



Observatory on Academic  
Ranking and Excellence

## The IREG Ranking Audit - Purpose, Procedures and Criteria



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## The purpose of the audit

### Background:

- Growing numbers of national and international
- Increasing relevance/impact of rankings
- Yet many users do not have a deep understanding of rankings and their methodologies

### Purpose:

- Enhance the transparency about rankings
- Give users of rankings a tool to identify trustworthy rankings
- Improve the quality of rankings

# The Audit: Principles and actors



## General principles:

- Overall responsibility lies with IREG Executive Committee
- Procedures should guarantee maximum transparency and impartiality
- Procedures follow good practices developed in quality assurance systems (accreditation)
- Audit of individual rankings, not of ranking organisations

# Actors and Responsibilities



## Executive Committee

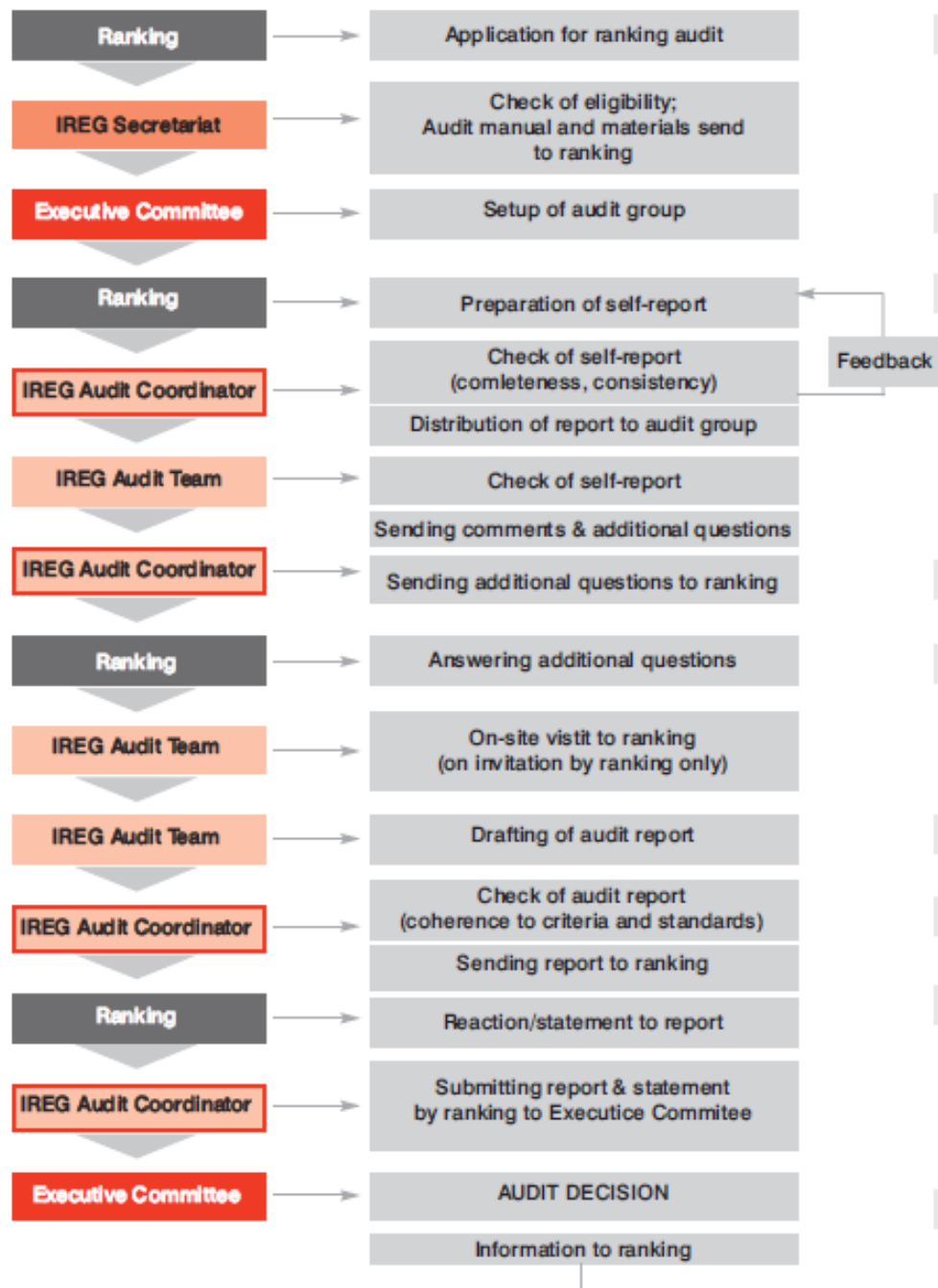
- Decision about eligibility/start of audit (on application by ranking)
- Audit decision

