University Rankings

Criticism and Policies
A little bit of history…
University Rankings: Three Levels of Problems

- Social
- Conceptual
- Methodological
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Data Quality

Unclear and/or incompatible definitions

Underreporting due to lack of compliance
Biases

Disciplinary Bias

Linguistic Bias

Publication Type Bias
Statistics

Lack of an error theory

Using averages for measures that are asymmetrically distributed
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Measuring Past Performance

Long data collection periods
Long time lags in performance & measurement processes (citations; impact; Nobel prizes...)
Unknown delays in reputation measures
Spurious Precision

Comparing the Incomparable

Academic staff
Funding mechanisms & accounting
Institutional profiles & types
University Rankings: Three Levels of Problems

- Social
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Goodhart’s Law

When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure.
Social problems

Incentives for window dressing and manipulation

Goal displacement

_ Only what is measured counts.

_ Competition drives out cooperation.
A kinder research culture is possible

Wellcome is right to call out hyper-competitiveness in research and question the focus on excellence. But other funders must follow its move.
Which **policy options** do we have?
Ignore
Ignore?

Double Top Universities Plan (China) etc.

Researcher Mobility

Student Mobility
Ignore?

„Wenn wir dann in einigen Jahren wirklich vier oder fünf international reputierte Hochschulen haben, die in den Rankings ganz vorne liegen, dann können wir sagen: Das war genau die richtige Entscheidung, die wir jetzt getroffen haben.“

Bundesministerin Johanna Wanka anlässlich des Beschlusses über die Exzellenzstrategie
Boycot Rankings
Universities boycott Maclean's rankings

Eleven of Canada's universities are refusing to participate in the Maclean's university ranking issue, saying they find the magazine's survey methodology to be "oversimplified" and "arbitrary."
Compete
University and College Rankings 2019-2020

Compare more than 1,700 universities and colleges from 96 countries worldwide and find your best matching university with U-Multirank university rankings.
Adapt

If you can‘t beat them, join them.
Adapt, but do not compromise.

- Be consistent in your communication.
- Don’t succumb to the ranking hype.
- Resist goal displacement.
- Have a say.
Thank you!