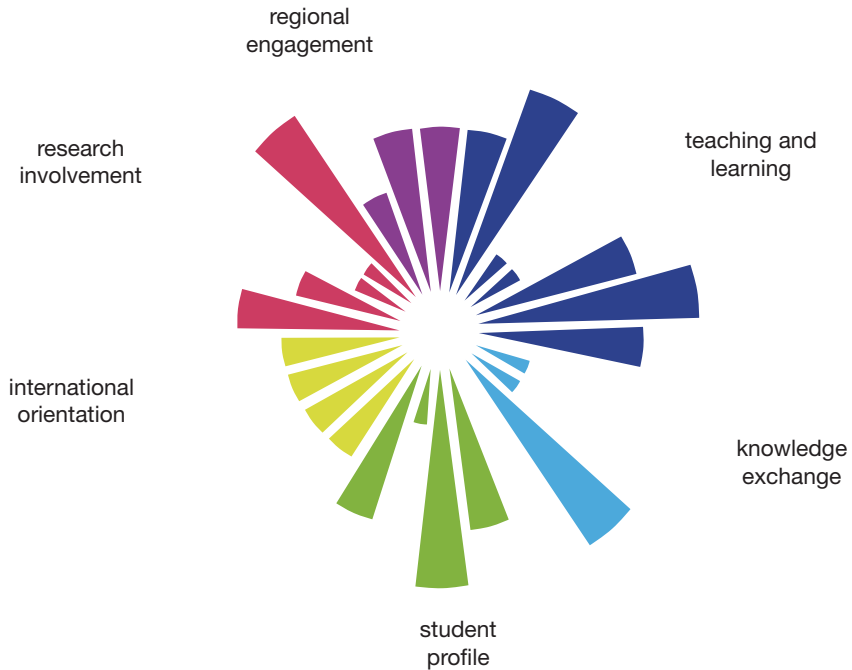# U-Map

A University
Profiling Tool

U-Map: A university profiling tool

There are about 3,000 universities, colleges, polytechnics and specialized higher education institutions (HEIs) distributed across national higher education systems in Europe. Given the varying activities carried out by these HEIs, there is a pressing need for greater transparency. U-Map helps making this diversity more transparent, allowing institutions to express both what they do (showing their profile) and how that profile compares to similar institutions. This can inform HEIs' strategy development, their positioning in the higher education marketplace, and may assist them in benchmarking exercises or in developing inter-institutional cooperation. U-Map also helps (national) higher education policy makers to map the institutional diversity in their HE system and to learn about differences and similarities and within national systems.

Activity profiles

The U-Map profile of an institution shows at-a-glance its main activities. It is based on empirical data for 25 key indicators, grouped into six dimensions. The diversity of each institution's activity is pictured in its 'sunburst' chart, with six colours representing the six dimensions of U-Map. Each 'ray' represents an indicator – its length indicating the relative position of an institution against a user-defined set of comparator institutions.

U-Map's indicators and dimensions have been validated for their efficacy and efficiency through a detailed process of stakeholder consultations and piloting, which confirms these variables do capture the essence of what institutions actually do.

regional engagement

research involvement

teaching and learning

international orientation

knowledge exchange

student profile

The tools

U-Map's users employ two on-line tools to inspect activity profiles, a Profile Finder and a Profile Viewer. These tools allow them to identify comparable institutions and then compare themselves against that group. The tools thus enable users to focus on those elements of activity profiles they are interested in, or that they regard as important.

The *Profile Finder* identifies specific subsets of institutions from the entire set of institutions covered in U-Map. Only those institutions that match the user-defined selection criteria are included in the user's subset.

The *Profile Viewer* provides the opportunity to zoom into selected activity profiles and to highlight the information underlying of up to three institutional profiles simultaneously.

Methodology

U-Map uses a methodology piloted extensively to test the indicators in practice and to incorporate informed comment from potential users. U-Map's activity profiles are based on data submitted by the institutions themselves.

The main data-gathering instrument is the on-line U-Map questionnaire for higher education institutions. The questionnaire is organized around seven sections:

1) General information;
2) Students;
3) Graduates;
4) Staff;
5) Income;
6) Expenditure;
7) Research and Knowledge Exchange.

An online Glossary and Help Desk are provided to facilitate consistent and comparable data-collection across institutional and national settings.

U-Map offers the option to have the questionnaire partly pre-filled using existing data from national databases provided by statistical agencies, rectors' conferences or ministries of education. This can reduce institutional data collection burdens and provides standard data definitions.

Institutional data is validated by the U-Map project team in consultation with individual institutions and, where possible, comparing data with existing national and international databases.

The data are used to calculate indicator scores. The scores are grouped into four groups for each indicator (using quartile scores as criteria).

U-Map is a flexible tool continually being improved in a dynamic environment. Indicators, data elements and underlying definitions are held under constant review. User suggestions are collected and improvement options are studied and discussed. This process results in adaptations in the U-Map tool (every four or five years). Notwithstanding this dynamic evolution, U-Map remains consistent to its founding principles.

U-Map dimensions and its indicators

Teaching and learning profile	Student profile	Research involvement
Degree level focus	Mature students	Peer reviewed academic publications
Range of subjects	Part time students	Professional publications
Orientation of degrees	Distance learning students	Other research output
Expenditure on teaching	Size of student body	Doctorate production
		Expenditure on research
Involvement in knowledge exchange	**International orientation**	**Regional engagement**
Start-up firms	Foreign degree seeking students	Graduates working in the region
Patent applications filed	Incoming students in exchange programmes	New entrants from the region
Cultural activities	Students sent out in exchange programmes	Importance of local/regional income sources
Income from knowledge exchange activities	International academic staff	
	Importance of international income sources	

The project on developing a European university profiling tool has been undertaken by the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS), University of Twente, the Netherlands in partnership wit several other organisations.

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