



Muteesa I
ROYAL UNIVERSITY

📍 P.O.Box 322, Masaka
📍 P.O.Box 14002, Mengo-Kampala
☎ +256 434 251459
✉ aro@mru.ac.ug
🌐 www.mru.ac.ug

BENCHMARKING POLICY

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Review Date: Institutional Review every after five years

Signature by Chairman Council

A handwritten signature in blue ink is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and appears to be the name of the Chairman of the Council.

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1.0 Interpretation of Operational Terms of the Policy

i) Benchmarking:

Is a learning process which is 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.

ii) Partner:

Is either of a pair of people honestly engaged together in the same activity:

iii) Project Initiation:

Is the beginning or first phase in the project management cycle where high-level decisions are made.

iv) Project Management:

Is the practice of initiating, planning, executing, controlling and closing the activity of a team to achieve specific goals and meet specific success criteria at specified time.

v) Implementation:

It is the process of executing or putting a decision or detailed conceptual plans into effect or reality.

1.1 Background of MRU

Muteesa I Royal University (MRU) was offered an operational license by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) in 2005 and started its operations in 2007. The founding Chancellor of the University, who is also its Visitor, is His Majesty the Kabaka, Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II. The genesis of modern education in Uganda is historically associated with the Kingdom of Buganda owing to the role that Sekabaka Muteesa I played in inviting the missionaries who introduced education in Uganda. Owing to this history, it is only befitting that the University was named after this visionary leader. Hence, the University was named after the 31st King of Buganda who was a monarch of great vision, Kabaka Muteesa I (1856-1884). MRU is a skills training, academic and research-oriented institution of higher learning that was established as a private institution. The initiative was promoted by the Executive Committee (EC) of the Buganda Kingdom, headed by the *Katikkiro* (i.e., Prime Minister).

1.2 Strategic Goals of MRU

The Strategic Goals of MRU are as follows:

- i) To produce graduates with all-round competencies and skills to be able to initiate self-employment activities or compete for jobs in the global market;

- ii) To promote research and encourage students and staff to publish;
- iii) To build and expand collaboration and engagement with the community, the alumni, and industry and business, and to equip students with practical skills while empowering the community, industry & business to develop local solutions;
- iv) To strengthen MRU's human resource capacity;
- v) To achieve a sustainable financial resource base;
- vi) To improve the administrative and organizational arrangements of MRU with a view to achieving efficiency and effectiveness in all sections of MRU; and
- vii) To construct or acquire, rehabilitate and maintain buildings, equipment, implements, ICT facilities and land particularly for the growth and development of its niche.

1.3 Vision of MRU

The Vision of MRU is to be “a leading university responding to contemporary challenges through teaching and learning, research and technical guidance”.

1.4 Mission of MRU

The Mission of MRU is “to provide training, research and technical guidance responsive to national socio-economic needs”.

1.5 Core Values of MRU

The core values of MRU are as follows:

- i) Professionalism; Professionalism is a trait that's highly valued in the human resource of any organization. It has many attributes, including: (a) Specialized knowledge, (b) Competency, (c) Honesty and integrity, (d) Respect, (e) Accountability, (f) Self-regulation, and (g) Image.
- ii) Respect for Diversity;
- iii) Cultural Sensitivity;
- iv) Tenacity; and
- v) Team Spirit.

2.0 Introduction of the Policy

As a self-accrediting institution, MRU has an obligation to ensure that it continues to demonstrate high standards of performance in learning and teaching, research and associated activities. This commitment to excellence is underpinned by a robust and efficient system to support continuous improvement of its processes and outcomes. Benchmarking with appropriate partners, at a national or international level, enables MRU to compare and evaluate its performance and, in so doing, monitor standards, compare good practices and make quality improvements.

3.0 Objectives of the Policy

MRU encourages benchmarking with comparable institutions nationally and internationally as a means of improving performance and assuring standards. This Policy aims to ensure a more coordinated, considered and systematic approach to benchmarking; one that supports institutional planning and the setting of performance targets. It is also linked explicitly with MRU's quality improvement system.

4.0 Application of the Policy

This policy applies to benchmarking projects undertaken by Faculties, Departments, and Units of MRU. It sets out the process to be followed in undertaking any benchmarking project, which involves a formal arrangement with one or more partner organisations. It includes projects initiated by MRU as well as external benchmarking projects in which MRU is involved. It does not cover informal benchmarking activities such as a desktop survey of relevant websites, or the use of publicly available comparative data. While there is no prescribed methodology for conducting benchmarking exercises, MRU expects staff to comply with the core principles and management procedures so described.

5.0 Principles

Benchmarking projects undertaken by Faculties, Departments, and Units of MRU will:

- a) Support MRU's mission, goals and strategic priorities;
- b) Be characterised by a commitment to: learning from good practice; implementing potential improvements arising from benchmarking findings; and sharing of good practices including after projects are completed;
- c) Be characterised by mutuality: the expectations of the proposed benchmarking activity need to be established prior to commencement of that activity, with a view to establishing mutual interest and benefits for all parties;
- d) Be balanced in terms of the value received compared to costs involved in undertaking the projects; and
- e) Have the approval of the relevant Dean or Head of unit.

