



**Title: Benchmarking Procedures**

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**Review:** The procedures are subject to a periodic review as per amendments of university policies and procedures

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to describe how benchmarking policy is implemented at Gulf University. The benchmarking procedures are aligned to Program Review and Development Procedures, which outline the program review process as part of the quality assurance and development framework at the University.

## 2. Scope

The document applies to all programs offered at Gulf University.

## 3. Acronyms

<b>BQA</b>	Education and Training Quality Authority
<b>CILOS</b>	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
<b>C-PRDC</b>	College Program Review and Development Committee
<b>HEC</b>	Higher Education Council
<b>NQF</b>	National Qualifications Framework
<b>PILOS</b>	Program Intended Learning Outcomes
<b>U-PRDC</b>	University Program Review and Development Committee

## 4. Definitions

**Benchmarking:** Benchmarking involves comparing an institution's processes and practices against good practices in other Higher Education Institutions.

**Course:** A course is composed of teaching and learning activities which guide and support students towards the attainment of a set of learning outcomes. A course is the smallest unit of teaching and learning activities at Gulf University.

**Course Intended Learning Outcomes:** Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) describe the knowledge, skills and attributes envisaged to be achievable by students who have been enrolled in a course. CILOs therefore contribute to PILOs.

**Graduate Attributes:** Graduate attributes refer to the characteristics a graduate is expected to display upon having completed a program associated with the qualification that has been

awarded. Graduate attributes refer to the personal qualities, academic capabilities and more general skills developed as a result of following the program.

**Mapping:** Mapping refers to the process of placing qualifications on Bahrain National Qualifications Framework. This process requires the credit value of qualifications to be stated and for qualifications to be placed at the appropriate level on the NQF.

**Notional Learning Hours:** Notional learning hours describe time allocated to study. This study time can comprise formal classroom instruction, time spent in self-study (for example, reading and revising notes) and time spent on assessment. Notional learning hours are calculated by those with experience in the subject area by envisaging the time that the average student would spend on tasks required by a course or program.

**NQF Credit:** A NQF credit is a measurement of learning at specific levels of a National Qualifications Framework. It is assumed that one credit of learning will result from ten 'notional' hours of study. Credits are assigned to courses, programs and qualifications. The credits assigned to qualifications comply with Bahrain National Qualifications Framework.

**NQF Level:** Bahrain National Qualifications Framework comprises ten levels. Each level signifies a stage of achievement with respect to learning ranging from the less to the more complex and demanding.

**NQF Level Descriptors:** NQF Level descriptors provide a general, shared understanding of learning and achievement at each of the ten levels of the NQF. Each descriptor relates to generic statements that describe the expected level of achievement with respect to:

- Knowledge (theoretical understanding and practical application)
- Skills (generic, problem solving, analytical skill and communication, ICT, numeracy)
- Competence (autonomy, responsibility, and context).

Level descriptors are used to map qualifications on the NQF and were designed to be used across a wide range of learning contexts.

**Program:** A program is a carefully designed and structured series of teaching and learning activities which support and guide students towards the achievement of the intended learning outcomes set for it.

**Program Intended Learning Outcomes:** Program Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) describe the knowledge, skills and attributes envisioned to be achievable by students who have followed a program of study. Demonstration of achievement of the PILOs is a necessary requirement for the award of a qualification associated with a program.

**Purpose Statement:** A purpose statement describes the overall goal or purpose of a program of study by, for example, describing the way graduates of the program will contribute to workplace needs or to society more generally. It can also describe the way the program contributes to the vision and mission of the institution offering the program.

**Qualification:** A qualification recognizes and certifies the learning achieved as a result of following a program of study. It therefore signifies and certifies the achievement of the PILOs by a student who has followed the program.

## **5. Procedure Details**

Benchmarking takes place at institutional level, unit level, program level and course level. For the institutional level, benchmarking is done for the organization structure, strategic plan, policies, and procedures. Unit level benchmarking focuses on vision, mission, scope of work, structure, range of activities, resources, facilities, staffing and support services. Program level benchmarking includes areas namely aims, learning outcomes, career opportunities, graduate attributes, admission criteria, teaching and learning methods, assessment methods, staffing, learning resources, infrastructure, and facilities. At course level, benchmarking is done to include aims, learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods, assessment methods and learning resources.

