

Policy Owner:	College Director
Contact Officers:	Quality and Compliance Director
Policy Number:	QQAPO003
Approved by:	Senior Management Group (14/01/16); Teaching and Learning Committee (14/04/16); Academic Council (29/04/16)
Date Approved:	29 April 2016
Last Reviewed:	29 April 2016
Related Policies:	Admissions Policy Assessment Policy Code of Practice Course and Unit Review Policy Internationalisation Policy Moderation Policy Quality Policy Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy Risk Management Policy
Related Documents:	Governance Structures Minutes – Academic Governance Committees Minutes – Senior Management Meetings Organisation Chart Student Satisfaction Surveys Strategic Directions (Plan) Success Factors – Performance, Planning and Review Survey Schedule Teaching and Learning Reports

1. Overview

- 1.1. The policy aims to identify and compare internal strengths and weaknesses against external benchmarks for the purpose of ongoing monitoring, evaluation and improvement of academic quality and associated processes.
- 1.2. Whilst benchmarking is informed by best practice in other Higher Education institutions, this policy recognises the need for flexibility that is commensurate with nature of ECC's mission, student profile, institutional profile and scale of operations.
- 1.3. This policy complies with the Higher Education Standards established by TEQSA for the purposes of quality assuring Higher Education Providers in the provision of services to students.

2. Organisational Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to *organisational practices* across ECC as well as across comparable UPD institutions within Navitas.
- 2.2. This policy applies to *different Courses* benchmarked within ECC, against comparable UPD Navitas colleges, against our university partner (ECU) and where applicable, against other Higher Education Providers.
- 2.3. This policy applies to *academic processes* benchmarked against comparable UPD Navitas colleges, against our university partner (ECU) and where applicable, against other NUHEP institutions.
- 2.4. This policy applies to *student outcomes* benchmarked across different ECC cohorts, against comparable Navitas UPD colleges and against our university partner (Edith Cowan University)

- 2.5. This policy applies to selected *best practice models* benchmarked against the HES and comparable NUHEP institutions.

3. Definitions

- 3.1. **Academic Governance** – comprises of the ECC Academic Council, ECC-ECU Faculty Consultative Committees, ECC Teaching and Learning Committee [with Offshore Partnerships, English Language Proficiency (ELP) and E-Learning Sub-Committees] and Board of Examiners.
- 3.2. **Benchmarking** – refers to a structured, collaborative, learning process for comparing practices, processes or performance outcomes. It is used to evaluate performance by comparing ECC practices to similar-sized education providers and/or ‘best practice’ within the tertiary sector.¹
- 3.3. **Course** – a formal program of education made up of study components known as Units.
- 3.4. **ECU** – refers to our partner university: Edith Cowan University
- 3.5. **Governance Structures** – refers to Academic Governance and Non-Academic Governance bodies
- 3.6. **HES** – refers to Higher Education Standards as determined by TEQSA or its successors
- 3.7. **KPI** = Key Performance Indicators
- 3.8. **Non-Academic Governance** – comprises the ECC Senior Management Group and ECC operational teams (Pathway Academics; ELICOS; Marketing/Admissions; Student & Academic Services; Partnerships & Commercial Services; Finance & Administration; Quality & Compliance)
- 3.9. **NUHEP** – refers to Non-University Higher Education Provider
- 3.10. **Partner Provider** – refers to Higher Education Institutions that have been approved by the Australian regulator to deliver accredited Courses on behalf of ECC.
- 3.11. **TEQSA** – refers to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
- 3.12. **UPD** – refers to the University Programs Division within Navitas

4. Policy Principles

This policy has been developed in line with requirements set out in the HES to ensure that ECC:

- 4.1. Compares its performance on teaching, student learning outcomes and graduate outcomes with other Higher Education Providers.
- 4.2. Benchmarks academic achievement in terms of admission criteria, academic rigour, student performance data and student satisfaction.
- 4.3. Undertakes a systematic and measured approach to benchmarking performance, identifying areas of improvement and allocating resources to meet action plans for improvement
- 4.4. Enhances student outcomes through activities that support our mission, vision, core values and strategic priorities.

