




ESMU-CEU Workshop  
on Benchmarking in  
European HE

What is Benchmarking?  
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ESMU Senior Expert  
Budapest, 27 August 2010




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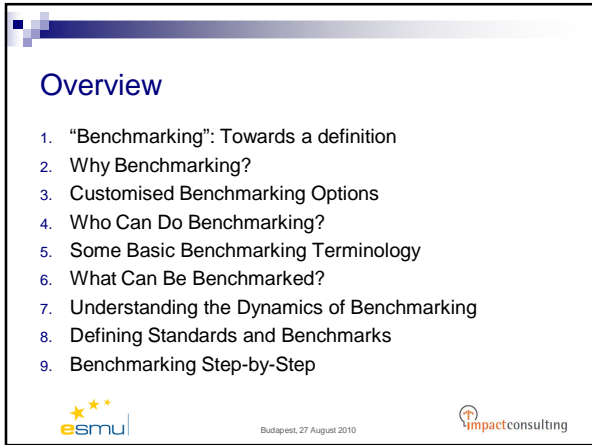
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Overview

1. "Benchmarking": Towards a definition
2. Why Benchmarking?
3. Customised Benchmarking Options
4. Who Can Do Benchmarking?
5. Some Basic Benchmarking Terminology
6. What Can Be Benchmarked?
7. Understanding the Dynamics of Benchmarking
8. Defining Standards and Benchmarks
9. Benchmarking Step-by-Step



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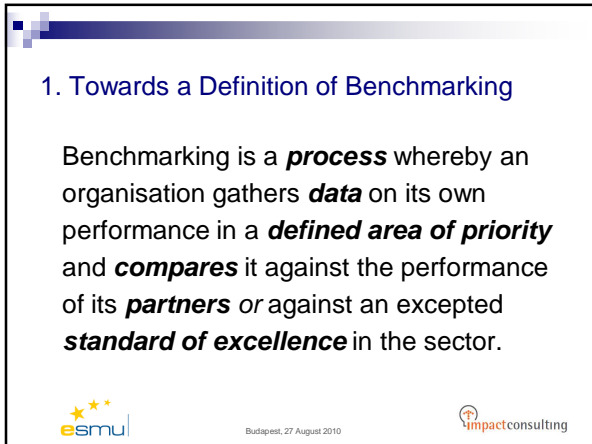
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1. Towards a Definition of Benchmarking

Benchmarking is a **process** whereby an organisation gathers **data** on its own performance in a **defined area of priority** and **compares** it against the performance of its **partners** or against an expected **standard of excellence** in the sector.



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- Benchmarking is a governance tool (autonomy!)
- Benchmarking is part of institutional change management
- Benchmarking reflects on the way a university views itself (dynamic and willing to be informed about its own performance)
- Benchmarking requires a conscious choice of priorities and partners
- Benchmarking standards are subject to definition according to institutional strategy


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## 2. Why Benchmarking?

Benchmarking enables universities to

- Measure and compare performance to the competition:
  - Self-assess their performance in selected areas
  - Support strategy formulation and implementation
  - Strengthen institutional identity
  - Obtain data for decision making
  - Better understand processes
  - Set targets for improvement
- Share good practice, learn from others how to improve
- Respond to national and international performance standards
- Be accountable to stakeholders
- Set new standards for the sector.


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## 3. Customised Benchmarking Options

- **Internal benchmarking:** comparing activities within units of the same institution e.g. between faculties or services
- **External benchmarking:** comparing activities across institutions
- **Functional benchmarking:** focusing on a specific process for detailed benchmarking work
- **Trans-institutional benchmarking:** a group come together around a common interest to build understanding of the process
- **Implicit benchmarking (ranking):** analysing performance or output data provided for other purposes to understanding comparative performance
- **Generic/ process benchmarking:** focusing on best-practice in particular process areas to identify innovative approaches and solutions.


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### 4. Who Can Do Benchmarking?

