

# Identify Areas of Improvement in the Universities Ranking

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## Abstract

University rankings influence public opinions, students, faculties, funders, governments and employers. In fact, these instruments are seen as having an impact not only on the choices made by universities' clients but also on choices and priorities of universities themselves. However, although nearly everybody agrees that rankings are "here to stay", the debate on the validity of the current mainstream rankings does not seem to be settled: it becomes even more vibrant when international league-tables are discussed with not few doubts being posed and few corrections to rankings methodologies being adopted in response to some of these critiques. Indeed, it should be considered that these instruments are still in their methodological infancy and further adaptations are expected to come in the next years. In this paper we identify five main problems of the classifications: the question of the comparability of universities; the insufficient attention to clients' opinions; the possible negative effects of rankings on innovation; the bias toward size; the issue of the transparency of the data that are being used and of the methodology that is adopted in order to process the numbers. On the basis of these specific issues we developed some possible criteria to solve each of the above problems: indicators which can measure the success of different universities with different segment of users and with different products; assessment of impact on broader public opinions; measurement of variations in performances in order to reward progress; comparison between outputs and size of the institution so that efficiency can be appreciated;

full transparency and possibility for each category of users to calculate its own ranking.

**Keyword:** Higher Education Institutions; Ranking; University Reform; Performance; Outcome