## Audit teams

- Roster of auditors (will be published on IREG website)
- No rankers among auditors !
- Balance by professional background, field of expertise, regions
- Audit report

## Audit coordinator

- Coordination of audits
- Consistency of audits & decisions



# The Audit Process



## Self-report

- Based on a pre-defined structure

## Review by audit team

- Side visit only on invitation by ranking organisation
- Additional questions to ranking organisation
- Draft report; checked by audit coordinator
- Statement by ranking organisation on draft
- Decision by Executive Committee
- Rules to manage disputes and appeals

# The Criteria

20 criteria on 5 dimensions:

I. Purpose, target groups, basic approach

II. Methodology

III. Publication and presentation of results

IV. Transparency, responsiveness

V. Quality assurance

- 10 core criteria with double weight, 10 standard criteria

# 1. Purpose, target groups, basic approach



	Criterion	Weight
1	The purpose of the ranking and the (main) target groups should be made explicit:	<b>2</b>
2	Rankings should recognize the diversity of institutions	<b>2</b>
3	Rankings should specify the linguistic, cultural, economic, and historical contexts of the educational systems being ranked.	<b>1</b>



## 2. Methodology



4	Rankings should choose indicators according to their relevance and validity.	2
5	The concept of quality of higher education institutions is multidimensional and multi-perspective (...). Good ranking practice would be to combine the different perspectives	1
6	Rankings should measure outcomes in preference to inputs whenever possible	1
7	Rankings have to be transparent regarding the methodology used for creating the rankings.	2
8	If ranking are using <i>composite indicators</i> the weights of the individual indicators have to be published. Changes in weights over time should be limited and due to methodological or conceptual considerations:	2
9	Data used in the ranking must be obtained from authorized, audited and verifiable data sources and/or collected with proper procedures for professional data collection	2
10	The basic methodology should be kept stable as much as possible.	1

### 3. Publication of Results



11	The publication of a ranking has to be made available to users throughout the year either by print publications and/or by an online version of the ranking	<b>1</b>
12	The publication has to deliver a description of the methods and indicators used in the ranking.	<b>1</b>
13	The publication of the ranking must provide scores of each individual indicator used to calculate a composite indicator in order to allow users to verify the calculation of ranking results.	<b>2</b>
14	Rankings should allow users to have some opportunity to make their own decisions about the relevance and weights of indicators	<b>1</b>

## 4. Transparency, Responsiveness



15	Rankings should be compiled in a way that eliminates or reduces errors	<b>1</b>
16	Rankings have to be responsive to higher education institutions included/ participating in the ranking	<b>2</b>
17	Rankings have to provide a contact address in their publication (print, online version)	<b>1</b>

## 5. Quality Assurance



18	Rankings have to apply measures of quality assurance to ranking processes themselves.	<b>2</b>
19	Rankings have to document the internal processes of quality assurance	<b>1</b>
20	Rankings should apply organisational measures that enhance the credibility of rankings	<b>2</b>

# The Assessment of criteria



- Each criteria is assessed on a 6 point scale:

Not sufficient	1
Marginally applied	2
Adequate	3
Good	4
Strong	5
Distinguished	6

- Maximum total score: 180 ( $10 \times 2 \times 6$ ,  $10 \times 6$ )
- Threshold for positive audit: 60% (=108 points)
- None of the core criteria must be assessed below 3
- Publication of audit decision and summary report
- No ranking of rankings → No publication of scores

# Outlook



- First two audits are going to start now
- Process open to other volunteers
- Pressure on rankings „to have it“?
- Evaluation of process after 4-5 audits



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