Ranking Universidades Españolas

2026 / 14th edition

Synthetic Indicators of Spanish Universities

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Fundación BBVA

Ivie 35 años

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The U-Ranking project, developed by the Ivie (The Valencian Institute of Economic Research) and the BBVA Foundation, is an essential part of a program of activities carried out by both institutions to document and analyze the role of knowledge in social and economic development. This report presents the basic products of the project, U-Ranking and U-Ranking Volume, including the methodology and results for 2026 (14th edition).

The approach of U-Ranking, the selection of variables on which the rankings compiled are based and the methodology used when treating the data have been thoroughly discussed by the Ivie team with a large group of experts on the assessment of universities, university information and management. We would like to thank these specialists from fourteen universities for their invaluable collaboration.

We would also like to acknowledge the support of the Valencian public universities in the initial stages of the project and the suggestions made by members of different Spanish universities since the presentation of the first results in June 2013, which have been followed with interest by many people. During the past year, the U-Ranking website has received close to 100,000 visits and more than 68,000 queries have been made to the results of the rankings. The project is also attracting international interest: 21% of the visits to the website come from outside of Spain, the majority from Latin America and the United States which jointly represent 16% of total foreign visits. Visits from major European countries such as France, Italy, United Kingdom, Germany, Portugal and The Netherlands also have significant percentages. These data provide a stimulus to maintain the continuity of the project while making improvements.

We would like to give special thanks to the IUNE Observatory[1] for their collaboration with research and innovation and technological development data, as well as participating in meetings on the availability and suitability of various sources and the problems of their treatment. In this regard, the IUNE Observatory, and specially the INAECU team, directed for many years by Professor Elías Sanz-Casado and currently by Professor Flor Sánchez Fernández, have provided complete Bibliometric data on all the Spanish universities (based on information provided by Clarivate),

[1] The IUNE Observatory is the result of work carried out by a group of researchers from the universities that make up the "Alianza 4U" (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and Universitat Pompeu Fabra). The general coordinator of IUNE is Elías Sanz-Casado, professor at the Department of Librarianship and Documentation of the Carlos III University Carlos III in Madrid and director of INAECU (Research Institute for Higher Education and Science).

from which many of the indicators relating to research have been calculated.

Also, the U-Ranking team acknowledges the cooperation of the General Secretariat of Universities and, in particular, the General Sub-Directorate of University Research Activity of the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, whom, for another consecutive year, has provided us access to the Integrated System of University Information (SIIU). In addition, this Ministry, through the State Bureau of Investigation, provided information on the research resources available to universities. The collaboration of all these institutions offers proof of their commitment to transparency and accountability, which are key elements for the university sector to be a socially profitable investment. It also allows the ranking to be independent from the information provided by the university institutions that appear in it, thus favoring independence with respect to them.

The Ivie also acknowledges the important contributions made by the following people in developing the methodology of the project: Antonio Villar (Universidad Pablo Olavide and Ivie Research Professor), Antonio Ariño (Universitat de València), Álvaro Berenguer (Universidad de Alicante), Gualberto Buela-Casal (Universidad de Granada), José Miguel Carot (Universitat Politècnica de València), Fernando Casani (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid), Daniela De Filippo (Universidad Carlos III), M.ª Ángeles Fernández (Universitat Jaume I), José M.ª Gómez Sancho (Universidad de Zaragoza), Juan Hernández Armenteros (Universidad de Jaén), Joan Oltra (Universitat de València), Carmen Pérez Esparrells (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid), José Antonio Pérez (Universitat Politècnica de València), Fernando Vidal (Universidad Miguel Hernández) and Carlos García Zorita (Universidad Carlos III). Thanks are also owed to the group of Ivie researchers and economists who have taken active part in the successive methodological adaptations that are a natural feature of any long-running project such as U-Ranking and the revision of the documents: José Manuel Pastor, Abel Fernández and Iván Vicente. The team also counted on the valuable support of other Ivie members. The U-Ranking team would like to thank all of them for their dedication and professionalism.

The results of the U-Ranking project are, therefore, the results of the collaboration of many people and institutions that share the same interest in analyzing the performance of Spanish universities and facilitating comparable and synthetic images of them. With this 14th edition, which reinforces important improvements in methodology and data used, included in the 2025 edition, we celebrate the continuity of this project, that allows to improve and offer results that are more and more reliable as the data and basic indicators become more refined.

In this regard, it is also important to highlight that one of the advantages of the U-Ranking project approach is that it pays special attention to the wide range of activities that universities carry out, such as teaching, research and innovation, and now that the information available allows, to take into account university outcomes in terms of labor market insertion of its graduates. It also enables the analysis of the system from two complementary perspectives: productivity and output volume, both of which are relevant depending on the user's objectives. This diversity of perspectives enriches the assessment of university results and shows the unavoidable limitations of partial views, because the institutions analyzed have different levels of performance in the various areas. Due to this situation, it is important that the range of results offered be as wide and complete as possible and based on reliable indicators.

