

# **Benchmarking Framework: Griffith University and University of Western Sydney 2007-2008**

## **Introduction**

During 2007 and 2008, Griffith University and University of Western Sydney (UWS) are working together in a benchmarking exercise to make comparisons in a number of key strategic areas, and to develop a combination of practical and conceptual outcomes.

## **Griffith and UWS as partners**

The universities share points of similarity and local contexts that make them suitable benchmark partners:

- **Both universities are multicampus and have a student body that is widely dispersed across those campuses**  
Griffith and UWS are the most dispersed universities in Australia, in the sense that their student load is the least concentrated in one location. This characteristic appears to present particular challenges in delivering a high quality on-campus student experiences. (Moodie 2005, Appendix 2)
- **Both universities have a strong commitment to equity and access issues**  
Griffith and UWS both attract students who are more likely than the national average to be the first from their family to be attending university. They also have strong traditions in a range of activities around university engagement and are already involved in joint projects, such as the partnership between Griffith, UWS and the University of Melbourne in the National Centre for Excellence in Islamic Studies.
- **Both universities have a strong commitment to student retention and success, and have a strong engagement with their local communities.**  
As examples, both Griffith's *Academic Plan 3 2007-2010* and UWS' *Teaching and Learning Plan 2004-2008* set goals for student success and completion rates, and for diverse student populations. Both have individual projects focussed on disadvantaged or 'at-risk' students. UWS has a Regional and Community Engagement Plan to develop outreach with schools, TAFE institutions, and Indigenous community organisations. Griffith has a high school partner program, a TAFE links initiative and a number of initiatives directed at low socio-economic status and Indigenous students, including a project funded by DEEWR to promote Indigenous higher education at its Logan campus.
- **Both universities wish to increase their outcomes on the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund**  
Griffith and UWS have a range of initiatives under way which are complementary.

The purpose of the exercise is to improve the performance of both universities, given the similarities in the circumstances and challenges facing each partner.

## **Nature and objectives of benchmarking**

### **Definition of benchmarking**

For the purposes of the Griffith-UWS benchmarking relationship, benchmarking is understood as:

the formal and structured process of searching for those practices which lead to excellent performance, the observation and exchange of information about them, their adaptation to meet the needs of one's own organisation, and the implementation of the amended practice. (Mead 1998)

The partners will use benchmarking in this sense to identify effective practices leading to improved performance. Benchmarking is the process of comparison that will establish the dimensions of good practice and effective indicators of that practice. The quality improvement processes that track present and future performance will be the responsibilities of the separate institutions. These processes will 'establish priorities for change and resource allocation' (ACODE 2007), will help people apply their learning, and will improve collaboration and communication across heads of service areas. It is important that both partners recognises areas of achievement, and that the two universities take what participants have seen and apply it in the home institution, so that the outcome from the benchmarking process represents value for the time, money and effort invested.

### **Objectives**

The Griffith-UWS benchmarking exercise will give priority to projects addressing the following issues:

1. Effectively providing student services to a dispersed student body across multiple campuses, and particularly the challenge of coordinating service delivery at any given campus by cross-campus administrative elements
2. Effectively leading and managing an academic or administrative element across multiple campuses
3. Providing effective systems and IT support for cross-campus academic operations
4. Identifying the strategic, policy, quality assurance and pedagogical implications of cross-campus delivery
5. Providing effective support across campuses for research activity, including for RHD students
6. Improving performance management, support and rewards for senior staff

## Benchmarking method

A preliminary meeting of senior managers from the two universities was held in June 2007 at Griffith University. Areas for benchmarking were identified (see Appendix 1). A follow-up meeting will be held at UWS in 2008 for groups involved in active benchmarking projects to meet and discuss findings, and to report on improvement actions taken or planned in the light of benchmarking outcomes.

Appendix 3 contains **definitions** of benchmarking, and summarises different types of benchmarking and associated benchmarking methods. When benchmarking teams are considering the approach to their projects and reporting back to the joint meeting, these may be useful terms to have a shared understanding. Benchmarking groups may employ a variety of benchmarking methods to achieve the objectives stated above. Different methods will be appropriate to different projects.

It is likely that project teams will be involved in some aspects of **activity-based benchmarking** which will identify current strengths and proven techniques (in approaches, policies and processes) to build on in the future, and opportunities for improvement that will enable improved performance.

