

**STUDY PROPOSAL FOR:**

**ACPUA / THEMATIC ANALYSIS / "ACPUA LEARNS" SERIES**

**RESPONSIBLE: PROF. JOSÉ MARÍA GÓMEZ SANCHO, UNIVERSIDAD DE ZARAGOZA**

## Teaching accreditations and rankings

The assessment of programmes, whether by means of accreditation or classification, is becoming increasingly important. By means of the accreditations conducted by the quality agencies, in Aragon the ACPUA has already assessed -and continues to do so- all the teaching offer of the University System of Aragon. But what is happening in the other direction, that of the rankings?

Since 2003, the rankings of universities, areas or macro-areas, programmes, teaching staff, etc., have grown exponentially due to the appearance of the *Academic Ranking of World Universities* (ARWU)<sup>1</sup>, produced by Shanghai Jiao Tong University in China. This ranking was the first to establish a ranking of the best (500 at the beginning, currently classifies the 1000 best) universities worldwide. Over time, the *Times Higher Education World University Ranking* (THE)<sup>2</sup> and the *QS World University Ranking* (QS)<sup>3</sup> have also been consolidated. The rankings provided by the *US News Ranking*<sup>4</sup> or the *Center for World University Rankings* (CWUR)<sup>5</sup> could be included in this group.

The biggest problem with these university rankings is that, although they try to show an evaluation of all the activities carried out by the universities (teaching, research, transfer, etc.), they are very much biased towards research. This is due to the fact that currently only this university activity has internationally comparable indicators. At ARWU all of their indicators are research indicators, at THE and QS the vast majority are research indicators since, although some of them are based on reputation surveys, they are often highly correlated with research. The *CWTS Leiden*<sup>6</sup> and the *Scimago Institutions Rankings*<sup>7</sup> are focused solely on research.

Over the years, and in response to the criticism they have received, these rankings have been increasing their offer and various classifications have been added to the world ranking of universities (League Tables), such as: by geographical areas, for young universities, by cities and by subjects which, in turn, have been increasing over the years. The latest published data show that ARWU has 54 subjects, THE 11 and QS 51 (the CWTS only breaks down into five macro areas and the US News Best Global University Rankings has 38 subjects).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.shanghairanking.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-global-universities/rankings>

<sup>5</sup> <https://cwur.org/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.leidenranking.com/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.scimagoir.com/>

Another serious drawback, for the purpose of programmes evaluation, is that they are grouped by subject or area, but not by programmes. This makes it difficult or impossible to attribute these results to specific ones. In conclusion, the rankings traditionally used to classify universities around the world are not currently operational to try to evaluate programmes.

In terms of rankings by programme, at the international level, *the complete University guide* stands out in the United Kingdom. Apart from the ranking of British universities as a whole, its rankings by programmes use 5 indicators: Student Satisfaction, Research Quality, Research Intensity, Entry Standards and Graduate Prospects<sup>8</sup>.

If we move on to analyse what is happening in Spain, two rankings stand out: the CYD (related to the European U-Multirank) and the U-Ranking. These are user-customized rankings, where the user chooses the indicators or weightings, while the previous rankings showed synthetic indicators (a final figure after weighting the indicators). Both allow the analysis of Spanish universities as a whole or by fields or even at degree level.

Thus, the 2019 CYD ranking analyses the results of public (48) and private (25) universities<sup>9</sup>. The indicators are grouped into 5 dimensions: Teaching and learning (9 indicators), research (9 indicators), knowledge transfer (8 indicators), international orientation (7 indicators), and contribution to regional development (4 indicators). It also allows the results to be visualised by areas (25) of 2925 bachelor's and master's degrees. In this case the indicators are grouped into 6 dimensions: Teaching and learning (13 indicators), research (9 indicators), knowledge transfer (2 indicators), international orientation (10 indicators), contribution to regional development (3 indicators) and labour integration (8 indicators).

In the U-Ranking it also has a classification of public universities (48) and private universities (22, of another 14 it does not have sufficient data), and by programme. In the university rankings, it is possible to obtain the global or separate ranking by its two dimensions (teaching and research and innovation), in which four areas are analysed (resources, production, quality and internationalisation) and the relevant indicators are assigned to each of them according to the dimension<sup>10</sup>. At the end there are 10 indicators for teaching (2 level at university level and 8 at branch level) and 10 for research (3 level at university level and 7 at branch level). The degree rankings analyse 3,359 degrees and double degrees (5 of the 10 teaching indicators are disaggregated at this level) which are concentrated into 122 groups (5 of the 10 research and innovation indicators are disaggregated at this level). In addition, it incorporates complementary information on labour market insertion taken from the 2019 Report on Labour Market Insertion of University Graduates

One of the biggest differences between CYD and U-ranking, apart from the indicators they use, is that CYD uses data provided by the Universities and the U-ranking public and verifiable data.

As for the data sources from which interesting information can be extracted for this type of studies: The Rectors' Conference (CRUE), the Integrated University Information System

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://rankingcyd.org/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://u-ranking.es/index2.php>

(SIU), the Directorate General for Scientific and Technical Research (DGICT), the IUNE Observatory, OTRIs, the Ministries of Universities and of Science and Innovation, the databases of the Web of Science and Scopus, the University Quality Agencies such as ACPUA and the Universities of Zaragoza and San Jorge themselves. Finally, it is worth noting the information that can be obtained from the results on labour insertion such as those provided by the ACPUA and the Government of Aragon<sup>11</sup> or that for Catalan degrees, masters and doctorates are carried out by the AQU<sup>12</sup>.

**Proposals:**

- 1) To analyse in which rankings the programmes taught by the Aragon universities appear and also to understand and explain the outcomes obtained.
- 2) In the light of these results, to analyse both the indicators and the outcomes of the assessments conducted by the ACPUA, so that this comparison can be used to identify and construct alternative or additional indicators for use in future evaluations and in improving the quality of university education in Aragon.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://acpua.aragon.es/es/insercion-laboral-de-egresados> and <https://www.aragon.es/-/transicion-educativa-laboral-e-insercion-laboral#anchor1>

<sup>12</sup> <http://estudis.aqu.cat/dades/Web/Inici>