The authors of the report are grateful to the BBVA Foundation and the Ivie for their long-standing support and, in any case, assume sole responsibility for the selection and development of the indicators presented and the resulting conclusions.

Introduction

01

This report presents the results of the research undertaken by the Ivie, within the framework of the program developed jointly with the BBVA Foundation to develop the 14th edition of U-Ranking, corresponding to 2026. The study analyzes the teaching, research and innovation activities of the universities and, labor market insertion outcomes which was included as a novelty in the previous edition.

The 23 indicators chosen for the data bank of the project provide the basis for compiling different rankings of Spanish universities. The first of these rankings is denominated **U-Ranking** and analyzes the performance of the University System, synthesizing the universities' achievements in teaching, research and innovation, and labor market insertion, regardless of their size.

The fact that a smaller university achieves good results is relevant, but we should not ignore that their impact of these results on their environment may be far smaller than a large university with less outstanding results. For example, a university with 100 faculty members that produces 100 patents is more productive than if one with 1,000 members produces 500 patents. However, 500 patents will have more impact on the economy than 100. For this reason, we provide a second global ranking, the **U-Ranking Volume**, which considers the combined effect of both variables, results and size, and classifies the universities according to their total contribution to the universities' missions.

In addition to these two general rankings, we construct other more specific ones: **U-Ranking Dimensions**, focused on the classification of universities in the three dimensions that make up the mission of the universities (teaching, research and innovation and, labor insertion). The analysis of these dimensions is conducted from two complementary perspectives: productivity and output volume.

Since the thirteenth edition (2025), U-Ranking and U-Ranking dimensions are also offered by areas of study (U-Ranking Areas of Study). This new feature is important because it enhances the analytical capacity available to interested audiences, many of whom often focus their attention on certain areas of study, for example, when assessing alternative degree programs within a specific area, whether by prospective students, their families, or academic advisers. In such cases, it is important to consider, for instance, that a university's strong teaching performance may be consistent across all areas or concentrated in only in a few where efforts have been primarily focused. The breakdown of the rankings presented by areas of study in this edition enables a more detailed analysis.

Also, **U-Ranking Degrees** ranks on its website the degrees offered by the different universities, providing useful information to potential students for their decision making in the choice of a University.

All of these rankings are approximations of university results, allowing them to be compared

from different perspectives. Through such comparisons, synthetic indicators assess their performance by answering relevant questions, such as the following:

- Which Spanish universities are the most productive or efficient? Which achieve the greatest volume of results? Do the universities at the top of these rankings coincide and do larger universities operate more effectively?
- Do the positions of Spanish universities in international rankings meet the criteria in terms of volume of activity or in terms of output? Are the positions of Spanish universities in the U-Rankings in line with the best-known international rankings such as that of Shanghai, QS or THE[2]?
- Do universities with the best research and innovation results stand out for their teaching results? Are both results correlated? Is there a relationship between those dimensions and labor market insertion?
- Are the general rankings on university activities as a whole similar to those obtained when comparing specific qualifications? Is the internal heterogeneity of universities high?

The answers to these questions can be of great interest in order to obtain a complete view of the Spanish University System. This is the only way to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the universities that form part of it, from a comparative perspective, and to classify them according to their position within the system from different relevant perspectives. That is basically the purpose of this project and also of this report, as noted in other studies carried out by the Ivie and the BBVA Foundation (Pérez y Serrano [Dirs.] 2012; Aldás [Dir.] 2016; Pérez [Dirs.] 2018; Escribá, Iborra and Safón 2019; Pérez, Aldás y Peiró [Dirs.] 2021), the Spanish University System is far from being homogenous and stable. Not acknowledging its heterogeneity and its changes makes its evaluation difficult. Despite the fact that this assessment requires that the different specialization and changing characteristics of each university be taken into account, their real possibility of competing in different areas of its activity, both in teaching and research, and their improvements.

Rankings as synthetic indicators of results

The performance of Spanish universities receives constant attention, and debates about the exploitation of the resources used and their results are increasingly frequent. This debate becomes even more common at times like now, in which Spain's new Organic Law for Universities (no. 2/2023) has introduced significant changes in the regulation of the university system. The driving force behind this interest is the significant number of resources currently dedicated to these activities and the recognition of the important role universities play in generating and in the transmission of knowledge, two key areas in the social and economic development of countries today and in human capital development.

In Spain, discussions about university results frequently focus on public universities, for two main reasons: the volume of their activity accounts for most of the Spanish University System, and the origin of the majority of the resources used is public; the assessment of their results is therefore considered to be of general interest. There is also a more practical reason. In Spain, traditionally, it has been more feasible to assess the resources and results of public universities based on relatively homogeneous data, because until recently most of the already numerous private universities (currently, 45 active centers) did not provide the necessary data to carry out analyses.

[2] Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) (CWCU 2026), QS World University Rankings (QS 2026b) and Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE 2026).