For each institution, the participants must have a good understanding of their own processes, the process measures currently in use, and the high-level aggregate measures used at the institutional level of reporting. The teams may share relevant data that has been routinely collected and analysed, and perhaps new information collected for the exercise. They may also share information about organisational performance and practical advantages. It is important that project teams are clear about the purpose for each project, and how the exercise will be conducted. In addition there may be improved understanding of processes when the partner questions its success.

The projects should go beyond data comparison to gain some insight into the reasons for difference in performance, and analyse process improvements in flow, efficiency, effectiveness, adaptability, cost etc. Potential actions or strategies will be reported to the joint meeting of the institutions, as well as organisational barriers and ways to energise change and improvement. In some projects, there may be some cultural dilemmas or natural preferences which require further reflection. Teams will report using a template (See 'Benchmarking Project Report') to make the identification of priorities easier.

## Review

To drive improvements generated by the sector benchmarking exercise, project outcomes will be shared by the teams at a joint meeting of the partners. This exercise aims:

- To establish the priorities for action across the projects within each institution that take the most important opportunities through to implementation, and establish a balance between long-term strategies and short-term actions that are sustainable and will lead to improvements over time

- To identify barriers or dilemmas that need credible management of cultural change, or effective time management to implement the proposed improvements
- To recognise local improvements that are likely to have consequences for other parts of the organisation, and set plans to improve the interactions between the relevant sections
- To leverage and link the many joint initiatives already under way between the two universities
- To explore, in the longer term, the merit of developing an Australian multicampus universities support network.

### **Joint meeting April 2008: Griffith visits UWS**

The Griffith team leader for each project will visit UWS to make, with their UWS equivalent, a joint short outcome presentation to a meeting of all the teams on what has been achieved and to identify further developments.

### **Institutional implementation**

#### *Implementation of Improvements*

Where each institution's implementation plan has identified a priority activity, it will be the responsibility of the senior manager to develop detailed implementation strategies and resource plans.

#### *Sustainable improvements*

As sustainable quality improvements require longer term projects, the relevant members of University Executive will maintain commitment to the processes of change at the Area of Focus level, and to the removal of barriers that impact on the proposed changes.

#### *Communication*

By agreement between the partners, the findings and outcomes will be shared with others in the institutions.

#### *Evaluation*

When the exercise is nearing completion, the results of benchmarking will be evaluated, and demonstrated where this is possible.

## **Project Management**

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## Recommended Reading

### Strategic Plans

Griffith University's *Strategic Plan 2006-2010* and *Griffith 2015: Beyond top 10*  
Available at <http://www.griffith.edu.au/office-vice-chancellor/key-university-documents>

*The Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan of the University of Western Sydney.*

Available at <http://www.uws.edu.au/about/university/mission>

### Core Activity Plans

Griffith University's *Academic Plan3 Learning for Success: A plan for student learning and success at Griffith 2008-2010.* Available at

<http://www.griffith.edu.au/ua/aa/plans/academic/>

University of Western Sydney's *Teaching and Learning Plan 2004-2008.* Available at [http://tdu.uws.edu.au/qilt/teaching/docs/Teaching\\_and\\_Learning\\_Plan\\_2004\\_2008.pdf](http://tdu.uws.edu.au/qilt/teaching/docs/Teaching_and_Learning_Plan_2004_2008.pdf)

### Other Manuals, Guidelines

ACODE (Australasian Council on Open, Distance and e-Learning) 2007, *ACODE benchmarking for e-learning in universities and guidelines for use.*

Available from

<http://www.acode.edu.au/aboutus/acodebenchmkwksp/acodebmguideline0607.pdf> Accessed 8 January 2008.

Jackson, N. & Lund, H. (eds.) 2000, *Benchmarking for Higher Education*, Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press, UK.

McKinnon, K.R., Walker, S.H. and Davis, D. 2000, *Benchmarking, A manual for Australian Universities*, Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs, (DETYA) Higher Education Division. Available:

[http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher\\_education/publications\\_resources/pr\\_ofiles/archives/benchmarking\\_a\\_manual\\_for\\_australian\\_universities.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/pr_ofiles/archives/benchmarking_a_manual_for_australian_universities.htm) accessed on 8 January 2008.

Meade, P.H. 1998, *A guide to benchmarking*, Dunedin, University of Otago Press, cited by AUQA Quality Enhancement Glossary.

