



Knowledge exchange framework to band universities by performance

Ministerial letter suggests ratings system similar to teaching excellence framework

December 1, 2017

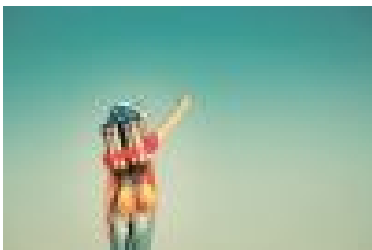




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English universities will be banded by performance in the planned knowledge exchange framework (<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/englands-kef-will-it-be-patent-counting-extra-reporting-burden>), similar to the teaching excellence framework, it has been confirmed.

Up until this point, very little has been said as to how the new framework – first announced (<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/jo-johnson-plans-kef-measure-knowledge-exchange>) by universities minister Jo Johnson on 12 October – will come to be used as a method for measuring English universities on their commercial successes and wider community impact.



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Addressing a letter to David Sweeney (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/News/2017/jo_johnson_to_david_sweeney_24-11-17.pdf), director of research and knowledge exchange at the Higher Education Funding Council for England, Mr Johnson said that the KEF should create a “constructive competitive dynamic”, as well as increase universities’ responsiveness and hold them accountable for how public funding is spent.

The minister has commissioned Hefce to prepare implementation of the policy, which will be managed by Research England from April 2018.

“The KEF should...enable universities to benchmark and develop their own performance. And it will ensure that KE [knowledge exchange] funding, including increased levels of Higher Education Innovation Funding, is allocated effectively,” the letter states, asking Dr Sweeney, executive chair (designate) of Research England, to “consult with the sector” and advise on its development.

The letter is also the first time that the idea of “banding” institutions “in a benchmarked manner” has been introduced in relation to the KEF. Universities will therefore be grouped into clusters for comparison, making it easier to determine which institutions are underperforming in line with their peers.

The letter suggests data that could be drawn on for the KEF, including the Higher Education Business-Community Interaction Survey, and other collections held by the Higher Education Statistics Agency and UK Research & Innovation.

Hefce is to “consider whether additional metrics can be devised and collected to provide a more comprehensive view of the effectiveness of universities’ external engagement, whilst having regard to the burden and cost of collection”, the letter says.

The technical group, chaired by University of Sheffield (<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/university-sheffield>) professor Richard Jones, will advise Hefce and later Research England on the design and delivery of the new KEF metrics system.

The funding body has opened a call for evidence (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2017/Name,116323,en.html>) from university leaders until the end of January, before a consultation takes place in spring 2018.

Welcoming the announcement, Jessica Cole, head of policy at the Russell Group, said: “Establishing an accurate framework will be a complex process, but if KEF is to be genuinely useful for universities and their partners it is important that we get this right.”

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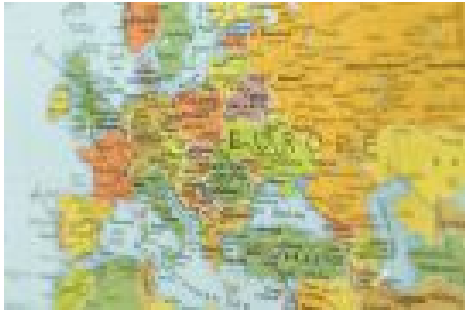
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