However, the participation of private universities is gaining importance and their presence in the public statistics and information systems is increasing. Therefore, a project such as U-Ranking, which aims to provide an overall view of the Spanish University System, should accept the challenge of including these institutions, as it has been doing recently. Thus, recent editions of U-Ranking have included in the ranking system private universities that provided sufficient information of adequate quality, so that the data is homogeneous with that of public universities in order to construct synthetic indicators.

The information provided by U-Ranking is particularly relevant at a time when the Government of Spain has recently reviewed the criteria for the creation, recognition, and authorization of universities (amendment to Royal Decree 640/2021 formalized in the Royal Decree 905/2025), citing, among other arguments, the limited development of research and knowledge transfer activities in private universities. When faced with such crucial issues in university policy, it is essential to have objective information that allows for an informed assessment on the appropriateness of these decisions.

The 14th edition of U-Ranking considers 23 of the 45 private Spanish universities that have been active during the 2026-26 academic year. All of those included have information on at least 20 out of 23 indicators used to calculate the synthetic index. To evaluate teaching activities, eight out of ten indicators are required; the same standard applies to research and innovation. Meanwhile, to assess labor market outcomes, at least two out of the three indicators must be available. The published rankings include a list of private universities that are not included because of lack of comparable information. This means the reader has an enhanced overview of the system as a whole and will appreciate that if certain universities are not ranked, it is because they do not provide enough available information. If they were included, they would appear below or above other universities in the ranking, that offer more transparency by disclosing information to the ranking system.

Assessments to measure university results in many countries, as well as in Spain, are increasingly using rankings to classify institutions from different perspectives and with different criteria. Some international university rankings have found their place in debates about the quality of these institutions, becoming widely used references to assess the position of universities and national University systems. Thus, for example, the presence of 10 Spanish universities (11% of the total 95 public and private Spanish universities currently with activity[3]) among the first 500 institutions of the world according to the Shanghai Ranking, is a fact often mentioned as proof of the limited quality and insufficient international projection of our university system. However, assessing this issue has multiple facets Pérez, Aldás y Peiró [dirs.] et al. 2021). In this sense, the information used by U-Ranking to construct its national rankings is more complete and homogeneous than the data used by any of the best-known international rankings.

Researchers, public and private institutions, university associations, along with companies in information and media are increasingly taking more initiatives to compile rankings. The objectives and interests of such initiatives and their scope are diverse, both in terms of university activities studied (many rankings focus on research), as well as in terms of coverage (national and international), the data used and its treatment. Some of these rankings are carried out by firms or institutions with criteria that do not exclude the participation of the institutions evaluated in the process, nor the financing of these through the channels by which the ranking is disseminated.

[3] Of these, 92 had students enrolled in the 2024–25 academic year.

Some recent reports (Rauhvargers 2011, 2013) stressed the importance of carefully assessing the criteria with which the rankings are compiled when demonstrating their significance and interpreting results. Accordingly, IREG Observatory published in 2019 the *Guidelines for Stakeholders of Academic Rankings* that provides recommendations to help stakeholders (students, families, higher education institutions, policymakers, etc.) interpret and use rankings appropriately (IREG 2019).

Indeed, the rankings are a particular way to assess university results, and their appeal lies in the fact that they offer concise information. This facilitates comparisons while making them sensitive to the criteria and procedures followed when constructing indicators. It is for this reason that the value given to the rankings should not be separated from how they are compiled, nor from the metric used or the objectives of their authors. In this sense, it is important to emphasize that U-Ranking is a project with a transparent methodology, using data from external sources, mostly official ones, and non-profit institutions.

Among the most recent warnings about the inappropriate use of rankings is the recommendation not to use the rankings provided by universities in terms of research to evaluate the individual research results of their members (commitment no. 4 of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment-COARA, July 2022).

These precautions are not always present when presenting the results or when using rankings. On the one hand, the reputation of a good position in a ranking turns them into an intangible asset to universities. Therefore, increasingly more universities develop strategies to convey information about themselves (signaling) by advertising their more favorable results, and also to improve their positioning in the rankings. Certainly, the expected return of a good position in a ranking is significant, given that it can affect areas as diverse as recruiting students, attracting researchers, obtaining resources and the social projection of institutions.

On the other hand, the growing interest in these classifications is because they are perceived as useful tools (despite being imprecise) for various purposes and different stakeholder groups in universities as they:

a) Provide the members of each university with external references on their strengths and weaknesses, contributing to the perception of their position.

b) Offer the users of university services easy to interpret information in terms of attractiveness or quality of institutions.

c) Provide comparative information to governments, with the possibility of being used to assign resources to the university systems or universities or for the accountability of universities to society.

d) Complement the work of university quality assurance agencies and provide information to analysts interested in having homogenized indicators available.

Approach of the project

In Spain different university rankings are being regularly presented, compiled with diverse perspectives and methodologies. What sets this project apart is that its rankings (U-Ranking, U-Ranking Volume, U-Ranking Dimensions, U-Ranking Areas of Study, U-Ranking Degrees) are developed according to criteria that respond to international recommendations. One of them is that indicators should be created with the objective of studying university activities from a comprehensive approach, i.e. examining teaching, research, innovation and technological development activities, and, from this year's edition, the labor market insertion of graduates. Another important feature is that it offers rankings by degrees (U-Ranking Degrees), giving guidance to students when choosing what to study.