Schofield A. 1998, *An introduction to benchmarking in higher education* (Chapter 1) and *Benchmarking: An overview of approaches and issues in implementation* (Chapter 2) in 'Benchmarking in Higher Education: An International Review', CHEMS. Available at

<http://www.acu.ac.uk/chems/onlinepublications/961780238.pdf> accessed on 8 January 2008.

Stella, A. & Woodhouse, D. 2007, *Benchmarking in Australian higher education: A thematic analysis of AUQA audit reports*, Australian Universities Quality Agency. Available at

[http://www.auqa.edu.au/files/publications/benchmarking\\_final\\_text\\_website.pdf](http://www.auqa.edu.au/files/publications/benchmarking_final_text_website.pdf) accessed on 10 December 2007

## Benchmarking Project Report

(email contacts at both universities are normally [the initial of the first name. surname@universityname.edu.au](mailto:the.initial.of.the.first.name.surname@universityname.edu.au))

### Planning and Quality

Project Description	Griffith staff	UWS Staff
Item validation & use of data from unit/course feedback surveys	Kerri-Lee Krause Duncan Nulty	Geoff Scott Mahsood Shah
Share information on retention data and surveys	Wendy Marchment	Steve Butcher Mahsood Shah
Survey of non-returning students (exit survey)	Wendy Marchment	Mahsood Shah
Compare and contrast program approval processes, especially using online systems & agrees QA checkpoints	Karen van Haeringen Sharon Clifford Bruce Callow Sally Borbasi Duncan Nulty	Thea Seabrook Shaneen McGlinchey Kate Miranda Lizette Delacey Diana Calderan Chair Course Approval Committee
Optimum ways of ensuring planning has a productive impact including identification of most productive role and approaches of Academic Committees and Senate	Lea-Anne Stafford Richard Armour	Anne Cusick
Strategies for reducing the number of unproductive meetings and committees/ways to reduce travel and to use of teleconferences	Danielle Cooper	Geoff Scott
Business Intelligence Review	John Dewar	Geoff Scott
The Green Campus Project (UWS) - Making Griffith Green and Sustainable	Geoff Dengate	Geoff Scott

### Learning, Teaching & Assessment

Project Description	Griffith staff	UWS Staff
A blended Learning Strategy & implementation plan	Kerri-Lee Krause	Stuart Campbell
Share details of IT-enabled learning projects at both institutions	Paul Turnbull Kevin Ashford-Rowe	Lynnae Rankine Janne Malfoy
Assessment – focus, processes, quality assurance in different fields of education & at the subject level	Heather Alexander Lynda Davies	Stuart Campbell
Assessment – including how to manage overassessment	Mike Davidson	Garry Tibbits
Online use of ICT in the languages	Michael Levy	Bruno di Biase
National Centre for Excellence in	Griffith Team Leader	UWS Team Leader

Islamic Studies		
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## Research & Scholarship

Project Description	Griffith staff	UWS Staff
Exchange of information on Business Journal rankings & development strategies	Mike Davidson	Garry Tibbits

## Student Administration & Services

Project Description	Griffith staff	UWS Staff
Approaches to developing a 'one stop shop' (virtual and face-to-face)	Richard Armour Cathy McGrath Barbara Biviano Susan McPaul	Thea Seabrook
Online enrolment	“ “ “	“ “ “
Towards achieving a seamless integration of online systems and portals in this area	“ “ “	“ “ “
Effective approaches to orientation & transition (virtual and face-to-face) – especially support for students at risk	Richard Armour Orientation & Engagement Committee	Ellen Brackenreg
UWS use of TRIM	Gabrielle Ingram Karen van Haeringen	Thea Seabrook TRIM team

## L&T Leadership

Project Description	Griffith staff	UWS Staff
Action plan to address the key findings from the Carrick L&T Leadership Project	John Dewar	Geoff Scott

## HR & Staff Issues

Project Description	Griffith staff	UWS Staff
Workload management – comparison of approaches	Mike Davidson	Garry Tibbits

