Basic facts about U-Multirank

1. U-Multirank applies a completely new approach to international ranking

U-Multirank is multi-dimensional.

U-Multirank takes a different approach to the existing global rankings of universities. First, it is multi-dimensional and compares university performances in the different activities in which they are engaged. It is not confined to research, but takes into account different aspects and dimensions of the performance of universities: teaching & learning, research, knowledge transfer, international orientation and regional engagement.

Second, U-Multirank does *not* produce a combined, weighted score across these different areas of performance and in the following use this score to produce a numbered league table of the world's 'top' 100 universities. The reason for this is that there is no theoretical or empirical justification for such composite scores. Empirical studies have shown that the weighting schemes of existing global rankings are not robust: small changes in the weights assigned to the underlying measures (the indicator scores) will change considerably the composite scores and hence the league table positions of individual universities. Therefore, the U-Multirank methodology looks at the scores of universities on individual indicators and places these in five 5 performance groups (starting from 'very good' to 'weak').

U-Multirank is user-driven.

The multi-dimensional approach is closely related to the focus on user needs. U-Multirank provides information relevant for decision-making by many different parties, that is: students, university administrators, policy-makers, academics, business leaders, et cetera. Composite indicators, as used in other rankings, define the relevance of each indicator uniformly and patronise users. U-Multirank, on the other hand, appreciates that different user groups of rankings may have preferences and priorities about university activities ('Quality lies in the eye of the beholder'). This is why U-Multirank leaves the decision about the relevance of different performance indicators to its users. This is facilitated by U-Multirank's interactive web tool.

U-Multirank is stakeholder-oriented.

Many stakeholders have been involved in the development of U-Multirank – its indicators, the underlying data collection instruments as well as the design of the interactive web tool through which the results are presented. They will continue to be involved in the further refinement of U-Multirank's features. The information needs of the users of U-Multirank and their suggestions for new and existing features and functions will be monitored constantly and taken into account.

U-Multirank is a multi-level ranking.

U-Multirank combines an institutional ranking (of whole institutions) with a set of field-based rankings that focus on particular academic disciplines or groups of study programmes. Both are equally important. Whereas field-based information is most important to many users of rankings (e.g. to students who are looking for a university which offers a programme in their intended field of study, to academic researchers interested in comparisons with colleagues in their field), other users (including for instance, university presidents and policy makers) are also interested in information about the performance of their entire institution. Starting with 4 subject rankings in 2014, the number of subjects included increased to 24 in the 2019 edition. For the 2020 release, we are going to add international law, linguistics, social geography and earth sciences as new subjects (and update a group of "old" subject (see below).

U-Multirank shows the diversity of institutions.

In contrast to other global rankings which are rankings of only one university type, namely the internationally-oriented research university, U-Multirank has a more comprehensive understanding of higher education institutions and provides information on institutions with different missions. U-Multirank covers institutions with a wide range of profiles: universities of applied sciences, regionally-oriented colleges, and specialised institutions such as music academies and teacher training colleges. U-Multirank highlights the diversity of institutional profiles. This also means that U-Multirank includes more than 300 institutions which have never been visible in global rankings before, with a number of them showing very good performance in particular indicators.

U-Multirank compares institutions with similar activity profiles.

If a ranking includes a wide range of institutional profiles, it has to ensure that it provides meaningful comparisons. U-Multirank therefore enables users to compare particular kinds of universities (like-with-like). It does not make much sense to compare a small regional undergraduate teaching institution with an internationally oriented research university, nor to compare an arts academy with a technical university. U-Multirank invites the user to first choose a number of empirical "profile indicators" and compare institutions with similar profiles in the following.

U-Multirank does not provide over-simplified league tables.

Institutions are ranked into five 5 different performance groups (rank groups A to E, with A indicating 'very good' and E 'weak' performance) for each of the indicators in the rankings. Whereas league tables produced in other global rankings may satisfy media needs for headlines ("The number one is…"), they tend to exaggerate differences in performance between universities and provide a false impression of exactness ("Number 27 is better than number 29"). U-Multirank therefore leaves it to the user to

produce her/his own list of universities (or university fields), showing the performance on a selection of indicators made by the user.

To assist U-Multirank users in producing their results, the interactive web tool can sort universities alphabetically or sort them based on the scores for a particular indicator. As an extra service, users can follow an approach similar to the Olympic medal table, according to which universities with the highest number of 'very good' scores ('A' scores in the ranking tool) would be shown at the top in the table. If there are more than one university with the same number of As, then (and only then) the number of 'B' ('Good') scores come into play. Similarly, to rank those with the same number of As and Bs, the Cs are considered, and so on.