The criteria used in developing U-Ranking that should be noted are:

- Offering multiple university rankings, in which university activities are examined from a general perspective, as well as in specific fields (teaching, research and innovation, or labor insertion), but also in terms of the performance achieved (U-Ranking) or the total output (U-Ranking Volume) of each university. In addition, these rankings are provided for the five areas of study: arts and humanities, social and legal sciences, sciences, engineering and architecture, and health sciences.

- Taking into account the various perspectives and interests that potential users of the data have when using the rankings. In particular, special attention is paid to the importance that many people give to specific areas of activity, such as degrees, when comparing universities. To deal with this concern, a web tool has been developed which creates personalized rankings in terms of bachelor's degrees (U-Ranking Degrees). It has been designed to guide students, families and counselors when choosing a university in which to study. The advantage of recognizing that users have different preferences is that the following problem can be avoided when constructing synthetic indicators: their excessive dependence on experts' opinions (subjective and sometimes contentious) regarding the weights that should be attributed to teaching or research. This perspective is also taken into account in the personalized rankings, allowing the user to give different weights to teaching and research and innovation according to their preferences and different from the general weights used to create U-Ranking.

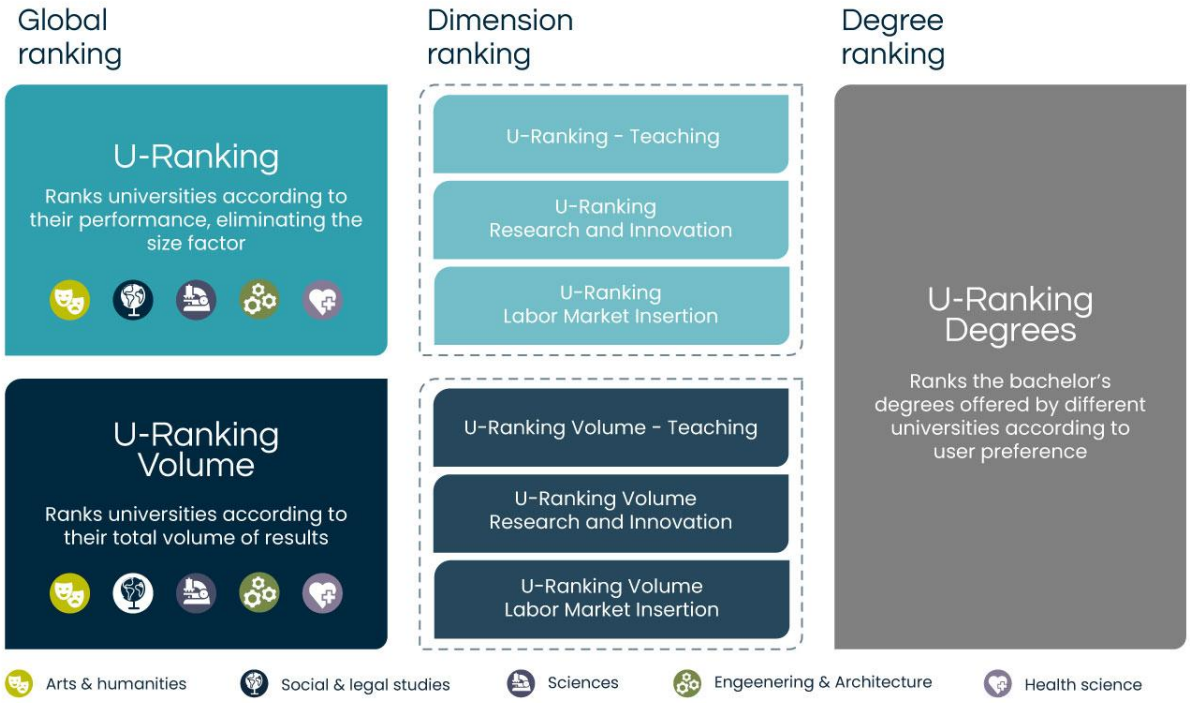
The project therefore offers two different products:

- A collection of general rankings on Spanish universities, based on the criteria of the project's team and the experts consulted, allowing each institution to be compared with others from different points of view: results (U-Ranking), volume of results (U-Ranking Volume) and areas of specialization in teaching, research and labor market insertion (U-Ranking Dimensions) and areas of study (U-Ranking Areas of Study).

- A web tool that provides personalized rankings for different bachelor's degrees, grouped according to area of study and which allows to compare the degrees offered by the universities taking into account the interests and criteria of each user (mainly students enrolling in universities, their parents or school counselors) on their choice of studies, the regions considered when choosing where to study and the importance given to teaching, research and innovation and labor market insertion results: U-Ranking Degrees.

Figure 1.1 summarizes the different rankings offered by U-Ranking.

