

# Old Tools and New Challenges in Higher Education

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**FIGURE 1**  
Tentative assessment of coverage of "new" policy issues in information tools.  
Note: size of the circle indicates relative coverage.

In the last years, "new" policy issues, such as sustainability, have emerged, and old ones, such as social inclusion or study success, have resurfaced on the political and public agendas, being higher education institutions (HEIs) expected to respond to these "new" challenges. One of the biggest developments driving these challenges was the rise of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). But how are HE systems and institutions, namely in Europe and Asia, looking at these 'new' policy issues and assessing them? The article delves into this issue, exploring the use of two of the most well-known tools or mechanisms for measuring performance in both the European and Asian settings: quality assurance systems (QAS) and rankings.

A tentative assessment of coverage of "new" policy issues by these information tools can be seen in Figure 1. QAS was subdivided into external and internal – EQA and IQA. Four rankings were looked at: Times Higher Education – THE, Shanghai Academic Rankings of World Universities – ARWU, QS World University Ranking – QS, and U-Multirank – UMR.

This article concludes that the role of the "new" policy issues in the assessment of institutional performance and quality is still very limited. Both in Asia and Europe, the development of valid, reliable, and feasible metrics to capture those "new" missions, is still at an early stage, which makes it unlikely that "new" missions will be introduced in the QA standards. The need for contextualization makes it even more unlikely. That context refers not only to regional, national, and cultural differences, but also to the mission profile chosen by each HEI.

Developing indicators that may be used for accountability purposes or improvement purposes is a major challenge that lies ahead. Facilitating the exchange of ideas, experiences, and knowledge on how to measure performance on the "new" policy issues and on how to use that information in any of the rationale settings seems to be a promising way forward to get the "new" policy issues embedded in these tools.

	EQA	IQA	THE	ARWU	QS	UMR
study success	●	●	●			●
social inclusion	●	●	●		●	●
sustainability	●	●	●		●	