**Additional Areas suggested for Joint Work**

1. UWS approach to consolidation and alignment of learning programs is of interest to Griffith.
2. Joint interest in determining where and how to locate learning assistance in a multi-campus university and the optimum role of ICT in this
3. Griffith's approaches to engaged research and how partnerships with industry are developed is of interest to UWS (including the Dean of the College of Business)
4. Honours College (Griffith) and Student Leadership Scholarships (UWS)
5. Implementation support and tracking for the new medical programs at both institutions – especially the practice oriented and community focused components
6. BIT work-based learning model at Griffith Logan (Mike Blumenstein HOS at Griffith and Simeon Simoff HOS at UWS)
7. How to leverage differential expertise in the School of ICT at Griffith and in the School of Computing and Mathematics at UWS (Michael Blumenstein and Simeon Simoff)

## Contextual statement for the learning and teaching performance fund (Extract)

### Factor not considered in the adjustment: dispersion of load among in-State campuses

Institutions that have their load concentrated on one campus have scope for greater economies of scale and are easier to manage than institutions that serve a region by having their load dispersed across several campuses. Institutions with most of their load concentrated on one campus are also better able than dispersed institutions to provide student facilities and services and generate a strong academic culture. The extent of an institution's dispersion of load amongst campuses may thus affect its performance on the indicators used for the learning and teaching performance fund, particularly good teaching, student retention and overall satisfaction.

Off shore campuses are completely discretionary: institutions choose to establish off shore campuses despite their lower economies of scale and being more difficult to manage. They should therefore be excluded from an analysis of campus concentration and dispersion. Some onshore campuses are also completely discretionary. Thus Central Queensland University's campuses in Melbourne and Sydney are obviously discretionary since they are outside the institution's State of establishment. But several universities have campuses within their State some of which are discretionary and others which are part of the institution's core mission. Since it is hard to distinguish these without a detailed knowledge of each institution and its campuses this analysis considers all campuses within an institution's State or Territory of establishment.

A measure of the extent of an institution's concentration of in-State load is the proportion of the institution's in-State load located at its biggest campus in its State of establishment. Values range from the ANU, Batchelor College and the University of Sunshine Coast which have 100% of their in-State load located on their biggest campus, to the University of Western Sydney which has only 26% of its in-State load located on its biggest campus in its State. There is an uneven distribution of institutions by concentration of in-State load: the median is 85%, mean 78% and the standard deviation is 22%.

TABLE 1: % OF IN-STATE LOAD AT BIGGEST CAMPUS

Institution	No. in-State campuses > 100 eftsu	% load on biggest campus	High dispersion	Rank % load on biggest campus	L&TPF rank
The Australian National University	1	100%		1	6
University of the Sunshine Coast	1	100%		1	20
Batchelor Institute	1	100%		1	39
The University of New England	3	99%		4	7
The University of Western Australia	1	99%		4	12
Macquarie University	2	99%		4	15
University of Canberra	2	98%		7	8
Flinders University of South Australia	2	97%		8	26
The University of Melbourne	4	96%		9	3
University of Southern Queensland	2	96%		9	27
Charles Darwin University	2	96%		9	38
The University of Adelaide	3	95%		12	36

Institution	No. in-State campuses > 100 efts	% load on biggest campus	High dispersion	Rank % load on biggest campus	L&TPF rank
Curtin University of Technology	5	94%		13	24
Murdoch University	2	93%		14	11
University of Wollongong	4	92%		15	1
The University of New South Wales	3	92%		15	32
The University of Queensland	3	88%		17	5
The University of Sydney	4	86%		18	10
University of Technology, Sydney	3	85%		19	18
The University of Newcastle	4	85%		19	25
<b>Median</b>				<b>19</b>	
Southern Cross University	3	84%		21	28
James Cook University	2	78%		22	30
<b>Mean</b>		<b>78%</b>			
University of Ballarat	2	76%		23	9
La Trobe University	5	76%		23	16
RMIT	5	76%		23	29
Swinburne University of Technology	3	73%		23	4
University of Tasmania	3	63%	High	27	34
Central Queensland University	7	62%	High	28	35
Queensland University of Technology	3	58%	High	29	31
Victoria University	6	57%	High	30	19
Australian Maritime College	3	56%	High	31	2
Monash University	6	52%	High	32	14
Deakin University	5	52%	High	32	21
University of South Australia	5	50%	High	34	37
Edith Cowan University	4	41%	High	35	23
Charles Sturt University	6	40%	High	36	17
Griffith University	5	37%	High	37	22
University of Western Sydney	6	26%	High	38	33

An institution was categorised as having highly dispersed load if 63% (1 standard deviation from the mean) or less of its in-State load was located at its biggest in-State campus. By this measure there are 12 institutions or 31% of the total with highly dispersed load. Only one institution with highly dispersed load is in the top 10 of the learning and teaching performance fund rank and institutions with highly dispersed load are correspondingly over represented in the bottom 9 of the overall rank, with 5 institutions with highly dispersed load making up 56% of the bottom 9. The effect is spread amongst the indicators, with the disadvantage for highly dispersed institutions being most marked in good teaching. In Griffith's case this may be because many staff teach on campuses other than the campus on which they are based, spending considerable time commuting and not being available for consultation for extensive times on the campuses on which they are not based.