¹ TEQSA. (2015). *TEQSA Guidance Note Benchmarking*. Retrieved January 6, 2016, from http://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/BenchmarkingGNFinal_0.pdf

5. Policy Content

5.1 **Directions:** ECC activities are guided by its mission, vision, core values and strategic priorities:

5.1.1 Mission: To provide high quality education services that lead to success in ECU and beyond

5.1.2 Vision: We innovate, we educate, futures begin at ECC

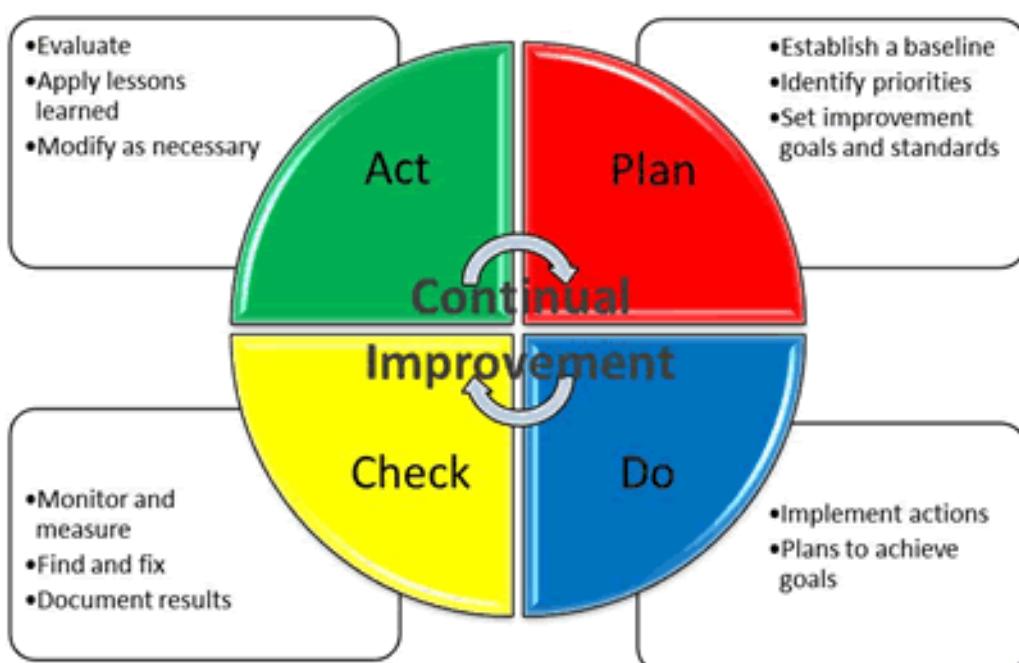
5.1.3 Core Values:

- **Conviction** to our purpose and potential
- **Drive** towards achieving and advancing together
- **Adventurous** in mind and spirit
- **Rigour** in enhancing our professional reputation and credibility
- **Genuine** in the way we behave and deliver
- **Respect** shown by celebrating, valuing and caring for people and the environment

5.1.4 Strategic priorities are characterised by established regulatory standards, best practice in the Higher Education sector and commitment to continuous improvement based on systematic SWOT analysis activities.

5.2 Benchmarking Processes:

5.2.1 This policy does not prescribe a methodology for benchmarking activities however the core principles of PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act)² constitute an important set of guidelines for continuous improvement within ECC.

