

## ***Assessment of University rankings in the frame of measuring university performance***

---

### ***Instructor:***

Sadia Vancauwenbergh, Martelarenlaan 42, B-3500 Hasselt, Belgium  
Head Information-Management and Data analysis, Project Leader on University Rankings

### ***Qualifications:***

Over the past years Hasselt University has gained a lot of expertise in rankings and their methodologies. HU has performed several studies on rankings, resulting in publications with guidelines to correctly interpret ranking results. That expertise is utilized by providing information to the Flanders government on ranking-related issues. Furthermore, HU is leading a Flanders' initiative on ranking-related semantics, harmonizing the (possible) interpretations of the data needed by the ranking organizations, what results in a uniform and comparable dataset for the Flanders region. HU is extending this initiative to the Walloon region, and further to the international level, for which HU is member of an International Organization on Ranking Excellence.

### ***Topics:***

Since the first publication of the Shanghai ranking, the number of university rankings has been vastly growing. Over the years, this has resulted in wide variety of rankings ranging in their scope, underlying methodologies and indicators used. As university rankings receive extensive media attention, it is crucial that ranking results are interpreted correctly. All too often hasty conclusions are drawn without considering the exact meaning of a particular ranking result. However, this is becoming increasingly important as rankings are more than ever seen as a possible evaluation instrument of a university's performance.

During this tutorial, first an overview will be given on the different types of university rankings. Specific attention will be given to worldwide rankings, i.e. the Shanghai, THE, QS, CWTS Leiden ranking and U-Multirank. The underlying methodologies used to measure an indicator performance as well as methods for calculating final ranking scores will be explained.

In the second part of the workshop, the attendees will get acquainted with the many different kinds of misinterpretations that frequently occur when evaluating ranking results (Poelmans, H. & Vancauwenbergh, S. (2016) In: TORB (2-3), 148-157.)

Furthermore, the participants will get practical exercises where they have to look up ranking results and evaluate these, with the prior knowledge they obtained. These will be discussed during the workshop.

The workshop will be concluded by giving the participants guidelines how to use and interpret ranking results correctly.

**Draft Program:**

Introduction to university rankings	
9.00-9.10	Welcome and intro
9.10-9.50	Overview of university rankings, methodologies and indicators
Misinterpretation of university rankings	
9.50-10.30	Sharing knowledge on frequently made errors
10.30-10.45	Coffee break
Exploration of ranking tools	
10.45-11.45	Exercises
Conclusions	
11.45-12.00	Guidelines on the correct interpretation of ranking results

**Pre-requisites for attendants:**

The tutorial is aimed at researchers, higher education institution's administrators and technology support professionals who need to advance their organization's understanding of university rankings. Participants gain practical knowledge and resources to correctly evaluate university rankings. Furthermore, the tutorial also offers an opportunity to share experience on university rankings and their use in different national and institutional contexts.

No prior knowledge required.

**Tutorial setting:**

- Max. 20 participants
- Need for computers, min. 10 (2 persons/computer)
- Internet connection

**Related to the following conference topics:**

- Analytics and quantitative measurement in research information systems: metrics and indicators
- Output and performance: trends in research assessment, rankings and bench-marking
- Evaluation of scientific organizations as cultural, societal or economic assets
- Value, impact and outcomes of universities
- Semantic approaches, data mining and profiling in the interpretation of research information
- Interoperability: exchange and reuse of research information from existing resources