

Call for Papers

**Rankings and the structure of the economic sciences:
promoting excellence, preserving academic quality, or constructing
hierarchies and exclusions?**

Workshop at the Johannes Kepler University of Linz, Austria, 20-22 July 2022

Submission Deadline: 31 March 2022

Notification of Acceptance: April 2022

Discourses around research excellence and quality are predominant within the economic sciences. Here, different forms of rankings play a central role. They make “excellence” in research and teaching visible, but they also form hierarchical orders among researcher, institutions, publication outlets and countries. Rankings operate in different directions: on the one hand, rankings evaluate ex post the outcome of research, teaching activities, and media visibility of the past – for example the Handelsblatt Ranking in Germany or the many rankings of economists in widely printed newspapers; on the other hand, rankings sketch out and anticipate ex ante what “good research” (and teaching) might be by setting standards by Journal Rankings and teaching concept evaluations (e.g., the Research Excellence Framework – REF – in UK universities). Moreover, impact rankings based on publications in a few “top economic journals” also play a decisive role for career trajectories of young economists.

Within the social sciences many scholars have analysed the role and far-reaching implications of rankings. Some studies have criticised the validity of existing rankings and proposed more elaborated concepts and criteria on how to better reflect real quality in terms of societal and academic impact. Other studies argued that rankings do not reflect academic quality, they rather change academic life according to their proposed criteria. Additionally, critical studies have shown that rankings incentivize strategic behaviour of researchers and academic institutions alike and thus hinder knowledge evolutions. However, today there are many other research perspectives on the role of rankings within and for academia in general, and in the economic sciences in particular. This workshop invites papers focussing on questions related to the study of the role of rankings in the formation of economic sciences. These papers might want to address one of the following topics:

- How and inasmuch can rankings reflect quality and excellence?
- What are the mechanisms that allow rankings to block innovation and to promote opportunistic behaviour in research?
- Can rankings be seen as expressions of academic power and quality?
- Can we understand the history of rankings as “battle field” or “evolutionary progress”, and how?
- What does it mean to conceptualise rankings as “performative tools”?
- How do rankings promote communication between science and society?
- How do rankings influence career trajectories?
- How do rankings participate to create hierarchies, exclusion and inequalities?

The workshop is organised by: Stephan Pühringer (host, Univ of Linz), Jens Maesse (Univ of Giessen), Thierry Rossier (LSE)

We welcome submissions that address one of these topics or related research questions. Please send your abstract (300-400 words) to: stephan.puehringer@jku.at; jens.maesse@sowi.uni-giessen.de, thierry.rossier@unil.ch

The workshop will be organised as hybrid workshop (including up to 30% online presentations)