

# Inter-Institutional Benchmarking Project Using CADAD<sup>#</sup> Benchmarks

## Participant Information & Acknowledgement Sheet

As confidentiality is important to cross-institutional benchmarking, please read through and carefully note the contents of the attached Benchmarking Code of Conduct document\*.

### By your participation in the project:

1. You acknowledge that you will abide by this Code of Conduct. This Code of Conduct is not a legally binding document it is for guidance only.
2. You acknowledge that you intend to produce an academic publication from this pilot benchmarking exercise, you will seek approval and comply with your institution's ethical reviewing process. As confidentiality is important in benchmarking and as indicated in the Code of Conduct, benchmarking findings, data, contacts and exchanges are to be treated as confidential to the individual and organizations involved. Hence, for academic research outputs such as publication of journals, books, articles and or conference presentation you acknowledge that in any publication, information will be provided in such a way that the participating universities cannot be identified i.e. aggregated data will be reported
3. You acknowledge that you have agreed to participate in this pilot benchmarking project with all of the institutions involved in this pilot benchmarking project named below are:
  - **Insert names of all Benchmarking partner institutions**
  - X
  - X
4. You acknowledge you will adhere to the following guiding principles drawn from the APQC Benchmarking Code of Conduct so as to contribute to efficiency, effectiveness, and ethical benchmarking activities for this pilot project.
  - Keep it legal.
  - Be willing to give what you get.
  - Respect confidentiality
  - Keep information internal.
  - Do not refer without permission.
  - Be prepared at initial contact.

<sup>#</sup>Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development (CADAD) <http://cadad.edu.au>  
CADAD Benchmarking document <http://www.cadad.edu.au/course/view.php?id=11#section-1>

# The Benchmarking Code of Conduct

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## The American Productivity & Quality Center (APQC)

About APQC - The American Productivity & Quality Center (APQC) is a business-oriented non-profit source for performance improvement and decision support—information and knowledge, networking, research, training, and advisory services. Organizations of all sizes and industries—business, government, education, and health care — partner with APQC to discover global best practices and grow into learning organizations. For more information about APQC's services, including the International Benchmarking Clearinghouse and the Institute for Education Best Practices, call 800-776-9676 (713-681-4020 outside the US), email to [apqcinfo@apqc.org](mailto:apqcinfo@apqc.org), or visit our website at <http://www.apqc.org>.

# Benchmarking Code of Conduct

The Benchmarking Code of Conduct is guided by 8 Principles:

1. Principle of Legality
2. Principle of Exchange
3. Principle of Confidentiality
4. Principle of Use
5. Principle of Contact
6. Principle of Preparation
7. Principle of Completion
8. Principle of Understanding and Action

## 1. Principle of Legality

- 1.1. If there is any potential question on the legality of an activity, consult with your legal advisors.
- 1.2. Avoid discussions or actions that could lead to or imply an interest in an advantage to ones' institution at the expense of another. Don't discuss or disclose costs with non-benchmarking institutions, if costs are an element of benchmarking.
- 1.3. Refrain from the acquisition of institutional secrets or intelligence from another by any means that could be interpreted as improper including the breach or inducement of a breach of any duty to maintain secrecy. Do not disclose or use any institutional intelligence that may have been obtained through improper means or that was disclosed by another in violation of duty to maintain its secrecy or limit its use.
- 1.4. Do not extend benchmarking study findings to another institution or in publication without first ensuring that the data is appropriately blinded and anonymous so that the participants' identities are protected.

## 2. Principle of Exchange

- 2.1. Be willing to provide the same type and level of information that you request from your benchmarking partner to your benchmarking partner.
- 2.2. Communicate fully and early in the relationship to clarify expectations, avoid misunderstanding, and establish mutual interest in the benchmarking exchange.
- 2.3. Be honest and complete.

## 3. Principle of Confidentiality

- 3.1. Treat benchmarking interchange as confidential to the individuals and institutions involved. Information must not be communicated outside the partnering organizations without the prior consent of the benchmarking partner who shared the information.
- 3.2. An institution's participation in a study is confidential and should not be communicated externally without their prior permission.