- Any university that has
  - a well defined and agreed strategy for institutional development at leadership level
  - a general commitment to competitiveness
  - data on key performance indicators
  - benchmarking partners (peers and competitors, national, European or international)


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### 5. Benchmarking Terminology

- **Priorities:**
  - Focus for benchmarking activities in a domain
- **Targets:**
  - Level of performance the individual institution is aiming to achieve
- **Criteria:**
  - Areas of activity/ Good Practice relevant to achieve targets
  - Identified with help from external and internal experts
- **Indicators:**
  - Qualitative – quantitative
  - Input – Process – Output – Impact


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### 6. What Can Be Benchmarked?

- Any area relevant to institutional performance in competition on which data are available
  - E.g.: Curriculum Reform, Lifelong Learning, University-Enterprise Cooperation, Research Performance, Internationalisation...
- Different types of indicators:
  - input –process – output – impact
  - quantitative – qualitative
- Customised criteria
  - Good practice exchange, input from external expertise


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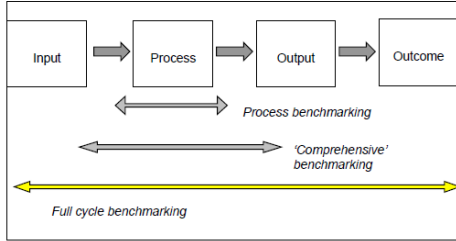
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## 7. Understanding the Dynamics of Benchmarking

Figure 1 A process perspective on benchmarking



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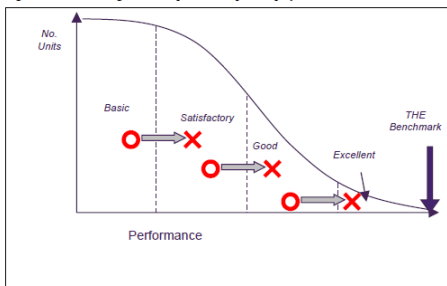
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## 8. Defining Standards and Benchmarks



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## 9. Benchmarking Step-by-Step

### Task 1: Strategic Phase

- Involve Leadership/Senior Management
- Identify strategic need and aims for Benchmarking
- Communicate with internal and external stakeholders, ensure commitment
- Choose partners
- Allocate resources



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## 9. Benchmarking Step-by-Step

### Task 2: Data Gathering:

- Set priorities within the area of benchmarking
- Define targets
- Identify relevant criteria/actions/obstacles (with help from external experts)
- Choose indicators
- Agree benchmarks (various options)



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## 9. Benchmarking Step-by-Step

### Task 3: Introduce Change through Action

- Produce report + summary for Senior Management
- Verify targets, communicate!
- Decide on actions to be taken, based on indicators and criteria
- Agree Business Plan, allocate personal responsibilities
- Set timeline and milestones
- Monitor change
- Follow-up



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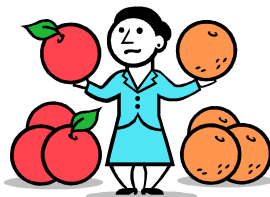
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...and so to work!



Thank you for your attention!



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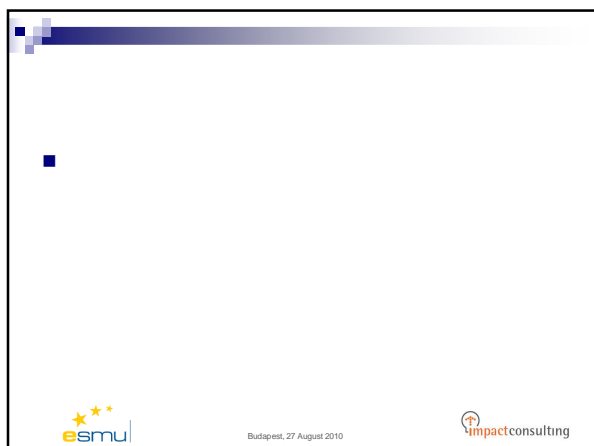
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