Figure 1.1. **Rankings included in the U-Ranking Project**



It is important to point out that all the rankings have a standard information base: the data corresponds to the same set of variables, and the methodology followed in the treatment and aggregation of the variables is also the same. The differences between the various rankings come from the levels of disaggregation of the variables (university, area of study, or family of degrees) and from the choices the users make to construct their personalized rankings. The adequacy of the information used is fundamental for the construction of the indicators offered.

The project U-Ranking relies on the valuable collaboration with the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, allowing access to the Integrated System of University Information (SIIU). The SIIU is a web-based platform that collects, processes, analyzes and disseminates data of the Spanish University System providing, thanks to its continuous development, homogeneous and comparable statistical information of the Spanish universities. Through the SIIU, the Spanish Ministry aims to make the university system more transparent, so that citizens and researchers alike can analyze it, draw their own conclusions and generate proposals for improvement. Thus, the SIIU is a tremendously valuable project, which is a result of the commitment on behalf of the majority of universities and public administrations that allows society to know the reality and performance of the university system, a system that is key for economic and social development and in which a large number of resources are allocated.

This platform provides information on the degrees offered by each university, in which schools they are taught, students in each degree and full-time equivalent teaching staff. Also, it includes information on students in international mobility programs, as well as by degree on success, performance and drop-out rates, percentage of foreign students in each degree, affiliation rates, average contribution base, or the percentage of graduates employed in positions that match their level of education. Since new information is continuously being added and updated in the SIIU, U-Ranking can rely on this source to access other indicators that can be expected to become more accurate over time. No changes have been introduced to the indicators that make up U-Ranking in this 14th edition. The system therefore retains the structure adopted in the previous edition, in

which a significant review was undertaken as part of the ongoing improvement of the information available through SIIU. Among the main changes introduced in 2025 were the incorporation of three indicators to assess graduate employment outcomes, the expansion of the patents indicator to include international patents, the replacement of several teaching-quality indicators with more suitable measures for comparing public and private universities, and the reorganization of research and innovation resources into a single composite indicator. These adjustments improved the ranking's ability to reflect more accurately the current realities of the Spanish university system. From a methodological standpoint, the key focus of the 2026 edition is to examine whether the changes introduced result in a ranking that is sufficiently responsive to annual developments while maintaining the stability expected in a system that has undergone no major structural transformation.

One of U-Ranking's main objectives is to provide the most useful and detailed information as possible for different groups of people which are potential users. Consequently, the project includes additional information to the rankings, both in the ranking of universities and in the ranking by degree:

a) Results of each university:

A university ranking allows to observe the relative position of one institution with respect to others. But it is not easy for university managers or researchers to analyze in depth the performance of a specific university, to assess the aspects in which it stands out or its distance from the average of the system or from a certain university, or a group of universities that are taken as a reference. For this reason, the website https://u-ranking.es, includes the section **Data by University** in which the user can consult the data and ranking results for each university. With this dynamic tool, the user can compare different universities, both for groups of universities (Spanish university system, public or private ownership, or by region), as well as individual universities. Proof of the interest and usefulness of this section are the 60,000 queries made in the last edition.

For each university, the U-Ranking and U-Ranking Volume (global and dimensions) indexes obtained in this edition are offered, in relation to the average of the chosen comparison group. The panel also shows a **panel of indicators** for each university, which is a file containing the values for each of the 23 indicators that make up the synthetic index and are compared with the mean value of the universities so that managers can observe the relative distance with the reference group or with other universities. The indicator value is normalized to 100, with the highest-scoring university receiving a value of 100, and the remaining universities receiving values between 99 and 0 based on their distance from the maximum score. In this way, it facilitates the comparison between very different indicators and it offers a general profile of each university.

The panel of indicators also contains the position obtained in U-Ranking and U-Ranking Volume in the last six editions. Other basic data on the university is provided, such as year of foundation, type of ownership, student body, faculty and number of degrees.

The information provided is completed with the results of specific analyses carried out in recent editions. Thus, for example, it includes the labor market insertion indicators published by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities on the situation in 2024 of those graduates who obtained their bachelor's degree four years earlier. The indicators from 2018 served as the basis to prepare a ranking on the employability of universities in the 2020 edition (Pérez and Aldás [dirs.] 2023). Data from the INE's Graduate Employment Survey (*Encuesta de Inserción Laboral de los Universitarios*, EILU) was used to update and improve the 2023 edition of this study (Pérez and Aldás [dirs.] 2023). In this edition, as detailed in the following section, the two tools available on the U-Ranking website for exploring employment outcomes by areas of study and by university have been updated.

In 2026 (Pérez and Aldás [eds.] 2026), U-Ranking explores in greater depth the internationalization of the Spanish University System in a separate report from the one currently in the reader's

hands. Internationalization is a key dimension within U-Ranking, as the rankings produced by the project include specific indicators designed to measure performance in this area.