## 4. Principle of Use

- 4.1. Use information obtained through benchmarking only for purposes stated to the benchmarking partner.
- 4.2. The use or communication of a benchmarking partner's name with the data obtained or practices observed requires the prior permission of that partner.

## 5. Principle of Contact

- 5.1. Respect the institutional culture of partner institutions and work within mutually agreed procedures.
- 5.2. Use benchmarking contacts, designated by the partner institution if that is their preferred procedure.

- 5.3. Obtain mutual agreement with the designated benchmarking contact on any hand-off of communication or responsibility to other parties.
- 5.4. Obtain an individual's permission before providing his or her name in response to a contact request.
- 5.5. Avoid communicating a contact's name in an open forum without the contact's prior permission.

## **6. Principle of Preparation**

- 6.1. Demonstrate commitment to the efficiency and effectiveness of benchmarking by being prepared prior to making an initial benchmarking contact.
- 6.2. Make the most of your benchmarking partner's time by being fully prepared for each exchange.
- 6.3. Help your benchmarking partners prepare by providing them with a questionnaire and agenda prior to benchmarking visits.

## **7. Principle of Completion**

- 7.1. Follow through with each commitment made to your benchmarking partner in a timely manner.
- 7.2. Complete each benchmarking study to the satisfaction of all benchmarking partners as mutually agreed.

## **8. Principle of Understanding and Action**

- 8.1. Understand how your benchmarking partner would like to be treated.
- 8.2. Treat your benchmarking partner in the way that your benchmarking partner would want to be treated.
- 8.3. Understand how your benchmarking partner would like to have the information he or she provides handled and used, and handle and use it in that manner.

# Benchmarking Protocol

## **Benchmarkers should:**

- Know and abide by the Benchmarking Code of Conduct.
- Have basic knowledge of benchmarking and follow a benchmarking process.
- Prior to initiating contact with potential benchmarking partners, have determined what to benchmark, identified key performance variables to study, recognized superior performing institutions, and completed a rigorous self-assessment.
- Have a questionnaire and interview guide developed, and share these in advance if requested.
- Possess the authority to share and are willing to share information with benchmarking partners.
- Work through a specified host and mutually agreed upon scheduling and meeting arrangements.

## **When the benchmarking process proceeds to a face-to-face site visit, the following behaviors are encouraged:**

- Provide meeting agenda in advance.
- Be professional, honest, courteous, and prompt.
- Introduce all attendees and explain why they are present.
- Adhere to the agenda.
- Use language that is universal, not one's own jargon.
- Be sure that neither party is sharing proprietary information unless prior approval has been obtained by both parties, from the proper authority.
- Share information about your own process, and, if asked, consider sharing study results.
- Offer to facilitate a future reciprocal visit.
- Conclude meetings and visits on schedule.
- Thank your benchmarking partner for sharing their process.

## **The following guidelines apply to both partners in a benchmarking encounter with competitor institutions or potential competitor institutions:**

- In benchmarking with competitor institutions, establish specific ground rules up-front, e.g. "We don't want to talk about things that will give either of us a competitive advantage, but rather we want to see where we both can mutually improve or gain benefit."
- Benchmarkers should check with their legal departments if any information gathering procedure is in doubt, e.g., before contacting a direct competitor. If uncomfortable, do not proceed, or sign a security/nondisclosure agreement. Negotiated a specific non-disclosure agreement that will satisfy the lawyers from both institutions.
- Do not ask competitors for sensitive data or cause the benchmarking partner to feel they must provide data to keep the process going.
- Use an ethical third party to assemble and "blind" competitive data, with inputs from legal counsel in direct competitor sharing.
- Any information obtained from a bench-marking partner should be treated as internal, privileged communications. If "confidential" or proprietary material is to be exchanged, then a specific agreement should be executed to indicate the content of the material that needs to be protected, the duration of the period of protection, the conditions for permitting access to the material, and the specific handling requirements that are necessary for that material.