“You may have heard: Utrecht University has not been included in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Ranking 2024.”

Professor Paul Boselie, UU Chief Open Science

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Utrecht University @UniUtrecht in the Netherlands has withdrawn itself from the World University ranking @THEworldunirank provided by @timeshighered. As this has generated quite some reactions - praise, questions, some doubts, I want to provide some context. Hence a thread 📌 1/16

Pulling out of the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings will not affect Utrecht University’s standing or popularity among current or future students. That was the message of Professor Dr Henk Kummeling, rector magnificus of the Netherlands’ university, whose areas of responsibility include student policy, academic affairs and cooperation in higher education.

“Utrecht University [UU], like many other Dutch and foreign universities, has been critical of rankings for a long time,” Kummeling told University World News.

“UU has now chosen to no longer actively participate in rankings that do not adhere to principles of open science, as it is not in line with our values and ambitions and what we propagate in the ... academic community,” he said.

The university accepts that the absence of UU in the London-based THE magazine’s ranking may affect the perception of UU, he said. “But people are expected to choose to study, work or collaborate with UU based on content and quality, not on a spot in a ranking with limitations”, said Kummeling who advocates strategic choices, making UU “a university with a head and a heart”.

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Impact

Transparency

Distinction between academic and support staff reduced

Multidisciplinary and inclusive teams

Open educational resources

Sharing data and code

Co-operation instead of competition

New evaluation criteria

Leadership

Teamwork

Open access of output

Open mindset in curriculum

Involving society

www.uu.nl/openscience
Impact factor abandoned by Dutch university in hiring and promotion decisions

Faculty and staff members at Utrecht University will be evaluated by their commitment to open science.

By Chris Woolston

A Dutch university says it is formally abandoning the impact factor—a standard measure of scientific success—in all hiring and promotion decisions. By early 2022, every department at Utrecht University in the Netherlands will judge its scholars by other standards, including their commitment to teamwork and their efforts to promote open science, says Paul Boselie, a governance researcher and the project leader for the university’s new Recognition and Rewards scheme. “Impact factors don’t really reflect the quality of an individual researcher or academic,” he says. “We have a strong belief that something has to change, and abandoning the impact factor is one of those changes.”

Fig. 4.3. Why JIF Should Not Be Used to Assess Individual Researchers (Plomp et al., 2021). Image license: CC-BY.
Why UU is missing in the THE ranking

Too much stress on competition

UU has chosen not to submit data. A conscious choice:
• Rankings put too much stress on scoring and competition, while we want to focus on collaboration and open science.
• In addition, it is almost impossible to capture the quality of an entire university with all the different courses and disciplines in one number.
• Also, the makers of the rankings use data and methods that are highly questionable, research shows. For example, universities have to spend a lot of time providing the right information.

National response, debate and position paper (2023)

Figure 1: University context in which rankings are used

Society with its political & economic climate
- Pandemic
- Climate collapse
- Labour market

Core tasks
- Research
- Education
- Social Mission (Impact)

Mission
- Open Science
- Reward & Recognition
- Internationalisation
- Sustainable Development Goals
- ...

Stakeholders
- Parent
- Student
- Staff
- Organisation
- Business

= Rankings
- Global Ranking
- Topical Ranking
- Subject Ranking
- Impact Ranking

An instrument that provides limited, incomplete information on the contribution of the university.

Ranking the university
Benefits and drawbacks?

(+)
- Media attention, free publicity
- First mover advantage, global reactions such as ‘brave’
- Global South enthusiasm:

△
- Involve Communication, avoid the element of internal surprise
- Check immigration regulations for students and employees
- The ranking and benchmarking addiction is both organizational and individual
Apendices
Coalition of the Willing

- International: for example https://coara.eu/

Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (2022):

Our vision is that the assessment of research, researchers and research organisations recognises the diverse outputs, practices and activities that maximise the quality and impact of research. This requires basing assessment primarily on qualitative judgement, for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators.

- International: for example DORA declaration
  “Announcing plans for DORA’s 10th Anniversary Celebration” (Dec, 2022)

- National: UNL (see position paper 2019)
OPEN SCIENCE RECOGNITION AND REWARDS

PAST

Primary focus

Individual performance

RESEARCH

EDUCATION

LEADERSHIP

IMPACT

PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE

Output

Quantity
Closed
H-index & Impact factors
€ Funding received

OPEN ACCESS
FAIR DATA & SOFTWARE

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
RECOGNITION AND REWARDS

OPEN SCIENCE PROGRAMME

FUTURE

Team effort

Dynamic career paths

EDUCATION
RESEARCH
IMPACT
LEADERSHIP
PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE
(e.g., patient care)

Outcome

Quality
Open
Narratives & meaningful metrics
Societal relevance

ORGANIZATION

SKETCH
Recognition & Rewards Transformation

2018 • UU OS programme: Rewards & Incentives section

2019 • NL Position Paper: Room for everyone's talent

2020 • UU Strategic plan: Open Science

2021 • UU Vision Recognition and Rewards

2023 • NL Roadmap: Room for everyone's talent in practice

2023 • UU Vision Recognition and Rewards updated
New R&R Vision September 2023

1. University staff (UP)
2. Principles
   1. We work together
   2. Leadership is key
   3. Room for development
   4. Transparency (open science)
   5. Quality over quantity
3. TRIPLE (broadened) as a tool