

Third Forum “Academic Performance and International Comparisons”

The new role for science

São Paulo, 15th to 18th of June 2020

Summary of conclusions

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The Third Forum “Academic Performance and International Comparisons” established an enabling environment for **dialogue and collaboration** on the academic performance of universities, funding agencies, NGOs, governments, companies and society in confronting the crises of 2020. The event discussed proposals to revisit the indicators in use, and formulate new indicators relating to social, economic and environmental impact.

Crises raise risk awareness and also the cost of inaction in the education of new generations, offering opportunities for the construction of a better future. Crises develop new abilities in governance that value cooperation.

All areas of knowledge have a contribution to make in identifying and mitigating the effects of the health, economic, social and political crises. Beyond healthcare, universities have used their capabilities to respond to urgent societal demands.

Research in the new emerging era:

1. Science that is responsive to societal problems must adopt a **strategic outlook** underpinned by basic research. Engagement with **local needs**, presence in national and international research networks show the **relevance of science and innovation**.
2. The **multidisciplinary mobilisation** of research and outreach has shown the best way to **respond to the crises of 2020 and other sustainable development challenges**. Contributions to mitigate economic and social effects are vital to maintain the leadership and public financing of science.
3. The search for **complementary financial resources to respond to the health crisis** led universities to develop new capabilities. Among them, the social sciences have proven extremely valuable in the mapping of vulnerabilities for the allocation of vital resources.
4. **The financial crisis will have a heavy impact on science**, and years of scarcity lie ahead. In this context, the advance of science depends on multidisciplinary groups with the ability to confront complex problems, internationally connected, oriented by the valuing of human dignity and the resolution of the problems that humanity faces.

Higher education in the crises of 2020:

5. During the health crisis, the **transition to remote learning** will lead to the adoption of a **hybrid model**, focused on the student, and that takes into account the needs and digital access of the whole university community.
6. In this inclusive hybrid model, **presence in a university campus** is essential for the construction of values and critical thinking, as well as a collective search for new knowledge, **for the conception of a meaningful life project**.
7. The education of new generations should prioritise **T competences**, with specialisation and a broad vision that increases citizens' capacity to participate in new fields. This is required to confront **complex** challenges, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, which do not conform to institutional barriers.
8. **Science and innovation**, in gaining greater leadership, have a determining role in the **evolution of mentalities and values**. These values include a desire to serve, respect for life, solidarity and a sense of public duty. These are the values that bond the university community in the face of an unpredictable future.

Strategy and university governance:

9. In the new era that is emerging, **unpredictability** induces universities to adopt **light and agile structures with well-defined responsibilities**, in the spheres of teaching, research, innovation, outreach and culture, as well as in the processes of university governance.
10. The reduction of physical mobility has led to an **increase in the use of information communication technologies**. The redesign of laboratories and meeting spaces should be prioritised to reduce the impact of physical barriers, ensuring hygiene safety.
11. Universities reveal their **capacity to reorganise** in the crisis. This **readiness deserves to be scrutinized through an indicator**, given that these institutions are often perceived to be rigid, resistant to change and inward facing.
12. The dual responsibility to recognise the real effects of **use of indicators** and **respecting diversity** between areas of knowledge requires a culture of responsible indicator use. The Leiden Manifesto, and the San Francisco Declaration, among others, advise each university to define their own system of indicators.