

Sultanate of Oman  
Ministry of Manpower  
*Shinas College of Technology*

# ShCT-Benchmarking Policy

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Policy No.	<b>ShCT-Col.17.BP.001</b>	Version Number	1.0
Effectivity Date	01-09-2018	Document Author(s)	ShCT-QAD
Next Review Date	01-09-2020	Document Owner	College Council
Approval Authorities	Chairman, College Council	Reviewing Authorities	ShCT-PMT
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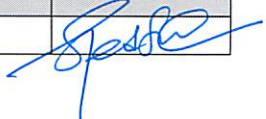
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## Version Control

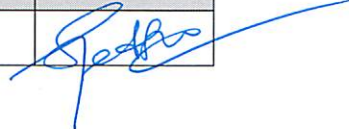
### A. Feedback and amendments

Version	Author	Date (dd/mm/yy yy)	Summary of Revisions	Contributed by
0.1	Dr. Syed	10/01/17	First Draft	First Draft
	Dr. Syed	18/1/17	Changing purpose and objectives under the contents point 4	Mr. Dhana (QAD)
1.0		31.05.2018	Approved by CC	

### B. Plagiarism verification


Version	Team/committee/person	Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	% of Plagiarism	Signature
Final draft	QAD	17/12/2018	8%	

### C. Document proofread by:

Version	Team/committee/person	Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	Language quality (Excellent, Good, Fair)	signature
Final draft	QAD (E-Rater Technology)	17/12/2018	Good	

### Approval Authorities Signature/Date:

College Council  
31.05.2018





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## 1. Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to support the College's Quality improvement initiatives and its strategic objectives of comparing performance/practices/processes/systems with other national and international best practices and thereby ensuring an improvement in the performance as well as assuring the quality of the practices. In addition to this, through the implementation of the policy, the college intends to establish consistency and effective utilization of benchmarking exercises across the college.

## 2. Scope

The policy is applicable for all types of formal benchmarking activities undertaken by faculty, staff, students and administration members. The policy will not be applicable for informal benchmarking activities unless, authorized by College Council/Dean. All the benchmarking activities that require support (resources) and approval of the College Council/Dean will strictly adhere to the policy and its specifications.

## 3. Definitions

Acronyms

AoS: Areas of Strength

CC: College Council

HEI: Higher Educational Institution

MoA: Memorandum of Agreement

MoU: Memorandum of Understanding

OFls: Opportunities for Improvements

QAD: Quality Assurance Department

Definitions:

**Benchmarking** – *“Benchmarking is, first and foremost, 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 (TEQSA, Guidance Note- Benchmarking, 2016)”*

**Intellectual property**- Intellectual property (IP) refers to creations of the mind, such as inventions; literary and artistic works; designs; and symbols, names and images used in commerce<sup>1</sup>.

**Internal Benchmarking**- It specifies comparison by internal units across each other's practices/systems/processes.

**External Benchmarking**- It specifies comparison of practices/systems/processes of a college with an external organization.

**Horizontal Benchmarking**- It specifies practices/systems/processes applicable to all the units of the college and is being taken up for benchmarking.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wipo.int/about-ip/en>

**Vertical Benchmarking-** It specifies to benchmarking the area which is specific to one unit's practices/systems/processes. It is further studied layer by layer to go into the specific details of that area.

**Functional Benchmarking-** It specifies a benchmarking between members belonging to a larger group or organization. It involves sharing of just the data or more detailed investigation sort to contribute to the improvement of the whole group members.

**First Party:** It specifies the member in the benchmarking exercise/activity who has taken the initiative of the exercise/activity.

**Second Party:** It specifies the member in the benchmarking exercise who agreed to work with the first party for the exercise.

## **4. Policy**

### **4.1 Policy Statement**

The Benchmarking is a learning process which allows the college to compare the performance of its practices and systems across another organization at a national or at an international level. Therefore the exercise should lead to identification of Opportunities For Improvements (OFIs) and Areas of Strength (AoS) for the benchmarking partners, which will serve as a basis of review for quality improvement.

The College intends to improve its practices and processes by comparing them with other HEIs/organizations. In doing so, the College evaluates its performance against its peers and partners by undertaking benchmarking exercises/activity, which helps the college to identify the level of its own standards, gaps in the current system and the best practices in the field. The college uses the data derived from the activity to improve its practices and processes.

### **4.2: Principles**

- a. The benchmarking activities/exercises undertaken will be in line with strategic objectives, requirements, and initiatives of the college. It is ensured that benchmarking activities/exercises supports the Vision and Mission of the College.
- b. The objectives and purpose of benchmarking activity with clear expectations will be identified prior to the benchmarking exercise/activity. This will be agreed upon between the parties during the first discussion or meeting session.
- c. Both parties should have a clear commitment to learn from the identified best practice. Moreover, use the data to improve their current practices based on the identified gaps.
- d. An action plan to be developed by both the parties for the project.
- e. The results and outcomes will be approved by both the parties before being utilized for implementation.

