured to include the following elements:

- Alignment with the strategic direction, missions, and values of SIHE
- A clearly defined purpose and timeline
- A clearly defined process including monitoring, review and implementation of improvements
- Defined and measurable benchmarking criteria established
- Confidentiality for benchmarking partners
- Mutual benefit with benchmarking partners

Procedures

Approval of Benchmarking Projects

Benchmarking for any given SIHE program must be approved by the relevant Program Director and Dean.

Benchmarking for non-academic operations must be approved by the General Manager, Governance and Projects and President.

Management of Benchmarking Projects

The parties involved in the benchmarking activities must sign an agreement regarding what information may be accessed and utilised, the specific benchmarking criteria, and any conditions of the project.

Benchmarking of academic operations is overseen by the *Academic Quality Committee*.

Non-academic benchmarking exercises are generally internal and are managed by the relevant members of the *Executive Management Team*.

The position or body responsible for a benchmarking project must provide a full report for the *Corporate Governance Board* and *Academic Board*, and this report must be available for all SIHE staff to access.

External Program Benchmarking

The following aspects of SIHE higher education program offerings will be benchmarked against courses offered by comparable providers:

- Entry requirements and admissions processes
- Study modes and delivery locations
- Program structure
- Program content
- Program fees
- Program and subject learning outcomes
- Assessment strategies
- Data relating to student progression, achievement, retention and completion rates
- Data from student feedback surveys

SIHE's benchmarking activities within the first five years will be limited to mostly external course benchmarking against the above-listed data before SIHE has collected enough student data to analyse. Formal benchmarking partnerships will not be sought out within the first five years.

SIHE formal benchmarking partnerships, will seek additional external benchmarking in regards to operational matters such as:

- Operational indicators, including:
    - Staffing levels
    - Recruitment and promotion criteria
    - Promotion criteria
    - Staff satisfaction
    - Institutional and individual key performance indicators
    - governance and committee structures and oversight
    - academic quality indicators
    - levels of library and learning resource provision
    - student support provisions
    - learning and teaching infrastructure.
    - Overall research performance
    - Policies and procedures and the effectiveness of their implementation.

External benchmarking partners

External benchmarking partners must:

- Be a reputable organisation with good outcomes that align with industry best practice
- Have a comparable size and scope of operations
- Be willing to share information and data about their higher education operation, practices and student outcomes

SIHE must also conduct benchmarking against the standards of universities which embody best practice and academic standards in Australian higher education.

Internal Benchmarking

SIHE conducts internal benchmarking on an annual basis with regard to:

- Assessment tasks and pedagogical tools used across different SIHE programs
- Student retention, progression, completion rates, and feedback data across different programs
- Employee satisfaction across different areas of operation
- Staffing levels and promotion criteria across different areas of operation
- Policies, procedures, and processes utilised by different areas of operation

Improvements

Recommendations arising from benchmarking activities must be carefully considered for implementation by the relevant Boards and Committees as part of ongoing review and improvement cycles, in accordance with the *Compliance Calendar*.

Any decision against implementing recommendations must be communicated to all parties with reasons for the decision.

Policy Implementation and Monitoring

The *Corporate Governance Board* delegates responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this policy to the General Manager, Governance and Projects.

The *Corporate Governance Board* will review all periodic reports from relevant committees and staff members.

Additionally, the *Corporate Governance* will review all relevant student complaints, concerns raised by staff members, and instances of student or staff misconduct on an ongoing basis.

The *Corporate Governance Board* must ensure that findings from these monitoring activities are taken into account in planning, quality assurance and improvement processes.

Definitions

Academic Board: the governing body responsible for academic matters, including learning and teaching, program approval, workforce planning, academic staff appointments, research and professional development, academic policies and procedures, overseeing student grievances and appeals processes. The *Academic Board* advises the *Corporate Governance Board* on academic matters.

Academic staff: staff employed at SIHE in a learning and teaching or research capacity.

Benchmarking: a process of comparing practices, processes and performance outcomes for the purpose of identifying comparative strengths and weaknesses in order to develop and improve academic quality and performance.

Corporate Governance Board: the governing body responsible for oversight of all higher education operations, including the ongoing viability of the institution and the quality of its higher education delivery. The *Corporate Governance Board* guides management and delegates responsibility for academic

matters to the *Academic Board*.

Program Director: the most senior academic staff member responsible for the delivery of a specific unit at SIHE. The Program Director is responsible for the planning and development of a unit, particularly unit curriculum information, and works in conjunction with other senior academic staff.

Dean: the most senior member of academic staff at SIHE who is the principle point of contact between the *Corporate Governance Board*, the *Academic Board*, and academic staff.

Review schedule

This policy will be reviewed by the Corporate Governance Board and Academic Board every three years.

Version History				
Version number:	Approved by:	Approval date:	Revision notes:	Next review date:
1	Corporate Governance Board	13/11/2017		13/11/2020
2	Corporate Governance Board	26/03/2021	No change. Periodic Review.	26/03/2024
3	Corporate Governance Board	28/08/23	Updated to reflect new governance and that SIHE is now a registered provider.	28/08/26

Related Documents		
➡	🗋	Academic Governance Policy
➡	🗋	Benchmarking Policy
➡	🗋	Program Development and Approval Policy
➡	🗋	Program Review and Continual Improvement Policy
➡	💼	Dean
➡	💼	Program Director - Business
➡	💼	Program Director - ICT
➡	💼	President
➡	💼	Quality and Compliance Coordinator
➡	🗋	Corporate Governance Board - Terms of Reference
➡	🗋	Academic Quality Committee - Terms of Reference