Table 2: effect of dispersion of in-State load

	Highly dispersed load	Average – low dispersion of load	Total
Number of universities	12 (31%)	27 (69%)	39 (100%)
Employ rank 1-10	2 (20%)	8 (80%)	10 (100%)
Employ rank 11-20	4 (40%)	6 (60%)	10 (100%)
Employ rank 21-30	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	10 (100%)
Employ rank 31-39	1 (11%)	8 (89%)	9 (100%)
Study rank 1-10	1 (10%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)
Study rank 11-20	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	10 (100%)
Study rank 21-30	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	10 (100%)
Study rank 31-39	3 (33%)	6 (67%)	9 (100%)
Gen skills rank 1-10	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	10 (100%)
Gen skills rank 11-20	1 (10%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)
Gen skills rank 21-30	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	10 (100%)
Gen skills rank 31-39	3 (33%)	6 (67%)	9 (100%)
Good teach rank 1-10	1 (10%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)
Good teach rank 11-20	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	10 (100%)
Good teach rank 21-30	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	10 (100%)
Good teach rank 31-39	3 (30%)	6 (67%)	10 (100%)
Satisfaction rank 1-10	1 (10%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)
Satisfaction rank 11-20	4 (40%)	6 (60%)	10 (100%)
Satisfaction rank 21-30	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	10 (100%)
Satisfaction rank 31-39	4 (44%)	6 (56%)	10 (100%)
Progress rank 1-10	4 (40%)	6 (60%)	10 (100%)
Progress rank 11-20	2 (20%)	8 (80%)	10 (100%)
Progress rank 21-30	2 (20%)	8 (80%)	10 (100%)
Progress rank 31-39	4 (44%)	6 (56%)	9 (100%)
Retention rank 1-10	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	10 (100%)
Retention rank 11-20	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	10 (100%)
Retention rank 21-30	4 (40%)	6 (60%)	10 (100%)
Retention rank 31-39	2 (22%)	7 (78%)	9 (100%)
Overall rank 1-10	1 (10%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)
Overall rank 11-20	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	10 (100%)
Overall rank 21-30	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	10 (100%)
Overall rank 31-39	5 (56%)	4 (44%)	9 (100%)

Gavin Moodie  
August 2005

## Definitions

### Benchmarking

Term	Definition	Source
Benchmark	A benchmark is a point of reference against which something may be measured.	INQAAHE <sup>1</sup>
Benchmarking	An improvement process in which an organisation is able to measure its performance against that of 'best in class' organisations, to determine how those organisations achieved their performance levels and use the information to improve its own performance	ASQ <sup>2</sup>
Benchmarking	Benchmarking is the formal and structured process of searching for those practices which lead to excellent performance, the observation and exchange of information about them, their adaptation to meet the needs of one's own organisation, and the implementation of the amended practice.	Meade, 1998
Benchmarking	A process that enables comparison of inputs, processes or outputs between institutions (or parts of institutions) or within a single institution over time	INQAAHE <sup>3</sup>
Benchmarking	A learning process structured so as to enable those engaging in the process to compare their services / activities / products in order to identify their comparative strengths and weaknesses as a basis for self improvement and/or self-regulation	Jackson & Lund, 2000 <sup>4</sup>
Benchmarking	A self-improvement tool for organisations [that] allows them to compare themselves with others, to identify their comparative strengths and weaknesses and learn how to improve. Benchmarking is a way of finding and adopting best practices.	ACU <sup>5</sup>
Benchmarking	A business excellence tool for finding, adapting and implementing outstanding practices in order to achieve superior performance. Benchmarking comprises measurement (the what) and practices (the how). And it tells us how well we are performing, defines how good we need to be (a practical vision), how to get there (a roadmap) and it needs to link to our mission, vision and values.	Benc 2003 <sup>6</sup>
Benchmarking	A method of comparing and measuring processes and outcomes with those of recognised leaders, with the intent	ABEF 2003 <sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), cited in Stella & Woodhouse 2007, p 14.