During the process of benchmarking both the parties will adhere to the following

1. **Confidentiality:** The parties during the process of benchmarking will ensure a high level of confidentiality of all the data shared between the parties.
2. **The use of benchmarking data:** The data shared between the parties will only be used for its intended purpose identified at the beginning if otherwise agreed upon mutually by both the parties.
3. **Intellectual property:** All rights to any intellectual property of any party will remain with that party. The rights of mutual documents authored by members from both the parties during the process will belong to both the party. Both the parties will respect the intellectual property rights of the other party.
4. **Agreement:** Both the parties will abide by the terms of the agreement if there was an agreement existing in the form of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the parties otherwise, both the parties will respect terms agreed upon at the beginning of the activity. It will be highly advisable to sign an agreement if the party for benchmarking is an external member/party. The terms must clearly state the rules of sharing information, confidentiality, use of the data shared and intellectual property.

## 5: Procedure

### 5.1: Phase-1: Identify the scope of benchmarking

- a. **Areas to benchmark:** Will it be a particular practice, the process, system, performance, organizational behavior or compliance requirement?
- b. **Nature of benchmarking:** Will it be just data comparison or detailed study or both to utilize for quality improvement?
- c. **Level of Application:** Will it be for a particular unit of the college or for the whole of the college?
- d. **Nature of partnership:** Will it be an informal relationship or formal partnership which requires a formal agreement like Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), a membership partnership or internal benchmarking activity across internal units?
- e. **Resource implications:** Who will resource the activity?

### 5.2: Phase-2: Decide on Type of Benchmarking

The type of benchmarking could include one or more of the types or a combination of types given below

- a. Is it about outcome comparison?
- b. Is the about practices?
- c. Is it about understanding particular processes?
- d. Is it just for sharing information?
- e. Is it strategic performance?

- f. Is it focused for a particular unit and drilling down vertically layer by layer (vertical)?
- g. Is it widespread across the whole of the organization (horizontal)?
- h. Is it sharing of information across member colleges or units (functional)?
- i. Is it the practice and process of one unit across another unit (internal)?
- j. Is it the practice and process with other HEI (external)?

### 5.3: Phase-3: Select benchmarking partners

When selecting benchmarking partners the following points are considered

- a. Partners with similar profile like a number of students, size, and disciplines.
- b. Partners who share similar outcomes, practices, and systems.

### 5.4: Phase-4: Develop a plan

- a. Decide the purpose.
- b. Decide the timeline.
- c. Identify the performance indicators that will be measured and compared.
- d. Scope of the activity/exercise.
- e. The methods that will be employed to arrive at conclusions.
- f. What will be the additional data that will be used to triangulation?
- g. Who will be responsible for what under the plan?

### 5.5: Phase-5: Carry out a Self-review

- a. Carry-out a self-review of the practices/processes/systems
- b. Identify the areas of strengths and weaknesses

### 5.6: Phase-6: Share Data and carry out a joint review (Peer-Review)

A face to face discussion and evaluation session is important to discuss and deliberate on various topics chosen for review.

- a. What information (data) to be shared during benchmarking?
- b. What are the areas of good practice identified?
- c. What areas are identified for improvement?
- d. What are the areas identified for sharing and collaboration?

### 5.7: Phase-7: Implement identified improvements

The implementation plan for the identified improvements need to be developed.

- a. What are the outcomes (actions) from the exercise/ activity?
- b. Will the improvements/recommendations contradict or conflict the existing policies and systems of the ministry? How will it be addressed?
- c. What budgetary implications the improvements will have?
- d. How the implementation will be monitored and by whom?
- e. Who is responsible to implement the identified improvements?
- f. When the implementation will start?

#### 5.8: Phase-8: Report benchmarking results

The finding/outcomes are to be reported to the appropriate stakeholders. The head of the Units concerned and administration need to understand the findings along with the recommendations and the plan for implementation to support the improvement and necessary changes.

- a. Who will report the results of benchmarking activity?
- b. How the results will be reported?
- c. The college administration and CC have to be reported about the results (Refer to the attached form).

#### 5.9: Phase-9: Evaluate and review

This phase is about evaluating the benchmarking process undertaken.

- a. Were the outcomes implemented?
- b. Were the result and the outcomes of benchmarking useful?
- c. Had the implementation brought about any improvements?

### **6: Responsibilities**

#### Internal Benchmarking

**Unit Head:** If the benchmarking is across the units in college, then the Heads of the units will hold the overall responsibility of the process.

**Benchmarking Team (Adhoc):** The team is responsible to carry out the self-review along with the support of the QA team. Other parts of the process will be solely done by the team.

**QA committee:** The concerned unit QA committee will be responsible to receive all the documents for documentation purpose.

