



# template #3

benchmarking teams

#### Purpose

Benchmarking teams offer a powerful method to assist with institutional benchmarking. In this approach, groups of stakeholders carry out analysis from a particular perspective and experience base. This work is then combined across groups to inform the institutional evaluation team.

As with focus groups, benchmarking in teams encourages discussion and sharing of perceptions. However, benchmarking teams go beyond focus groups in that each team discusses the underlying strategies and structures affecting institutional performance, and allocates a team rating for each benchmark.

Teams should be composed of peers, to encourage frank discussion. The approach of using faculty groups, where everyone is present from the newest Associate Lecturer to the Dean, is less likely to be effective for benchmarking promotion, simply because of the sensitivities of the topic. Instead, one team might bring together new lecturers, and another team might be formed of academic supervisors, in each case chosen from multiple faculties or schools.

## Sample list of teams (some could be combined, eg Deans/Heads)

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Stakeholder group** | **No. teams** | **Names of participants and/or how to be contacted** |
| ❒ Senior Executives/leaders (teaching, research, service, community, equity etc; chair of promotions committee) | 1 |  |
| ❒ Deans | 1 |  |
| ❒ Heads of School | 1 |  |
| ❒ Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) | 1 |  |
| ❒ Promotion Committee members | 1 |  |
| ❒ Recently promoted academics – rating teaching highest or equal highest | 3 |  |
| ❒ Recently promoted academics – NOT with teaching highest or equal highest | 2 |  |
| ❒ Promotions support (academic developers, administrators, HR) | 1 |  |
| ❒ Academic mentors/supervisors | 1 |  |
| ❒ Junior academics not yet promoted | 1 |  |

## Allocating benchmarks to teams

For each benchmark, benchmarking teams discuss experiences, adduce evidence, agree on a rating and document a rationale. Teams typically consist of 6-12 people.

If a team were to discuss all 18 benchmarks, this would represent a 3-4 hour meeting by each team. As an alternative to such a long meeting, it is suggested that each team discuss a selection of just 6-10 benchmarks. This offers multiple perspectives and triangulation of evidence, rather than every team reviewing every area. An additional reason for spreading the benchmarks across teams is that there are some benchmarks for which a particular team may have very little knowledge.

In this approach, each team would have some common benchmarks to evaluate plus a selection of the remainder, totalling 6-10 benchmarks per team. The result would be every benchmark evaluated by two-four teams, with some benchmarks evaluated by every team.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Benchmark** | **Benchmarking team A** | **Benchmarking team B** | **Benchmarking team C** |
| 1. University Plans | *Eg Senior Executive & Leaders* | *Eg Deans* | *Eg Associate Deans (Teaching & Learning)* |
| 1. Promotion Policies |  |  |  |
| 1. University Leaders |  |  |  |
| 1. Academic Leaders | **All teams** | | |
| 1. Peers | **All teams** | | |
| 1. Career Advice |  |  |  |
| 1. Supervisors |  |  |  |
| 1. Forms & Guidelines |  |  |  |
| 1. Evidence |  |  |  |
| 1. Systems |  |  |  |
| 1. Committee Membership |  |  |  |
| 1. Committee Preparation |  |  |  |
| 1. Committee Procedures | **All teams** | | |
| 1. External Input |  |  |  |
| 1. Transparency |  |  |  |
| 1. Equitable Outcomes |  |  |  |
| 1. Review Cycle |  |  |  |
| 1. Positive Perceptions | **All teams** | | |

## Sample agenda for benchmarking team workshops

In most cases, ratings and rationales for 6-7 benchmarks can be discussed and agreed in a single 1.5 hour meeting, or, for 8-10 benchmarks, in a 2 hour meeting. If more benchmarks are selected, time will need to be extended.

While papers can be circulated ahead of time, this is not essential. Participants will mainly draw on existing knowledge and experience, and busy people may be more inclined to participate if they don’t need to read or prepare. An exception might be where you are also testing new evidence guidelines and would like participants to come prepared with comments (extra time will be needed).

The facilitator should be sufficiently well-informed about the academic promotions process to be able to answer participant questions as they arise, and also to tactfully correct any myths or misconceptions (it is important to avoid perpetuating these within the benchmarking process).

#### Agenda

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| --- | --- |
| **Welcome & opening remarks** | Explain the background and scope of the self review. Carry out introductions (facilitators and participants). Answer participant questions about the process. Discuss confidentiality. |
| **Background to today’s workshop** | Explain the elements of the benchmarking process (benchmarks, focus questions, rationales and ratings). Explain that the focus questions are simply there to guide discussion, and additional aspects can be considered if needed. |
| **Agreement on benchmarks** | Explain that the team has been asked to review [6-10] benchmarks. Other benchmarks may also be considered, optionally and subject to the team’s decision that they are important, remembering that there are numerous other teams are involved as well across the institution. |
| **Benchmarking** | Take the team through each benchmark. Open discussion up to the floor for each one. While the emphasis is not on individual experiences, particular examples could be discussed to illustrate typical practice.  Ensure that the team agrees on and records a rating for each benchmark. Record any split votes or abstentions as they arise.  Ensure that a rationale is noted for each rating. |
| **Thank and wrap up** | |