External Referencing Policy

Purpose

This policy is an extension of the *Course Review and Quality Assurance Policy* and seeks to establish the requirements for external moderation and benchmarking. It is a core element of the moderation and review cycles at Victorian School of Commerce (VSC) to ensure that VSC is meeting the national standards as outlined in the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*.

The policy aims to ensure a systematic approach to external moderation and benchmarking that will support planning, quality improvement and support VSC's strategic goals and mission.

Scope

The Policy applies to all staff members and governing bodies of VSC and any external contributors involved in external moderation, review or benchmarking activities.

Definitions

Benchmarking – refers to the systematic comparison of an organisation's inputs, processes and outputs against those of external partners. Benchmarks are data comparisons.

Policy

VSC is committed to a systematic approach to benchmarking and external moderation activities. VSC 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. External referencing involves comparing VSC's operations and practices against those of other higher education providers or against external reference points. Benchmarking focuses on improvement through relationships with our benchmarking partner/s, but may also include comparing course design against publicly-available information and market intelligence.

VSC will implement external referencing in alignment with VSC's *Course Review and Quality Assurance Policy* and *Course Review and Quality Assurance Procedure*. This policy must be read in conjunction with that policy and set of procedures.

Benchmarking

VSC will identify and monitor standards and performance in order to improve VSC outcomes, processes and practices. The timings of Benchmarking activities will be agreed upon by the Dean in consultation with Academic Board. VSC will engage in four broad types of benchmarking at least once every three years:

- **Institutional benchmarking** – this includes the benchmarking and comparison of the institution and departments (e.g. staff ratios, financial information, criteria for academic appointment, student support services etc.)

- **Course and Unit benchmarking** – includes the benchmarking of course development and design and unit design, course learning outcomes, learning outcomes for units, construction of assessments and student performance.

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- **Policy and Process benchmarking** – this involves moderation and comparison of VSC's policies and procedures and their effectiveness and how they can be improved.

- **Performance benchmarking** – this is comparison of data on student outcomes, for example, completion, attrition, retention rates.

External References and Benchmarking Partners

VSC will seek to develop external references and benchmarking partners that:

- Have a comparable vision and objectives

- Be of a comparable size and have a similar student demographic

- Offer similar courses

- Are committed to quality improvement

- Are willing to share and be a partner

- Have a good performance record in the areas that are to be benchmarked.

Confidentiality

Permission must be obtained on behalf of the organisation before any external benchmarking can take place. All information gathered in the process of external referencing must be treated with utmost confidentiality. Any breach of confidentiality by VSC members will be dealt with according to the *Code of Conduct*.

Legislation

This Policy and the *Course review And Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures* are in compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021which in **5.3** on **Monitoring, Review and Improvement** state:

1. All accredited courses of study are subject to periodic (at least every seven years) comprehensive reviews that are overseen by peak academic governance processes and include external referencing or other benchmarking activities.

2. A comprehensive review includes the design and content of each course or study, the expected learning outcomes, the methods of assessment of those outcomes, the extent of students' achievement of learning outcomes, and also takes account of emerging developments in the field of education, modes of delivery, the changing needs of students an identified risks to the quality of the course of study.

3. Comprehensive reviews of courses of study are informed and supported by regular interim monitoring, of the quality of teaching and supervision of research students, student progress and overall delivery of units within each course of study.

4. Review and improvement activities include regular external referencing of the success of student cohorts against comparable courses of study, including:

   a. Analyses of progression rates, attrition rates, completion times and rates and, where applicable, comparing different locations of delivery, and

b. The assessment methods and grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes for selected units of study within courses of study.

5. All students have opportunities to provide feedback on their educational experiences and student feedback form institutional monitoring, review and improvement activities.

6. All teachers and supervisors have opportunities to review feedback on their teaching and research supervision and are supported in enhancing these activities.

7. The results of regular interim monitoring, comprehensive reviews, external referencing and student feedback are used to mitigate future risks to the quality of the education provided and to guide and evaluate improvements, including the use of data on student progress and success to inform admission criteria and approaches to course design, teaching, supervision, learning and academic support.

Related policy instruments

Academic Progression and At-Risk Policy
Academic Progression and At-Risk Procedure
Terms of Reference (Academic Board)
Admissions Policy
Admissions Procedure
Assessment and Moderation Policy
Assessment and Moderation Procedure
Course Creation and Development Policy
Course Creation and Development Procedure
Course Review & Quality Assurance Policy
Course Review & Quality Assurance Procedure
Feedback Policy and Procedure
Risk Management Policy
Strategic Plan
Teaching and Learning Policy
Teaching and Learning Plan

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Related documents and legislation

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021Tertiary Education and Quality Standards Agency Act 2011

Australian Qualifications Framework 2013

Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement https://www.education.gov.au/australian-higher-education-graduation-statement

Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) legislation 2000

National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018

Administration

Revision History

Version	Approval date	Approval body	Review date
0.1	24/07/2020	Academic Board	
1.0	02/06/2021	Academic Board	30/06/2022