#### Informal External Benchmarking:

**Unit Head:** if the benchmarking is informal with an external body, the concerned unit Head will hold the overall responsibility.

**Benchmarking Team (Adhoc):** The team members are responsible to carry out the self-review along with the support of the QA team of the concerned unit. Other parts of the process will be solely done by the team.

**QAD and QA of the concerned unit:** The Quality Assurance Unit and QA of the unit will be provided with a copy of the documents for documentation and QA purposes.

#### Formal External Benchmarking

The formal external benchmarking requires formal letters sent from one party administration to the other party. The CC/College Dean will be responsible to nominate a team constituting members based on the relevance of the area of the practice/process/system chosen for benchmarking. One of the members of the QAD will be a member of the committee.



## Benchmarking with Partners

The CC will be responsible to choose and establish a partnership with other organizations for benchmarking and collaboration purposes. There will be an official document of agreement/understanding in the form of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)/Agreement (MoA) signed between the administrations/managements of the organizations. The CC will be responsible to constitute an ad hoc committee based on the area chosen for benchmarking and collaboration.

## Procedure Flow chart

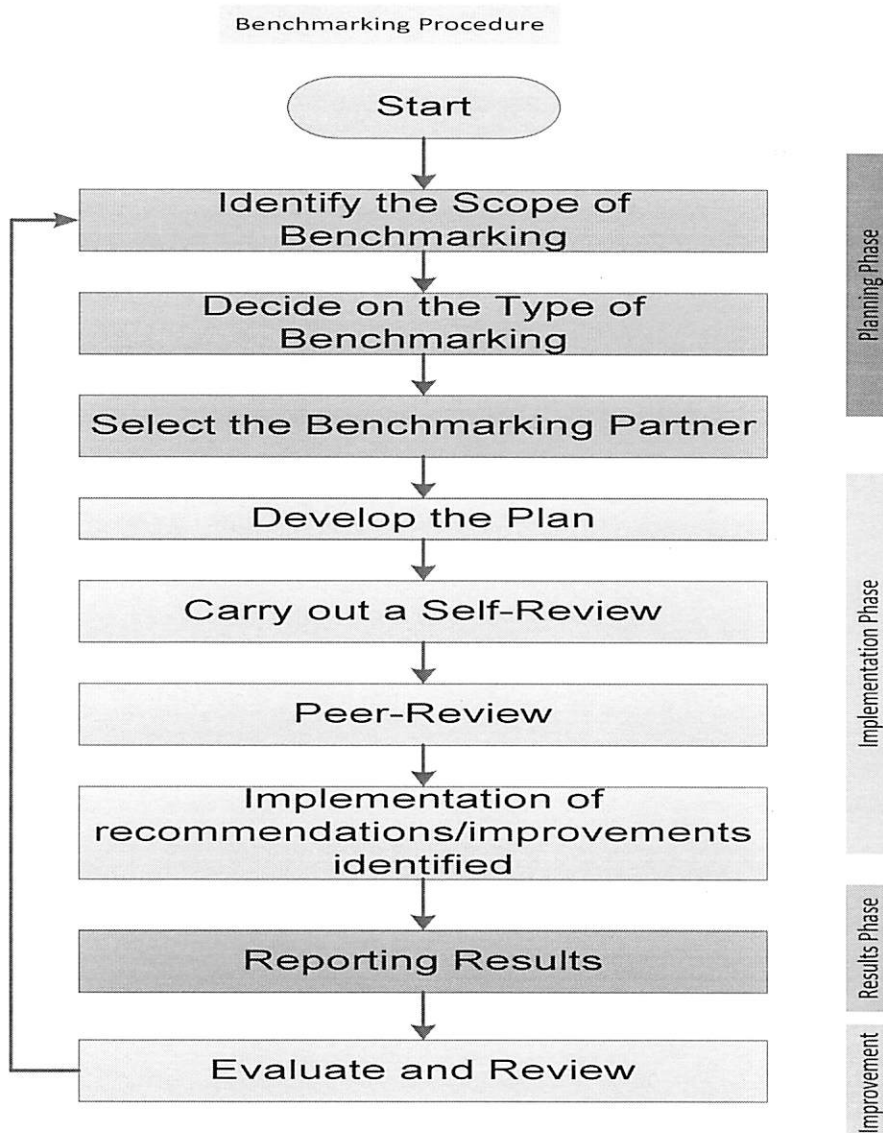


Figure 1: Shows different phases of the whole process

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### Benchmarking Report

Date:		Level of Benchmarking	Internal ( ) External ( ) External Partner ( )
			Functional ( ) Vertical ( ) Horizontal ( )
Name of the first party/Unit/College		Name of the second party/Organization	

S. No.	Area of Benchmarking	Points identified as Areas of Strength (AoS)	Points identified as Opportunity for Improvement (OFI)	Practice identified as Best Practice

Prepared by (first party/second party) Name and Signature:	Read by (first party/second party) Name and Signature:
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