U-Multirank is a growing system

In 2014 U-Multirank started publishing data on some 600 institutions presenting an institutional ranking and four subject rankings. In the third edition published in March 2016 the number of institutions has increased to 1,304 from more than 90 countries; the number of fields has been extended to 13. In its latest release in June 2019 the number of institutions has grown to 1,710, representing 96 countries. The subject rankings present data on some 5,000 faculties and departments and more than 10,000 individual degree programmes. In a student satisfaction survey, which is unique to U-Multirank, more than 100,000 students provided their views on their learning experience. Within three years, U-Multirank has become the most comprehensive global ranking and data system.

U-Multirank developed a unique user-driven web tool

A distinguishing feature of U-Multirank is that it is user-driven. The results are published on an interactive, freely accessible web tool (www.umultirank.org), offering several entry points for various target groups. It offers four main tracks with many possibilities for users to work with the rankings. The '[student track](#)' allows students to compare study programmes or universities of their choice, and has a special focus on teaching and learning. The '[University Rankings](#)' section allows users to compare higher education institutions of similar profiles or make comparisons with a specific institution in mind. "[Find your University's Ranking](#)" allows users to view the entire performance profile of a particular institution.

2. Data collection and verification in U-Multirank

U-Multirank relies on a number of data sources in order to produce a *multi-perspective* ranking. Data sources include external databases (e.g. on bibliometric data and patent data) in which data will be collected and analysed without direct involvement of participating institutions as well as data supplied by institutions. Among them are:

- a short survey to prepare the whole process of data collection (preparatory survey)
- an *institutional* survey collecting data on the entire institution
- *subject* surveys collecting data on the faculties/departments in the surveyed fields
- a *student* survey on their learning experience
- In addition a number of indicators is based on data from publicly available data bases (bibliometric and patent data bases; data will be collected/analysed without active involvement of participating institutions)

Institutions will get access data to the institutional and subject questionnaires after submitting the pre-survey. The online questionnaires include a number of built-in checks on plausibility and consistency of data that generate questions and comments that are displayed in the questionnaire.

Data collection will be organised in two phases: after a first phase of data delivery, we will check the data submitted. We will then insert comments and questions into the questionnaire. In a second phase, universities can check, correct and – if necessary - add missing data. This is an important step to ensure the quality of data before calculating indicators.

A detailed description of the methodology and the data collection can be found in the Methodology section of our website

3. U-Multirank offers a number of benefits to participating institutions

With its multi-dimensional approach, U-Multirank offers a highly useful tool for benchmarking. The mapping tool allows identifying institutions with a similar profile. In a second step, it offers a comprehensive comparison with them on more than 30 indictors. U-Multirank introduce an at a glance illustration of performance profiles, the 'sunburst chart':[1]

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[1] Each beam represents one indicator. Full length beams signify top performance (group 'A'), short beams signify poor performance ('E'). Missing beams show that data for this indicator are not available for this institution.
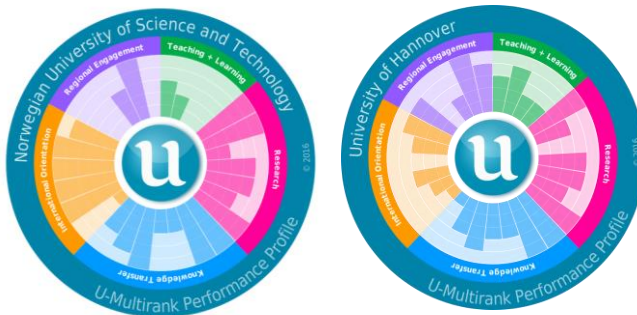
A couple of days before publication of new U-Multirank results, participating institutions will receive a package which includes

- the 'sunburst chart', providing an at a glance illustration of results both at institutional and subject level,
- a detailed overview of all indicator scores and rank groups,
- a detailed analysis of the student survey comparing results of their own students to the total sample,
- a guide on how to communicate the results.

4. U-Multirank 2020: Subjects and Schedule

The 2020 subject rankings will include the following subjects:
- *Business studies (update)*
- *Economics (update)*
- *Sociology (update)*
- *Political science (update)*
- *Educational science (update)*
- *International law (new)*
- *Social geography (new)*
- *History (update)*
- *Linguistics (new)*
- *Earth sciences/ geology (new)*

Institutions interested in participating in the 2020 edition of U-Multirank are able to register online via our website: Registration Form

The schedule of the 2020 ranking and the related data collection is shown in the following table:

Until July 2019	Registration for participation in U-Multirank 2020
June – November 2019	Institutional and subject data collection (depending on time of registration of the institution)
October – December 2019	Data verification by U-Multirank, feedback to institutions and second cycle of data collection
December 2019 – February 2020	Final data verification and analysis
June 2020	Release of results

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