The “Program Review Team” composed by Department Council shall be responsible for conducting benchmarking of programs offered in the Department as per the periodic review cycle stated in “Program Review and Development Procedures.” Selection of programs for benchmarking is based on criteria namely, accredited programs, international rank of the universities, similar domains of the programs offered by universities which have collaboration with Gulf University. Before conducting benchmarking for programs it is required to identify external reference points and align the program with relevant external reference points.

Benchmarking Process includes the following stages:

### **5.1 Stage 1 - Determination of Nature and Scale of Benchmarking Exercise**

5.1.1 The Program Review Team shall determine the nature and scale of benchmarking exercise with regards to the followings as a measure of verifying the quality of academic standards and to identify opportunities for improvement:

- Program structures and contents, and curriculum design.
- Methods of teaching and learning.
- Program graduate attributes.
- Career opportunities.
- Assessment methods.

- Admission criteria.
- Staffing.
- Learning resources and facilities.

5.1.2 The Program Team shall determine the nature of partnership for benchmarking: such as an informal partnership, a formal relationship which requires a Memorandum of Understanding, a membership partnership, or an internal benchmarking activity across a number of offered programs at University Colleges.

5.1.3 For external partnership the Program Team shall consider size, academic profile, teaching, and research approach.

## **5.2 Stage 2 - Selection of Benchmarking Partners (Higher Educational Institutions)**

5.2.1 The Program Team shall draw up a list of 8 to 10 potential higher education institutions from local, regional, and international institutions.

5.2.2 Carry out some search on the size, academic profile, teaching, and research approach in these institutions.

5.2.3 The Program Team shall take necessary steps to contact and reach with the selected institutions. Alternatively, the Team shall continue to benchmark using data from available literature or from other alternative resources.

## **5.3 Stage 3 - Decision on the Action Plan and Task Allocation**

5.3.1 The Program Team shall draw up a plan for benchmarking based on the best available information from selected institutions.

5.3.2 The Program Team shall allocate tasks among Team members within the scale of benchmarking exercise.

## **5.4 Stage 4 - Carrying-out Data Collection (Internally and Externally)**

### **5.4.1 Undertaking an Internal Self-Review**

5.4.1.1 The Program Team shall collect data (internally), such as program documents and surveys within the scale of benchmarking exercise related to the program under review.

### **5.4.2 Undertaking an External Peer-Review**

5.4.2.1 The Program Team shall conduct site visits (if possible).

5.4.2.2 The Program Team shall conduct data collection from websites of the selected institutions.

**5.5 Stage 5 - Reporting on Benchmarking Results**

5.5.1 The Program Team shall develop a well-structured and transparent report with both qualitative and quantitative comparable information on findings from the benchmarking procedures.

5.5.2 The report shall outline the good practices as well as the gap analysis for further development.

**5.6 Stage 6 – Development of the Improvement Plan**

5.6.1 The Program Team shall develop an improvement plan that outlines actions needed to improve the identified gaps.

5.6.2 The Program Team shall send both the report and program improvement plan to relevant Department Council.

**5.7 Stage 7 – Implementation of Improvement Plan**

5.7.1 Department Council shall review the improvement plan and provide recommendations to C-PRDC.

5.7.2 C-PRDC shall collaborate with the Program Review Team to consider the remarks and recommendations to implement the improvement plan and develop the revised program specifications.

**5.8 Conduct Periodic Review of the Effectiveness of Benchmarking Process**

5.8.1 C-PRDC shall conduct periodic reviews of the effectiveness of the benchmarking exercise in relation to program review and development (measuring outcomes in program delivery).

**6. Responsibilities**

**Academic staff members are responsible for:**

- following this policy appropriately.

**Heads of Departments are responsible for:**

- appropriate implementation of this document.

**Deans are responsible for:**

- ensuring that all Departments follow this document.
- appropriate implementation of this document.

**C-PRDC and U-PRDC are responsible for:**

- following this policy appropriately.

**Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for:**

- appropriate implementation of this document.

**University Policy development and Review Committee is responsible for:**

- systematic review of the effectiveness of this policy.

**7. Related Policies**

- Benchmarking Policy
- Policy of Mapping Programs to National Qualifications
- Program Design, Development and Approval Policy
- Program Review and Development Policy

**8. Related Procedures**

- Procedures of Mapping Programs to National Qualifications
- Program Design, Development and Approval Procedures
- Program Review and Development Procedures

**9. Related References and Standards**

<b>BQA</b>	National Qualifications Framework Handbook
<b>BQA</b>	Programs-within-College Reviews Handbook