<sup>2</sup> American Society for Quality (ASQ), cited in Stella & Woodhouse 2007, p 14.

<sup>3</sup> International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), cited in Stella & Woodhouse 2007, p 14.

<sup>4</sup> Jackson, N & Lund, H, 2000 cited in Stella & Woodhouse 2007, p 14

<sup>5</sup> Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), cited in Stella & Woodhouse 2007, p 14

<sup>6</sup> Benc, A 2003, cited by ACODE 2007 [p 3]

<sup>7</sup> Australian Business Excellence Framework (ABEF) Standards Australia International 2003 [2007 edition available at <http://www.saiglobal.com/Improve/ExcellenceModels/BusinessExcellenceFramework/default.htm> ]

	of improving performance	
Benchmarking	Benchmarking is a Business Excellence tool for finding, adapting and implementing outstanding practices in order to achieve superior performance. Benchmarking comprises prioritisation of strategic improvement needs (the why), measurement (the what - the Benchmarks) and practices (the how – the doing of benchmarking). Re-measure tracks performance improvement.	Benchmarking Partnerships <sup>8</sup>
	<p>What benchmarking is not</p> <p>Benchmarking does not mean simply collecting and comparing (eg staff turnover or debtor days). Performance is invariably measured in different ways by different organisations and figures alone are not a reliable basis for comparison. However, it can be valuable to partner with other organisations on a regular basis to compare performance figures and discuss the merits of alternative management practices and systems.</p>	
Benchmarking and Benchmarks	<p>There is an important distinction between benchmarking as a process and specific benchmarks. Many people regard the benchmarks as benchmarking, when this is only a small part of the benchmarking process.</p> <p>Benchmarking is the process that starts from identifying an area for improvement and ends in enhancing the quality of its services.</p> <p>Benchmarks are data comparisons, such as performance output figures. They can be a pointer to what you should be improving and from whom you should be learning.</p>	ibid

## Types of benchmarking

The type of benchmarks to be considered varies with the purpose.

### **Woodhouse categories**

Internal benchmarking	Occurs when comparisons are made against another division within one's own organisation	Woodhouse, 2000 <sup>9</sup>
Public information	Occurs when publicly available data about another organisation is used; obviously this does not require the other organisation to agree, or to be formally designated as a 'partner'; this is generally used as a low-key approach, but may be the only possible approach if the other organisation is a direct competitor	ibid
Sector benchmarking	Occurs when a benchmarking partner in the same sector is selected and the comparison extends to information known only within the organisations	ibid
Generic benchmarking	Involves comparisons of processes and practices regardless of the industry or field of the partner (e.g. comparing the	ibid

<sup>8</sup> Benchmarking Partnerships (Anton Benc and Bruce Searles) *What is benchmarking* Available at <http://www.benchmarkingpartnerships.com.au/benchmarking.htm> Accessed 15 January 2008

<sup>9</sup> Woodhouse, D 2000, cited in Stella & Woodhouse 2007, p 14

	processes for turning round assignments for distance education students with an analogous process in a totally different industry)	
Best practice benchmarking	Occurs when the interested party selects a comparator believed to be best in the area to be benchmarked	ibid
<b>McKinnon et al categories</b>		
Criterion reference benchmarking	Defines the attributes of good practice in a functional area. The benchmark could be simply a checklist of essential attributes constituting good practice.	McKinnon, 2000 <sup>10</sup>
Qualitative benchmarking	Distinguish normative and competitive levels of achievement ... where practice is quantifiably different in some institutions.	ibid
<b>Benc &amp; Searles categories</b>		
Sector benchmarking	Is conducted in partnership with similar functions areas in similar types of organisations eg government agencies.	Benchmarking Partnerships <sup>11</sup>
Industry or functional benchmarking	Involves partners in the same functional area, such as HR, finance and fleet management, in the private or public sector.	ibid
Generic benchmarking	Communications with operational communications in a private sector organisation. The range of comparisons is usually very broad within a common theme (for example, for communications: customer service, internal communications, strategic planning, or turn around times).	ibid
Internal benchmarking	Is partnering between different areas within the one organisation. For example, the HR and Finance areas within an organisation could develop a balanced performance measurement system. Benefits are that potential benchmarking partners are easy to identify, information sharing is usually straightforward and can result in improvement of strategies and processes within the organisation. The opportunities for learning from better practice are, however, limited to the scope of the internal partners.	ibid
Competitive benchmarking	Involves partnering with potential competitors (eg outsourcing services). The willingness and openness of competitors to share sensitive information determines the extent of benefits. However, where there are common interests, competitive benchmarking can be very useful.	ibid