The following should be taken into account where an exchange of information is involved:

- a) Confidentiality: All benchmarking exchanges should be treated as confidential. Hence, the publication and external communication of findings should not occur without the permission of all partners involved in the project;
- b) Use: Benchmarking information should not be used for other than the express purpose for which it was obtained without prior consent of all participating partners;

- c) Exchange: The type or level of information exchanged should be comparable between the benchmarking partners; and
- d) Intellectual Property: All rights relating to any intellectual property developed in the course of any benchmarking activity need to be negotiated and recorded by the relevant partners.

6.0 Partners

Selecting Benchmarking Partners entails the following:

- i) Is critical for successful benchmarking. An external benchmarking partner should:
 - a) Have a commitment to quality improvement and a 'willingness to share'; and
 - b) Demonstrate a record of good performance in the area(s) to be benchmarked.
- ii) For a whole-of-institution benchmarking project to happen, in general, a benchmarking partner should also:
 - a) Have a compatible mission, values and objectives;
 - b) Be of comparable size; and
 - c) Have a similar discipline mix.

7.0 Project Initiation

The Benchmarking Register should be checked prior to commencing a project to ascertain whether similar projects have or are already being undertaken. The relevant Deans or Heads of Department should approve any benchmarking projects involving a formal request for information from another institution. In the case of any large-scale University-wide benchmarking, prior written approval must be obtained from the Vice-Chancellor or relevant member of Management. If the scope of the project affects more than one subject area, then consultation and agreement between the areas affected should precede the project's commencement. Special care should be undertaken when projects require the sharing of corporate data with other institutions. In this case, the relevant 'data custodian' must be contacted and it will be his/her responsibility to ensure that appropriate written approvals for the data transfer are obtained from the Vice Chancellor.

8.0 Project Management

The responsibility for running the project will be with the Unit Head under whose authority the project was approved or his/her delegate:

- i) Contact with partner organisations will normally be through the responsible unit-Head, unless delegated by him/her. When institutional support is needed for a project to

proceed with particular partners, then the responsible manager should contact the Vice-Chancellor;

- ii) Written agreements with other institutions and organisations with which projects are undertaken must be vetted by MRU's Legal Unit and signed in accordance with the formal delegations of MRU;
- iii) MRU expects that benchmarking projects will be funded by the area that initiates, manages and accepts responsibility for the project. If central funds are required, such as might be the case for large projects, then a submission should be made through the planning and budgeting process. If a case for special funding is appropriate and the timeframe does not permit submissions through the planning and budgeting process, then the unit Head should approach the Vice-Chancellor;
- iv) Benchmarking projects must be recorded by name, type, objectives and outcomes on the MRU's Benchmarking Register. These details and, where confidentiality considerations allow, the full reports should be lodged with the Strategic Planning and Quality Office as soon as possible after the completion of the project. The register has MRU-only access; and
- v) Each year, a summary report on benchmarking projects undertaken by the Faculty/Department/Unit should be submitted as part of the annual Faculty Review Report.

9.0 Communicating Findings

- i) The value of benchmarking is considerably enhanced if the findings are shared within MRU. MRU encourages the production of benchmarking reports that can be included in the Benchmarking Register for the benefit of its other sections. This includes externally produced reports;
- ii) Progress towards implementing improvements based on benchmarking projects, and their effect on outcomes should also be shared and units are encouraged to submit and discuss progress with similar units, and with MRU committees; and
- iii) Ideally, implementation plans should describe the actions arising from benchmarking reports, including responsibilities, resources and timelines. Progress against these plans should be regularly monitored.

10.0 Integrating Benchmarking with Quality Improvement Systems

Benchmarking projects are most successful when they are integrated with other initiatives and processes designed to improve outcomes within MRU. Consequently, MRU expects that project findings and implementation plans will be reflected in Faculty's, Departments', Unit's and/or Committee's operational plans and reports.

11.0 Implementation

Implementation of the Benchmarking Policy involves three key bodies working in partnership:

- i) Council has oversight of MRU's strategic direction, academic and general reputation, financial viability and the maintenance of high standards and probity. Within its overall responsibility for quality management, Council has general oversight of benchmarking processes across MRU and may commission inter-institutional benchmarking studies;
- ii) Academic Senate is responsible for advising Council and the Vice-Chancellor on academic matters, including providing advice on means of achieving and maintaining excellence in academic matters. Committees of Academic Senate may therefore play a role in commissioning or overseeing some benchmarking exercises; and
- iii) The Vice-Chancellor, supported by the Management Team, is responsible for the overall function and performance of MRU. Management, specifically via Planning, Performance and Review Committee, therefore, has a central role to play in overseeing the initiation, approval and review of benchmarking initiatives. The Academic Registrar is the custodian of the benchmarking register.

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