

BLASST Benchmarking Workshops

Benchmarking can be a time-consuming process.

One advantage to benchmarking with the Framework and B-BIT is that the entire process from initiating benchmarking to reporting can be achieved in a day through holding a workshop and engaging with the Sessional Staff Standards as a group.

A **BLASST Benchmarking Workshop** is where an institution, faculty, department or centre hosts a structured day workshop for participants to work through the Framework using the online interactive tool B-BIT to generate a series of Benchmarking Summary Reports and Action Plans.

Why a 'Benchmarking Workshop'?

Benchmarking through a workshop can support you to:

- collaboratively benchmark against the Sessional Staff Standards;
- produce colour-coded summary reports in bulk which can be individually downloaded and saved;
- produce a series of action plans with a range of strategies to guide quality enhancement towards good practice;
- engage in repeat benchmarking cycles;
- learn about Good Practice with Sessional Staff.



How long is a BLASST Benchmarking Workshop? We suggest allowing at least one day for a structured workshop that incorporates multi-level benchmarking and group discussions.



Who attends the Workshop? The host centre or department, with invited participants including Sessional Staff, and at least one independent workshop facilitator.



What will participants gain from a BLASST Benchmarking Workshop? On completion of the workshop, all participants will have generated a benchmarking Summary Report (PDF) to save or print for their own reference. They will also take part in collaborative and critical discussions, gaining additional perspectives on sessional staff issues. Interacting with the tool collectively will also introduce participants to standards of good practice at various organisational levels.

Holding a BLASST Benchmarking Workshop

Before the Workshop – a checklist:

- Adapt the Workshop Program (see template below) as appropriate
- Send invitations (see sample invitation below) to potential participants, including Sessional Staff, at the organisational level/s (Institutional, Faculty/School, Department, Program, Unit) you wish to benchmark.
- Ask a senior level participant to lead the group on the day in a *Think Aloud* exercise (see next page)

Book:

- A venue large enough to hold the group
- Computers
- Audio-visual equipment
- Catering
- An independent facilitator to guide participants through the benchmarking process

Sample invitation to a Benchmarking Workshop



You are invited to take part in a one-day Workshop on Benchmarking with the Sessional Staff Standards Framework at [insert institution details] on [insert date / time]

Welcome to BLASST – an OLT-funded project to establish national standards to support and enhance quality teaching by Sessional Staff in higher education.

[institution name] is holding a BLASST Benchmarking Workshop with the Sessional Staff Standards Framework to evaluate the quality of performance and outcomes in learning and teaching; and in management and administrative policy, procedure and practices affecting sessional teaching staff.

As a sessional teacher OR as a staff member who is involved in managing, administrating, or convening Sessional Staff in [Department/ Faculty / School / Institution] you are invited to this Workshop to use an online interactive tool to evaluate Sessional Staff standards for quality learning and teaching at your institution.

The Workshop

This one-day workshop will be facilitated by [host department or centre] (your institutional contact is [name & email]). Your fellow workshop participants will include sessional teachers from your institution as well as academic and professional staff. At the end of the Workshop, each participant will be presented with a customised summary report.

Sample BLASST Benchmarking Workshop Program

	DAY PROGRAM	
10.00	Welcome Introduction to the BLASST Sessional Staff Standards Framework (SSSF) Introduction to the BLASST Benchmarking Interactive Tool (B-BIT) Benchmarking using the SSSF and B-BIT	Host centre representative + Facilitator
10.10	Starting off with the <i>Institutional standards</i> • Think Aloud exercise	Invited senior level participants + Facilitator
10.40	Group activity: Attendees work in groups at the SSSF <i>Institutional, Faculty, Department</i> , and/or <i>Individual</i> levels work through the SSSF and B-BIT	Whole group
12.00	Lunch	
12.30	<i>continue Group activity</i>	<i>Whole group</i>
2.00	Afternoon tea	
2.15	Whole-of-group discussion: What areas of strength and areas for further development around Sessional Staff issues have been identified for this institution?	Whole group + facilitator
3.15	Whole-of-group discussion: Where to from here? Developing action plans and timeframes	Whole group + facilitator
4.00	Close	

On the day of the Workshop:

- Welcome and introduction to the Framework, to B-BIT, and (if appropriate) to benchmarking for quality learning and teaching.
- State the confidential nature of the summary reports at the opening of the workshop.
- Think Aloud** exercise:
Support the senior-level participant as they lead the group in a **Think Aloud** activity where they work through a section of the B-BIT that is projected in front of the whole group, and verbalise their thoughts and actions as they do so.
- Be prepared to have some lively discussions! Some prompts:
What areas of strength around Sessional Staff issues have been identified for this institution?
What areas are in need of development?
Where to from here? (useful for developing Action Plans).
- Foster a context of trust and respect where each participant assumes a leadership role for Sessional Staff issues within their institution.

The Think Aloud exercise

We recommend that you include a structured **Think Aloud** exercise in your own Benchmarking Workshop.

In our pilot BLASST workshops, we asked senior-level participants to ‘think aloud’ or verbalise their thoughts, plans and actions in front of the entire group as they worked through a section of B-BIT (for example, Principle One at the Institutional level). This provided a model for working through B-BIT, and also established a collaborative and constructive workshop atmosphere that was critical to group engagement with the Framework and B-BIT and with fostering discussion around the Sessional Staff Standards¹.

¹ Luzia, K; Harvey, M; Parker, N; Brown, N; McCormack, C. & McKenzie, J. (2013). Benchmarking with the BLASST Sessional Staff Standards Framework. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*.

After the Workshop:

- Develop an Action Plan
(refer to the section on
The BLASST Summary Report and Action Plan)
- Put Plan into Action



BLASST OFF!