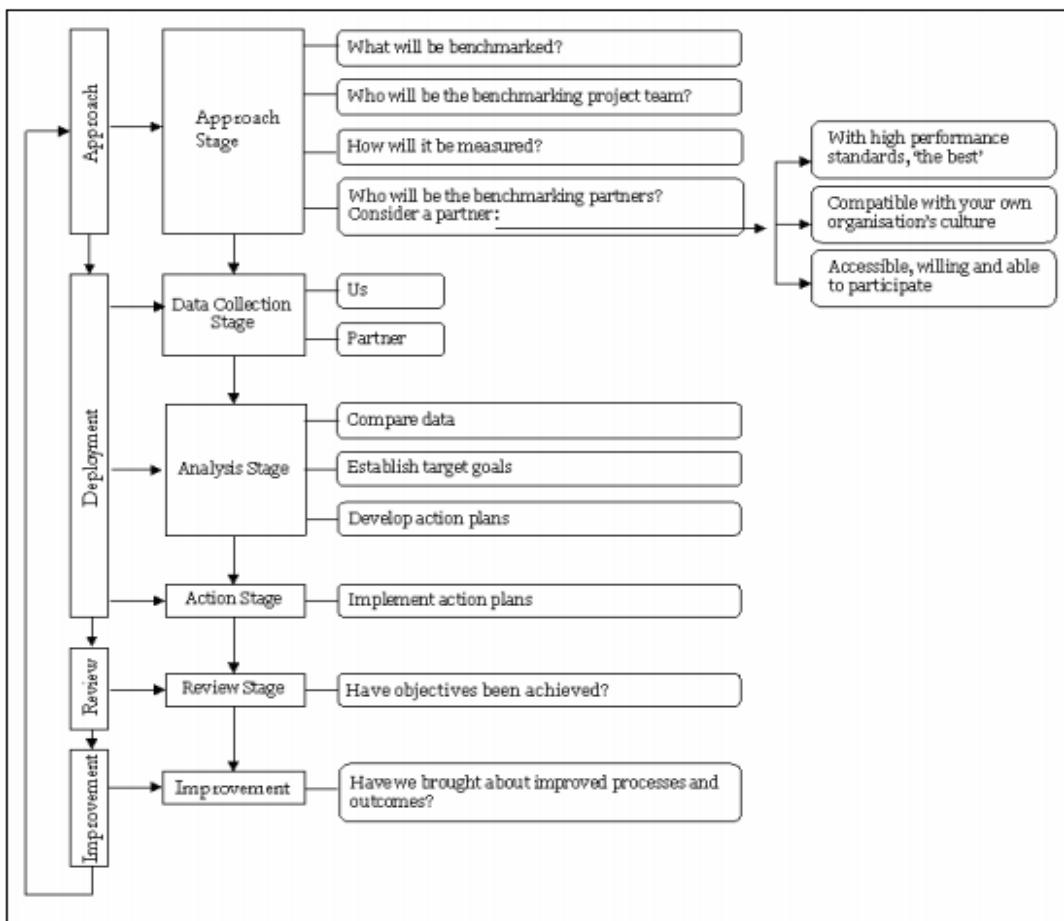


The PDCA framework informs decision-making through the collation of data, comparative analysis, regular self-evaluation and reflective practice (wash-up meetings). External input provides additional insights and opportunities for improvement against best practice models.

² ISO14001. (2013, June 11). *Plan Do Check Act* [Graphic]. Retrieved from <http://iso14001certification.com/plan-check-act/>

5.2.2 Where applicable, Meade's *Model of Benchmarking Procedure*³ may also be used to guide ECC benchmarking practices:

Figure 1. Model of Benchmarking Procedure



5.3 Academic Governance Processes – through the establishment of appropriate Academic Governance committees:

- 5.3.1 Comprising of a majority of external, independent membership;
- 5.3.2 Guided by clear terms of reference;
- 5.3.3 Having systematic oversight of academic policies, procedures and KPI;
- 5.3.4 Developing a systematic review process based on self-review, guidelines recommended by Chairs of Academic Boards Forum (CABF) and peer review by ECU and/or external reviewers such as the regulator.

