

# Benchmarking e-learning in HE: Global perspective & UK case study

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# World review

It's quick!

# Benchmarking Basics (Xerox)

a process of self-evaluation and self-improvement through the *systematic* and collaborative **comparison of practice** [process] and **performance** [metrics, KPIs, CSFs] with **competitors** [or comparators] in order to identify own strengths and weaknesses, and **learn** how to adapt and improve as conditions change.

# Benchmarking e-learning in universities

- A few reports directly applicable to benchmarking e-learning in universities
  - Especially [New Zealand](#) case study (Marshall)
  - Emerging [UK](#) work of mine – ALT-C, HEA, Educa
  - Emerging [US](#) work (NUTN-Hezel)...
  - Australia – [ACODE](#)?
- Some more generally relevant reports
  - Higher Education Academy, [DEST/Sydney](#)
  - UK Learning and Skills Council (general & [specific](#))
  - Emerging work “[The Matrix](#)” from Becta... schools?
  - OECD and OBHE surveys – but taxonomic/self-scored

# Common bases

- Often a 'late 90s' common base in “Principles of Good Practice” (Chickering & Ehrmann etc)
  - But this stuff is old (NB recent “discontinuities”)
- Sometimes an underpinning methodology from Information Systems (adoption, maturity, etc)
  - But this stuff can be even older (15 years) and oriented to first waves of innovation
  - Also very process-oriented with high analysis costs

So recheck assumptions using [current data and theories](#)

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# Guiding Principles

For a specific university exercise,  
either single or small club

# Recommendations 1

- Leverage on prior experience of benchmarking (some done at Sydney U)
- BUT be prepared to move to more “output-oriented” and “quantitative” measures than have been common in benchmarking projects up to now (often admin-focussed)

## Recommendations 2

- Focus on a **saleable set** of criteria (NB ABC)
- Focus on **your** critical success factors & KPIs
- **But** be mindful of **comparisons** (sine qua non)
- Be careful about approaches needing long training courses or weeks to drill out results
- Be careful about “universal” methodologies

# Scope issues

- How far do you delve into IT benchmarking?
- How far do you re-monitor general pedagogy including what the national quality agency does? (US and OZ/NZ does a lot of that)
- Do you have to re-normalise across sectors, countries and time horizons?
- We use criteria such as IT usability but not IT reliability
- We have a “quality and excellence” criterion: level 6 says: “Active dialogue with relevant quality agencies re appropriate quality precepts for e-learning”.

# The Pick & Mix system

- Based survey of “best of breed” ideas
- 6-point scale (Likert + excellence)
- Backed up by narrative and metrics
- 18 core criteria (e-learning specific)
- Can easily add more in same vein for local needs
- Little training required for assessment staff if knowledgeable and undogmatic about e-learning

# Technical Support criterion

1. No specific technical support for the typical (unfunded) academic engaged in e-learning
2. [interpolate]
3. Key staff engaged in the main e-learning projects are well supported by technical staff
4. [interpolate]
5. All staff engaged in e-learning process have “nearby” fast-response tech support
6. Increasing technical sophistication of staff means that explicit tech support can reduce

# Accessibility criterion

1. e-learning material and services is not accessible
2. Much e-learning material and most services conform to minimum standards of accessibility
3. Almost all e-learning material and services conform to minimum standards of accessibility
4. All e-learning material and services conform to at least minimum standards of accessibility, much to higher standards
5. e-learning material and services are accessible, and key components validated by external agencies
6. Strong evidence of conformance with letter & spirit of accessibility in all countries where students study

***Too aspirational, too international, too regulated?***

# Case Study

## Jan-Apr 2005

Manchester Business School  
within Manchester U  
(done by Matic Media Ltd)

# Methodology

- Externally-focussed
- Looked at 12 “comparator” business schools (2 UK, 10 non-UK) – no time to discuss
- Focus on speedy desk research (Web+DB)
- Focus on criteria susceptible to that
  - plus “narratives of good practice”
- Aim: to learn lessons for MBS

# A few MBS conclusions

- Numeric (not so interesting) – “taxonomic”
- Tabular (see next slide)
- Lots of case study narrative (but structured)
- Top-level conclusions include:
  - Saturation wireless networks universal
  - e-Portfolios used in highish-echelon
  - Give alumni *same* IT systems as students

## Criterion Level (levels 3 to 6 only)

<i>Factor</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Adoption phase (Rogers)</i>			<b>Illinois</b>	<b>UBC Virginia</b>	<b>Babson?</b>	
<i>VLE stage</i>			<b>Illinois Michigan</b>		<b>Babson UBC Melbourne</b>	
<i>Tools use</i>					<b>Babson IUPUI Leuven</b>	
<i>e-Learning Strategy</i>					<b>Penn State</b>	
<i>Organisation</i>			<b>Illinois Twente</b>		<b>Babson UBC IUPUI Penn State</b>	
<i>Technical support to academics</i>				<b>Penn State</b>	<b>Babson</b>	

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Thank you for listening  
Any questions?

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