Also included in the section on data by university are the results on the renewal of degree offerings in the last decade, which were analyzed in the 2021 edition (Pérez and Aldás [dirs.] 2021).

b) Personalized university rankings by degree:

The Choose a University tool allows to create customized rankings with nearly 3,600 degrees based on the user's preferences. In addition, along with the ranking results, it offers information on tuition costs, cut-off marks of the 2025-26 academic course and the most recent results on labor market insertion for each degree program obtained from the Spanish Social Security System (Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities 2026a).

c) Job placement ranking by field of study and database

U-Ranking website now includes a section on labor market insertion that offers students, families and guidance counselors information on the employability of university students in the different fields of study.

The 14th edition of U-Ranking has updated the two tools for monitoring and evaluating the labor market insertion of university graduates in Spain: 1) the Labor Insertion Ranking by Area of Study, and 2) the database which provides indicators by university and area of study.

Both tools are based on data provided by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities regarding the Social Security records (2021–2024) of students who graduated in the 2019–2020 academic year.

The Labor Market Insertion Ranking by Study ranks 111 academic fields—encompassing close to 4,400 bachelor's degrees—based on the employment outcomes in 2024 of graduates who completed their studies in 2020 in Spain. A composite index is constructed using data from the Ministry, combining three indicators related to employment probability and job quality:

- Employment rate: Percentage of university graduates residing in Spain who are affiliated with the Social Security system and are employed, relative to the total number of graduates
- Employed as graduates: Percentage of university graduates employed in positions that match their level of education. University level is considered: Social Security contribution groups for professionals with higher education (engineers, graduates, senior management, and technical engineers).
- Average Contribution Base: average annual contribution base for graduates working full-time under an employment contract.

Each of these indicators is standardized concerning the mean value of the 108 fields. The resulting indicators are aggregated using a geometric mean. The weights assigned to the indices equally distribute (1/3) the importance in the synthetic index of access to employment (employment rate), job qualification (employed as graduated), and income (average contribution base).

The platform allows users to view rankings based on the composite index or each individual indicator. Additionally, this edition of U-Ranking updates the interactive tool on graduate employment outcomes by university, covering 126 academic fields. The platform provides, for each university and area of study, the number of graduates and the labor market insertion results in six key indicators over the four years following graduation:

- Employment rate: Percentage of university graduates affiliated with Social Security and employed relative to the total number of graduates
- Employed as graduates: Percentage of university graduates employed in positions that match their level of education. University level is considered: Social Security contribution groups for professionals with higher education

(engineers, graduates, senior management, and technical engineers).
- Average contribution base: Average annual contribution base of graduates working as employees with a full-time contract.
- Full-time contract: Percentage of Social Security affiliates working as employees with a full-time contract
- Indefinite contract: Percentage of university graduates affiliated with Social Security under an indefinite contract.
- Self-employed: Percentage of Social Security affiliates under the self-employed regime.

The tool allows users to filter by field of study (126 options), region (autonomous community), type of ownership (public/private), gender, and time since graduation. Results can be sorted by any of the six indicators.

Easy access to this important information allows future university students and guidance counselors to use through the decision-making process that will lead them to choose or guide them toward a degree in which to pursue their studies.

Structure of the document

Following this introduction, the rest of this document is divided into five chapters, as follows. Chapter 2 describes the methodology used to prepare the rankings. Chapter 3 describes the approach adopted to allow users to personalize the rankings and the online tool constructed for the students. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the main aggregate results. Chapter 5 provides a technical analysis of the results presented in chapter 4. This analysis includes a comparison of productivity results with that of volume; a comparison of the various U-Rankings with the main international reference ranking (Academic Ranking of World Universities [ARWU] CWCU 2026); an assessment of the sensitivity of the results to changes in some of the underlying assumptions; an analysis of heterogeneity within the university system in terms of performance and output across the dimensions of teaching, research, and graduate employability; an evaluation of the differences in performance and output between public and private universities; and, finally, a comparison of the results obtained by the university systems of Spain's autonomous communities. Chapter 6 concludes by summarizing the project's main features and findings.



Methodology

02

The U-Ranking project was born from the desire to closely examine the most important national and international rankings available, so as to identify possible ways of reducing their shortcomings. The most significant problems arising with rankings occur in the following areas: (1) university activities studied, (2) disaggregation by subject or type of studies, (3) data availability and use, (4) methodological rigor in the treatment of data and construction of indicators, (5) recognition of the user's perspective when creating and providing data, (6) user-friendly tools to select their preferences in the rankings, and 7) the impossibility of generating synthetic indexes that adapt to the user, making them create their own ranking directly from the indicators offered, which often are inadequate.

The project addresses all these shortcomings and looks for ways to overcome them. In the first editions of U-Ranking, an extensive chapter was dedicated to the limitations of rankings and the improvements that a new tool like this one should include. The reader can view the corresponding reports —found on the U-Ranking website (https://u-ranking.es)— for a detailed analysis of these aspects, which are summarized in this edition.

The 14th edition follows the same methodology as the previous, which introduced two major innovations:

a) The inclusion of labor market insertion results as a third dimension—alongside teaching and research and innovation—for evaluating the performance of Spanish universities.
b) The publication of independent rankings of universities based on their performance and volume of results in each of the five broad areas of study used to classify degree programs.