<sup>10</sup> McKinnon, K R, Walker, S H & Davis D, 2000, cited in Stella & Woodhouse 2007, p 15

<sup>11</sup> Benchmarking Partnerships (Anton Benc and Bruce Searles) *What is benchmarking* Available at <http://www.benchmarkingpartnerships.com.au/benchmarking.htm> Accessed 15 January 2008

### **Australian Business Excellence Framework categories**

The Business Excellence Framework <sup>12</sup> is a performance benchmarking program that represents a system approach where each of the 7 categories is integrally linked and a change in any single category will require work in the other 6 to achieve the desired results. The 7 categories are:

1. Leadership
2. Customer and market focus
3. Strategy and planning
4. People
5. Information and knowledge
6. Process management, improvement and innovation
7. Success and sustainability

The aim of the Business Excellence Framework is to create an environment for continuous improvement that leads to sustainable business success. It is based on enduring principles of organizational improvement that are the underlying philosophy. The Business Excellence Framework describes the elements essential to sustainable organizational excellence.



Source: Business Excellence Framework, accessed at <http://www.saiglobal.com/Improve/ExcellenceModels/BusinessExcellenceFramework/default.htm> on 14 January 2008

The Framework provides both design and diagnostic tools, as each category has a number of specific items, each of which can be assessed in 4 dimensions: approach, deployment, results and improvement, and these dimensions have an assessment matrix.

<sup>12</sup> Business Excellence Australia  
<http://www.saiglobal.com/Improve/ExcellenceModels/BusinessExcellenceFramework/default.htm>

The Framework can be used to assess and improve any aspects of systems and operations, including service delivery.

### Methods of benchmarking

Stella & Woodhouse quote Alstete (1995), commenting that there is no single correct way to conduct all benchmarking studies, and different studies require different methods.

#### *Schofield categories*

Ideal type standards (or gold standards)	Occurs where a model is created based on idealised best practice and then used as the basis to assess institutions on the extent to which they fit that model.	Schofield, 1998 <sup>13</sup>
Activity-based benchmarking	Occurs when a selected number of activities, which are either typical or representative of the range of institutional provision, are analysed and compared with similar activities in other selected institutions. Such activities may be considered solely in their own terms, or may act as a proxy for overall institutional performance.	ibid
Vertical benchmarking	Seeks to quantify the costs, workloads, productivity and performance of a defined functional area. Consequently, depending on the approach, benchmarks can be in many forms — qualitative (e.g. successful practices) or quantitative (e.g. ratios). They can be expressed as Practices or Statements or Specification of outcomes all of which may overlap. In particular, benchmarks can be either Practices or Metrics where metrics are the quantified effect of implementing the practices.	ibid
Horizontal benchmarking	Seeks to analyse the cost, workloads, productivity, and performance of a single process that cuts across one or more functional areas, for example all aspects of student admissions irrespective of their location within an institution. As such the results provide a comprehensive review of institutional practice in any particular area, but data collection and interpretation may be highly problematic. Both horizontal and vertical benchmarks are useful diagnostic tools in identifying and prioritising opportunities to improve an administrative process or function.	ibid
Comparative performance indicators	Occurs when publicly available comparative performance indicators is used in a straightforward approach which is inexpensive but likely to be less fruitful	ibid

#### *Jackson & Lund categories*

Jackson & Lund (2000)<sup>14</sup> identify the following features of benchmarking activity:

- Implicit or explicit. The former is a by-product of other information gathering exercises
- Independent or collaborative, the latter being most common
- Focussed on the whole process or organisation (vertical benchmarking) or part of a process as it manifests itself across different functional units (horizontal benchmarking)

<sup>13</sup> Schofield, A, 1998, cited in Stella & Woodhouse 2007, p 15

<sup>14</sup> Jackson, N & Lund, H 2000 cited in ACODE, 2007

- Focussed on inputs, process or outputs or a combination
- Based on quantitative or qualitative methods.