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.
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

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.

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 comes 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.
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)

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

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
7. Understanding the Dynamics of Benchmarking

8. Defining Standards and Benchmarks

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
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)

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

...and so to work!

Thank you for your attention!