³ Department of Education, Training & Youth Affairs (DETYA). (2000, February). *Benchmarking: A Manual for Australian Universities*. Retrieved January 6, 2016, from http://science.uniserve.edu.au/Courses/benchmarking/benchmarking_manual.pdf, p. 8

5.4 Course and Unit Review Processes – reviewing, amending and approving Courses and units offered at ECC and its Partner Providers.

5.4.1 Review and improvement of Courses based on a range of inputs including:

- Formal feedback from ECU (eg, Graduate progression rates; PELA reports)
- Attrition/Retention rates
- Course completion rates
- Grade distributions
- Student survey feedback
- Market demand

5.4.2 Development of new Courses is undertaken on the basis of input from a range of internal and external stakeholders, and will draw heavily on the curriculum of first year Courses offered by ECU.

5.4.3 The process engages input from ECC staff and their industry-linked connections, Governance Structures, ECU staff and through them, various professional accreditation bodies (eg. CPA, Engineers Australia, NMBA) as well as insights from other Navitas UPD colleges.

5.4.4 The process ensures a coherent body of discipline knowledge that align with academic and employability skills aimed at streamlined transition into ECU.

5.4.5 Approval processes engage members from ECC Governance Structures which includes representation from independent, external stakeholders.

5.4.6 Where available, external benchmarks are used to measure results against:

- Pass rates in comparable Courses within Navitas UPD
- Pass rates in comparable Courses and units at ECU
- Retention rates in comparable Courses within Navitas UPD
- Graduate progression rates for similar cohorts (transfer to ECU; graduation from ECU)
- Feedback provided by TEQSA and/or other regulators

5.5 Moderation Processes – ensures appropriate levels of academic rigour and consistency of assessment procedures between lecturers teaching the same unit in a given trimester; between lecturers teaching the same unit across different trimesters; and between lecturers teaching the same unit across ECC-linked Partner Providers.

5.5.1 Moderation processes are outlined in the Moderation Policy and associated procedures

5.5.2 Benchmarking processes include comparison of academic KPI and assessment procedures linked to:

- Historical data for the same unit over time
- Comparisons against the same unit delivered by a Partner Provider
- Comparisons with available information on the equivalent ECU unit which may/may not be linked to input from professional accreditation bodies
- Comparisons against similar Courses delivered by a Partner Provider and/or Navitas UPD college
- Feedback/recommendations provided by teaching colleagues (including evaluation of potential for marking bias, communication between markers, cultural issues in curriculum content/assessment and areas for improvement in future delivery)

5.6 Student Satisfaction Processes – ensures regular feedback is collected, collated and compared over time and against equivalent cohorts.

5.6.1 The Survey Schedule includes the following dimensions that enable ECC to gauge how it

compares to other Higher Education providers and where it might focus its improvement initiatives:

- Navitas-linked surveys that benchmark ECC against Navitas UPD colleges in the areas of student satisfaction, graduate satisfaction, i-Grauate (ISB) and staff satisfaction
- Internal surveys that gauge student satisfaction in relation to new arrival processes; student satisfaction with ELICOS courses and staff satisfaction with operational matters over time
- Unit review surveys (linked to unit content/delivery and satisfaction with lecturers) benchmarked over time, across units and against Partner Providers. Whenever possible, comparable data will be sought from ECU.
- Participation in miscellaneous surveys that offer comparative data such as those linked to regulatory requirements (eg. VET Quality Indicators; AVETMISS) and/or offered from time to time by external bodies (eg. OLT / CSHE Student Experience Project; ACPET benchmarking)

5.6.2 Survey outcomes will be benchmarked against best practice models, bearing in mind ECC's scale of operations as well as its mission, vision, core values and strategic priorities.

5.7 Admissions Processes – benchmarking entry requirements in line with established English language requirements and academic standards

5.7.1 Benchmarking reflect input form the following inter-related sources



5.7.2 Academic benchmarking will comply with specifications outlined in the Australian Qualifications Framework (www.aqf.edu.au).

