

Benchmarking – a matter of self-assurance

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Self-assurance is a vital part of being a Higher Education Provider in the current environment. The commitment is endorsed by the National Regulator and regarded as best practice. This requires providers to be informed and convinced that what they are doing is consistent with both the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) and the National Code – and if feasible - what is happening internationally.

Formal Audits

My own organization is active in this space and conducts both independent (external) and internal audits on a regular basis. These audits are made readily available on our public website to provide some informal opportunity for other providers to view and to make comparisons. Of particular interest –

Threshold Standards Audit (v1 January 2026) - <https://sistc.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/THRESHOLD-STANDARDS-AUDIT-v1.pdf>

National Code Audit (v1.1 January 2026) - [NATIONAL-CODE-AUDIT-v1.1.pdf](https://sistc.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/NATIONAL-CODE-AUDIT-v1.1.pdf)

Academic Governance at SISTC (v1 February 2026) - [ACADEMIC-GOVERNANCE-AT-SISTC.pdf](https://sistc.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/ACADEMIC-GOVERNANCE-AT-SISTC.pdf)

Scholarship at SISTC (v1.1 January 2026) - <https://sistc.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/SCHOLARSHIP-AT-SISTC-v1.1.pdf>

These audits are *informally* benchmarked with the support of a range of institutions who freely share their own data and information – this makes the auditing clear and appropriate. This kind of collegialism is vital – and should be encouraged.

Formal Benchmarking

Benchmarking, then, becomes the added ingredient of *self-assurance*. In addition to independent/external/internal audit – benchmarking with other like HE providers makes infinite sense if we are to assure that what we are doing not only aligns with the Standards and TEQSA guidance notes – but also is in sync with the Sector in which we operate.

My own institution currently operates benchmarking at three levels –

Level 1

On a study period by study period basis SISTC compares its **grade distribution** with a *HEPP-QN* domestic initiative (involving 12 informants) and a *Musicum20* international initiative (involving 10 informants). This is an excellent way of gaining a sense of ‘appropriate’ distribution.

Level 2

In more recent times *SISTC* joined a **benchmarking consortium** that expands the opportunity to see what is happening across the Sector. *SISTC (Sydney, Parramatta, Melbourne)* joins *Polytechnic Institute Australia (Melbourne, Sydney, Geelong)*, *Sydney Institute of Higher Education (Sydney)*, *Universal Business School Sydney (Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide)*, *Sydney Metro College (Sydney)*, *Edvantage Institute Australia (Melbourne)*, the *Australasian Academy of Higher Education (Melbourne)* and the *Australian Guild of Education (Melbourne)*. The key foci at this level include –

- Grade distribution
- EFTSL
- Attrition
- Overall Pass
- Academic Integrity Breaches
- Moderation

Level 3

In December (2025) SISTC was inducted into the **Musicum20 international consortium** which provides both national and international benchmarking and co-operative activities. Membership consists of the *Academy of Music and Performing Arts* (Sydney, **Australia**) – www.ampa.edu.au; *Nagoya University of the Arts* (**Japan**) - [Nagoya University of the Arts](#); *Ecole Normale de Musique de Paris* (Paris, **France**) - [Accueil – Ecole Cortot](#); *Korea National University of Education* (**South Korea**) - [KNUE](#); *ASTRA Institute of Higher Education* (Sydney, **Australia**) - [Home - Astra](#); *Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts* (**Hong Kong**) - [School of Film & Television](#); *University of Popular Music and Music Business* (Mannheim, **Germany**) - [Popakademie Baden-Württemberg](#); *Hitmaker Global Academy* (**Singapore**) - [Hitmaker Global Academy](#); *Chiang Rai Rajabhat University* (**Thailand**) - [Chiang Rai Rajabhat University - CRRU: Chiang Rai Rajabhat University](#); *Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance* (London, **England**); [Home | Trinity Laban](#); *Yehudi Menuhin School* (Qingdao, **China**) - <https://en.menuhinschool.cn/>

The key foci at this level include –

- Grade distribution
- Scholarship – including Journals and Books
- Moderation
- Internationalisation (including TNE initiatives).

For more about Musicum20 see – [Home / | musicum20](#)

These invaluable partnerships - at all three levels - and opportunities to share and interface (benchmark) are essential to self-assurance efforts. The very notion of quality assurance rests with knowing how your institution compares with the Sector – ideally both nationally and internationally

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