The number of indicators used to assess performance is 23, with the addition of three related to employability: access to employment of recent graduates, the percentage of graduates employed in positions that match their level of education, and the average income. Since last year's edition, the patent indicator now includes all the different patents[4] from a university, rather than simply those granted by the Spanish Patent Office. The area of teaching quality is evaluated based on the graduation efficiency rate (graduates who complete their degree within the expected timeframe) and retention rate (students who, upon completing their degree, desire to pursue a master's degree and begin it at the same institution). These two indicators replace two previous

[4] Number of different patent family identifiers.

indicators: cut-off marks and percentage of postgraduate students. In the area of research resources, two indicators—funds obtained from competitive research projects and the amounts received through competitive research staff contracts—are combined into a single indicator. Additionally, a new indicator was added: the percentage of doctoral students over the total number of postgraduate students, now that a robust time series is available.

In summary, the project creates a set of composite indicators that allow for the evaluation and classification of universities based on their overall performance, as well as by three key dimensions: teaching, research and innovation, and labor market insertion. Each of these indicators is also published separately for each of the five areas of study into which university degrees are organized. This chapter describes in full the methodology used to calculate these indices.

2.1. THE DESIGN OF RANKINGS

The development and use of rankings entail certain **risks** that should be forewarned. First of all, it is not wise to base strategies on improving the variables studied, instead of on correcting the underlining problems: the improvement of the institutions should be based on principles of efficiency, and the results are reflected in the indicators. For university administrators, the goal is to generate policies that will make their institutions improve in teaching, research and knowledge transfer, trusting that if a ranking is well designed those improvements will be reflected in the indicators used to prepare the ranking, never seeking to manipulate the indicator in order to improve the ranking.

The opposite approach, i.e. to try to improve the indicators so as to improve an institution's place in the ranking, is not only misguided, but also ineffective. In recent years we have seen examples of this misguided approach, such as the double assignment of the results of highly productive and highly cited researchers to universities in other countries seeking to improve their positions in the rankings, in exchange for financial compensation. Because the methodology used in U-Ranking, is of national scope and double assignments are not possible, is not susceptible to being altered by this type of practice, but still precautions should be taken to prevent the manipulation of the indicators. For this reason, the use of indicators that are not very robust, with values that are highly sensitive to the criteria of measuring the variables and aggregation procedures, and they must adequately reflect, not only what can be measured, but what should be measured. Finally, a very common risk involving rankings is to focus only on the elite (world-class universities) and obliviate the rest. This practice can occasionally lead to an inadequate comparison of institutions that have very different specializations and resources.

Some published rankings show **limitations** that users should be aware of. In the case of universities outside the circle of well-known universities, many rankings are exclusively centered on indicators that focus on research activity and unreliable reputation factors that are sometimes based mainly on surveys[5]. These variables are, however, frequently unreliable when applied to national universities because the survey respondent can evaluate them using a snowball sampling technique, in which some universities notify the faculty members of other universities that they will receive the questionnaire and request an assessment, leaving ample scope for lack of freedom. The exclusive or majority use of these indicators to rank Spanish universities is in many cases inappropriate and risky, leading to wrong conclusions.

In the first three U-Ranking reports, a detailed review of the issues to be considered in the design of a good ranking was carried out and applied to the project. In this report it is not necessary to repeat in detail the aforementioned analysis, but we will summarize some of the aspects considered:

[5] THE which gives 33% of the weight of its indicators to a teaching and research reputation survey and QS which gives 45% to academic reputation and employability surveys.

- The study *Berlin Principles on Ranking of Higher Education Institutions* (IREG 2006, 2019) stresses, among other recommendations, to indicate clearly what the target audience of the ranking is, to be clear when detailing what each indicator measures to be methodologically scrupulous, to focus on the outcomes rather than on the inputs and to maintain a high ethical standard, given the responsibility and impact that rankings have.

- The results of discussions held by the European University Association (Loukkola, Peterbauer y Gover 2020) and the International group of Experts in Rankings (IREG 2006, 2019) highlight the importance of providing a vision of all the institutions, addressing their multidimensional nature and diversity, respecting the user's perspective and maintaining the independence and temporal sustainability of the ranking.

The U-Ranking project expressly includes all the principles which were recently discussed internationally and proposed by the EU. The following sections of this chapter detail the many aspects that have been taken into account during the development of a project that has reached fourteenth editions and has counted on these criteria to introduce improvements over time.

2.2. ACTIVITIES STUDIED

One of the main shortcomings of certain rankings in providing a general assessment of universities, particularly international ones, is that the activities are examined from a very partial perspective. The problem stems from the limited data availability on the results of teaching activities, and innovation and development technology, which are far less abundant than research.

In fact, most important rankings focus on research, taking little account of another significant university function, teaching, while giving only limited consideration to technological development activities, despite their growing importance, and barely considering labor market insertion outcomes. The rankings which are biased toward research are frequently interpreted as representative of university activity as a whole and they may not be. In fact, they are not, as the U-Ranking results show by the limited correlation between researcher and teacher performance.