5.7.3 Academic and English requirements for each course are separately determined with reference to the standards for direct entry into the university as well as other Higher Education institutions (eg. Navitas UPD colleges, TAFE).

- 5.7.4 Entry standards reflect guidelines set in collaboration with ECU. These standards are monitored and endorsed by ECU on an ongoing basis and may be amended to align with the requirements set by the respective professional accreditation bodies,
- For Diploma (Year 2), entry requires completion of Year 12 (or equivalent) and is generally half an IELTS band below ECU English entry requirements
 - For Diploma (Year 1), entry requires completion of Year 11 (or equivalent) but has the same English language entry requirement as Diploma (Year 2)

5.8 Risk Management – relates to both Academic and Non-Academic Governance matters.

- 5.8.1 As a Navitas business unit, ECC is answerable to Navitas' *Audit and Risk Committee* whose operations are based on the International Standard for Risk Management (ISO 31000).
- 5.8.2 ECC is required to lodge six monthly risk reports for the *Navitas Risk Register* of all key material inherent risks, an assessment of control effectiveness, comparison of residual risks to target risks and a data base of actions to reduce any residual risks to the desired level. This information underpins senior management's control self-assessment certificates, which are used to provide assurance to the Navitas Board that they are managing risks appropriately, and enables Group Internal Audit to concentrate its activities on material risks and adapt its approach accordingly

- 5.8.3 As a Navitas business unit, ECC is required conduct identification, assessment, control, reporting and on-going monitoring of risks within its own responsibility. This information feeds into risk reports for external review and moderation by Navitas' Audit and Risk Management Committee in the following areas:

- Academic and Student risk
- Economic, political, competitor and market risk
- Financial risk
- Information Technology (IT) risk
- Legal and regulatory risk
- Operational risk
- People risk
- Relationships and reputation risk

6. Administrative procedures

- 6.1. This policy will be available on the ECC website for students and distributed to relevant staff at induction. Administrative staff who provide advice to students will be provided with the policy by their respective supervisors.
- 6.2. Emails will be issued to all staff to inform and update them on any changes to the policy and/or procedures.

This policy has been developed and informed by the following sources:

- Central Queensland University. (2015, August 19). *GUIDELINE*. Retrieved January 5, 2016, from http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:tQG8rB8dtIQJ:policy.cqu.edu.au/Policy/policy_file.do%3Fpolicyid%3D2224+&cd=5&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=au
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- Deakin College. (2015). *Quality Management and Assurance Framework*.

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- Eynesbury College. (2014, October). *Program and Course Review Policy*.
- ISO14001. (2013, June 11). *Plan Do Check Act* [Graphic]. Retrieved from <http://iso14001certification.com/plan-check-act/>
- Navitas Limited. (2015, December). Navitas Investor Centre. Retrieved January 13, 2016, from <https://www.navitas.com/corporate/investors>
- Navitas Limited. (2015, September 25). Navitas Limited – Corporate Governance Statement. Retrieved January 13, 2016, from https://e6c67dfea7107c66cf4b-5fe525cefecba56744297355853ea71e.ssl.cf6.rackcdn.com/Corporate_Governance_Statement.pdf
- Scott, R. (2011). *Benchmarking: A Literature Review*. Retrieved January 13, 2016, from https://intranet.ecu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/357193/Benchmarking-Literature-Review.pdf
- TEQSA. (2015). *TEQSA Guidance Note Benchmarking*. Retrieved January 6, 2016, from http://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/BenchmarkingGNFinal_0.pdf
- University of Tasmania. (n.d.). *Benchmarking Policy*. Retrieved January 5, 2016, from http://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/435757/Benchmarking-Policy-.pdf
- University of Wollongong. (2010, October 15). UOW Benchmarking Policy. Retrieved from <http://www.uow.edu.au/about/policy/UOW090468.html>