

Irish Presidency Conference

Rankings and the Visibility of Quality Outcomes in the European Higher Education Area

30th–31st January 2013
George's Hall, Dublin Castle

Programme

Context

Since their first appearance at the start of the twenty-first century, global university rankings have proliferated and become increasingly commercialised in a market dominated by media organisations and private companies. In the 'knowledge society', higher education institutions have a key role to play in addressing the social and economic challenges facing the communities of which they are a part, and it is within this context that public interest in the performance of higher education institutions has understandably increased.

It must be ensured however, that the need to ensure the full accountability of higher education institutions to all stakeholders is balanced by safeguarding of the institutional autonomy and academic freedom that are the hallmarks of the highest performing universities around the world. It is the responsibility of those engaged in the performance measurement of higher education to ensure that the transparency and methodological rigour of ranking systems and performance evaluation frameworks protects the higher education sector from the perverse effects and unintended consequences to which such mechanisms can give rise as institutions compete to improve their ranking positions.





In particular it is vital to protect the rich diversity of higher education institutions, without which the needs of students, local communities, and regions will not be met. The diversity of European higher education is one of its key strengths, but this is jeopardised by the competitive pressures resulting from the vertical stratification of comprehensive research-intensive universities into league tables.

U-Multirank

It was within the context of increasingly widespread criticism of the methodological flaws of global rankings, and of their failure to recognise the cultural, linguistic, and historical diversity of higher education institutions, that the European Commission funded the CHERPA Network to design and test the feasibility of a user-driven, interactive, multi-dimensional ranking system for the benchmarking of higher education institutions' performance by a range of stakeholders. Building on the European Commission-funded 'U-Map' project, through which a multi-dimensional typology of European higher education institutions was developed, U-Multirank analyses institutional performance across five dimensions with a range of indicators selected by the user. Now in its second pilot-phase, U-Multirank aims to provide a performance-evaluation and information tool that will profile the heterogeneity and mission-diversity of higher education institutions in Europe and beyond.

Conference Objectives

The principal themes of the education and training dimension of the Irish Presidency will be quality and equity, with a focus on promoting equity of access to education, the relevance of education to emerging skills needs, quality assurance in quality frameworks, and regional engagement in higher education. Bringing together over 150 higher education stakeholders from across Europe to explore the information needs of users of university rankings, from students and



academics to employers and policy-makers, this conference will facilitate discussion about how performance evaluation in higher education can advance these strategic priorities. It will provide a forum for discussion about how best to evaluate and showcase the quality outcomes of higher education institutions, and of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in respect of teaching and learning, research, and external engagement.

In advance of the first publication of results from U-Multirank in early 2014, the conference will also provide an opportunity for dialogue between the consortium leading the second phase of this European Commission-funded initiative and the higher education community on the further development and optimal configuration of a user-driven and multi-dimensional ranking and information tool for the higher education sector.





Programme

Wednesday 30th January 2013

- 12:30 *Depart from Bewley's Hotel Ballsbridge to Dublin Castle*
- 13:00–13:45 **Conference Registration & Refreshments**
- 13:45–14:00 **Minister's Opening Remarks:** Ruairi Quinn, T.D., Minister for Education and Skills
- 14:00–14:15 **Opening Address:** Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth
- Session 1: U-Multirank: The Next Phase & User Perspectives**
- 14:15–14:30 **Chair's Opening Remarks:** Professor Marijk van der Wende, Amsterdam University College
- 14:30–15:00 **U-Multirank: The Implementation of a Multi-dimensional International Ranking**
Professor Frank Ziegele, Centre for Higher Education (CHE) & Dr. Don F. Westerheijden, Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS)
- 15:00–15:45 **Break-out Discussions: User-Perspectives on Rankings**
 1. **Policy-perspective:** André Kristiansen, Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research;
 2. **Student-perspective:** Karina Ufert, Chairperson, ESU;
 3. **Institutional perspective:** Tia Loukkola, EUA.
- 15:45–16:15 **Refreshments**
- 16:15–17:15 **Feedback from Break-out Discussions and Plenary Discussion**
- 17:15–17:30 **Closing Remarks:** Tom Boland, Chief Executive, Higher Education Authority
- 17:30 *Depart from Dublin Castle to Hotel*
- 19:15 *Depart from Hotel to Royal Hospital, Kilmainham*
- 19:45 *Reception, Royal Hospital, Kilmainham*





20:15 *Minister's Welcome*

20:30 *Dinner, Royal Hospital, Kilmainham*

Thursday 31st January 2013

08:15 *Depart from Bewley's Hotel Ballsbridge to Dublin Castle*

09:00–09:30 **Refreshments**

Session 2: Increasing the Visibility of Quality Outcomes of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

09:30–9:45 **Chair's Opening Remarks:** Tom Boland, Chief Executive, Higher Education Authority

9.45–10.15 **Increasing the Visibility of the Quality of EHEA: Benchmarking the Total Quality Experience**
Professor Ellen Hazekorn, Dublin Institute of Technology

10:15–10:45 **Plenary Discussion**

10:45–11:10 **Balancing Autonomy and Accountability through Transparency: The Irish Approach**
Muiris O'Connor & Dr. Vivienne Patterson, Higher Education Authority

11:10–11:30 **Plenary Discussion**

11:30–12:00 **Refreshments**

12:00–13:00 **Break-out Discussions: Evaluating the Core Activities of Higher Education**

1. **Research** Dr. Eucharía Meehan, Higher Education Authority & Professor Jürgen Barkhoff, Trinity College Dublin;
2. **Teaching and Learning** Professor Sarah Moore, University of Limerick & Professor Jean-Charles Pomerol, Université Pierre et Marie Curie;
3. **Regional Engagement & Knowledge-transfer** Dr. Irene Sheridan, Cork Institute of Technology & Professor David Charles, University of Strathclyde.

13:00–14:15 **Lunch (St. Patrick's Hall)**





- 14:15–15:00 **Measuring what Matters: Forging the Right Tools to Assess Learning Outcomes**
Professor George D. Kuh Director, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA)
- 15:00–16:15 **Feedback from Break-out Discussions & Round-table Discussion**
Panellists: Break-out Discussion Speakers & Professor Frank Ziegele
- 16:15–16:30 **Update on AHELO:** Deborah Roseveare (OECD)
- 16:30–16:45 **Concluding Remarks:** Jordi Curell, Director, Lifelong Learning, Higher Education and International Affairs, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, European Commission
- 16:45–16:55 **Closing Remarks:** Mary Doyle, Deputy Secretary General, Department of Education and Skills
- 17:00 *Depart from Dublin Castle to Hotel*

