



External Referencing Policy

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1. PURPOSE

The *External Referencing Policy* establishes the requirements for external referencing and benchmarking at the Australis Business School (“Australis”) to evidence quality assurance and quality enhancement in relation to academic programs, business operations and governance. The purpose of this policy is to establish the expectations and standards that are required to be met as outlined in the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015 when undertaking external referencing and benchmarking at Australis.

2. OVERVIEW

In the context of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015, external referencing means a process through which a higher education provider compares an aspect of its operations with that of an external comparator, such as comparing the design of a course of study and/or student achievement of learning outcomes with those of a comparable course from another higher education provider. The purpose of external referencing therefore includes establishing evidence of the quality and standing of a higher education provider’s operations and offering an external evidence base as context for the development of internal improvements, especially to student outcomes and establishment or fostering collaborative improvement efforts across providers.

3. SCOPE

The policy applies to all staff and governing bodies of Australis in relation to the quality assurance and quality enhancement of Australis’s academic programs, student outcomes, business operations and governance.

4. DEFINITIONS

See the Australis *Glossary of Terms* for definitions.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

Australis is committed to maintaining and enhancing the quality of its operations and academic outcomes to provide active, engaging, inquiry-based business education for its students.

Australis will identify and monitor standards and performance in order to improve Australis outcomes, processes and practices.

External referencing will be integrated into the operations of Australis, with routine analysis of data collected and use of the outcomes to drive improvements. Australis will use a number of approaches and techniques, such as benchmarking, peer review and moderation, and will use both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Appropriate indicators will be selected and these will be well-defined, measurable and refined to suit the Australis context as necessary.

In accord with TEQSA guidance, Australis recognises that the purpose of benchmarking is not to standardise all courses and all assessment outcomes, but to reveal variations and establish whether those variations arise from the individual nature of the courses or the student cohorts, or from variations in quality or academic standards.

Australis's external referencing may include benchmarking activities such as:

- **organisational benchmarking** – this includes comparisons at the organisational level, for example, staff ratios, criteria for academic appointments, financial information, student support services.
- **course and unit benchmarking** – this includes review of course and unit design, learning outcomes, assessment construction, teaching, supervision, learning and academic support, course admission criteria, student progress, success and performance.
- **process benchmarking** – this involves comparison of particular Australis practices and processes, and their efficiency.
- **outcomes benchmarking** – this relates to comparison of outcomes data, especially student outcomes, for example, attrition, retention and completion rates.
- **best-practice benchmarking** – this is where Australis selects comparators thought to be at the forefront in the area to be benchmarked, for example, the benchmarking of policies, procedures and agency performance to determine their efficiency and cost effectiveness.

5.1. Policy Principles

The external referencing process must be:

Effective: External referencing of assessment methods, grading and students' achievement of learning outcomes is comparable across courses of study and supports both quality enhancement and quality assurance of courses and subjects.

Efficient, sustainable and secure: The external referencing process is streamlined, efficient, sustainable and secure, and can be operationalised by each institution involved in this type of activity.

Transparent, inclusive, participative and accountable: External referencing engages with multiple perspectives to facilitate a critical discussion between teaching staff across comparable courses of study in order to support consensus building around the standards of student performance and to identify areas for improvement, which are implemented and reported to Australis's academic committees.

Capacity building: External referencing contributes to the professional development of participating staff and the formation of disciplinary and cross disciplinary communities of practice.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Directors is responsible for monitoring the implementation, outcomes and scheduled review of this policy.

The Academic Board (AB) monitors and reports on external referencing activities in relation to academic matters. The AB is responsible for considering and approving proposals for external referencing in relation to academic matters and for overseeing the implementation of improvements arising from external referencing report recommendations.

The Course Co-ordinator will prepare proposals and reports for external referencing as required. The Course Co-ordinator will also manage external moderation and benchmarking activities as required.

As required, Australis staff and students will be asked to participate in the external referencing process by providing qualitative and quantitative data for external referencing activities and preparing external moderation and benchmarking reports.

7. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All information gathered in the process of external referencing must be treated with utmost confidentiality. Any breach of confidentiality will be addressed according to the *Code of Conduct*.

8. RECORD MANAGEMENT

Employees must manage records in accordance with the *Records and Information Management Policy*. This includes retaining these records in a recognised Australis record-keeping information system.

9. Related Documents, External References and Version Control

9.1. Related/Referenced Documents

- Admission and Student Selection Policy and Procedure
- Assessment Policy and Procedure
- Course and Unit Development and Quality Assurance Policy and Procedure
- Feedback Policy and Procedure
- Governance Charter and Delegations Framework
- Learning and Teaching Plan
- Learning and Teaching Policy
- Risk Management Plan
- Strategic Plan
- Student Academic Progression, Monitoring and Intervention Policy and Procedure

9.2. Related Legislation and External References

- Higher Education Standards Framework 2021
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Act 2021

9.3. Version Control

Version	Date	Reviewed/approved by	Key notes/changes
0.1	23/07/21	Academic Board (AB)	Tabled and approved at the 23/07/21 AB meeting
0.2	22/09/21	Board of Directors (BoD)	Tabled and approved at the 22/09/21 BoD meeting
0.3	26/11/21	Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC)	Tabled and approved at the 26/11/21 LTC meeting
0.4	22/03/24	AB and BoD	Updated based on 21/03/24 AB meeting and 22/03/24 BoD meeting
0.5	05/04/24	AB and BoD	Further input from AB meeting 04/04/24 and BoD meeting 05/04/24 incorporated
0.6	11/04/24	AB and BoD	Reviewed and approved at the AB 11/04/24 meeting Reviewed and approved at the BoD 11/04/24 meeting

9.4. Document Review

To be reviewed at least every five (5) years from the date of final approval