There are three possible reasons for this: 1) the data available is used and, without a doubt, the abundance, quality and homogeneity of data on research is much greater than in the other two areas; 2) research activity is considered the most important distinctive element of universities in the last two centuries; and 3) the hypothesis holds that the research quality of professors is a proxy variable for other areas, and therefore observing the results in this area is sufficient to predict the others.

The first reason is practical but can induce bias by omission in indicators and rankings. The second needs some clarification in that it is a powerful argument regarding postgraduate studies but less so in relation to the degree, especially in mass university systems, such as those of most developed countries today. In fact, in many of these systems there is a significant concentration of research activity in a small number of universities, while in a large number of institutions there is fundamentally teaching activity. The third reason is a hypothesis, which validity should be tested by developing indicators for all activities and testing whether the correlation between teaching and research results is high. If the validity of this hypothesis is not tested, and given that the intensity of university teaching specialization, research and innovation and technological development varies greatly[6], overlooking the direct indicators of teaching and/or of innovation and technological development and labor market insertion can bias the rankings. In this sense, the experience of U-Ranking shows a low correlation between teaching and research and knowledge transfer, the importance of including teaching and research innovation indicators becomes more relevant. Chapter 4 offers more information.

[6] See Pérez and Serrano (dirs.) (2012, ch. 1 and 4) and Pérez and Aldás (dirs.) (2022, section 4.7).

Therefore, it is important to take advantage of the data available on university activity in the field of teaching, innovation and technological development and labor market insertion, so that the rankings reflect university activity as a whole more accurately. This also allows us to recognize the different specialization profiles of universities, as some focus more on basic research (as occurs in many of those most often included in the world rankings), others on higher education and professional development, and others on applied research, innovation and technological development.

Currently, the public and homogeneous data available on the innovative activity of Spanish universities does not allow a rigorous, independent evaluation of their performance in the area of knowledge transfer with a sufficient basis, as only one suitable indicator is available. For this reason, "Research and Innovation" is considered a single dimension, which includes one of the indicators most commonly associated with innovation: patents.

Studying the different activities of the universities is a first step in the direction of addressing the different perspectives on university systems and the different interests that potential users of rankings may have. Thus, a degree student probably shows greater interest in teaching, while postgraduate students and teachers focus more on aspects related to the quality of research. If the data focuses solely on research results, ignoring the teaching results, then these approaches cannot be carried out accurately.

From last year's edition onward, the ranking also includes the early career employment outcomes of university graduates from each university. This inclusion is based on the understanding that one of the core missions of universities is to train qualified professionals who significantly increase the stock of skilled human capital, help transform the economic fabric and improve productivity. The effectiveness with which universities fulfill this mission is largely reflected in the employment outcomes of their graduates. The better the labor market insertion results, the higher the levels of employability provided by the university to its graduates.

However, it is important to keep in mind that, in addition to the universities' ability to prepare students for the labor market, the socioeconomic context in which universities operate has an impact on employment results. This factor is taken into account when carefully weighing the employability dimension in the overall rankings, in relation to teaching and research.

There are various university rankings that focus on graduate employability, indicating a growing interest among various stakeholders in understanding how universities perform in this regard. The two most recognized international rankings are the QS Graduate Employability Rankings[7] and the Times Higher Education—Global University Employability Ranking (GEURS)[8]. At national level, U-Ranking has conducted several studies on graduate employment outcomes and has published two university employability rankings (Pérez and Aldás [eds.] 2020, 2023, 2024). However, until the 2025 edition, these results had not been integrated into the U-Ranking that evaluates overall university performance.

Thanks to the regular disclosure of data by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, it is now possible to include employability as a reliable ranking feature. As a result, since last year's edition it has been formally included.

Thus, the U-Ranking system is structured in three dimensions that study the two categories of

[7] It combines information from employer surveys and quantitative data on links with companies and graduates. It is based on five key indicators with the following weights: employer reputation (30%), alumni outcomes (25%), partnerships with employers (25%), employer-student connections (10%), and graduate employment rate (10%).

[8] It is compiled through surveys in which employers provide assessments of which universities produce the most employable graduates. The criteria considered by employers in this survey include aspects such as the academic excellence, research output, faculty profile and quality, innovative teaching methodologies, specialized training, university-industry links, adoption of new technologies, and internationalization.

university activities and the direct results of its graduates by analyzing the data available on each of them in Spain. The national scope of the project ensures that reasonably homogeneous data, with great detail, is available with a set of variables representing the activity of Spanish public universities and over half of private universities. In the future, and even though much improvement has been made, it would certainly be desirable to have data available for the rest of the private universities of similar quality and homogeneity as those included in the ranking, which would improve the overall scope of the project. Universities cannot be included in U-Ranking in a partial manner, evaluating only those areas for which there is public information or which the university chooses to publish. Therefore, to evaluate all universities according to the same criteria, U-Ranking only analyzes those institutions that have public or official information on at least 20 of the 23 indicators used to calculate the synthetic index. Eight out of the ten indicators used to evaluate teaching activity are required, as well as eight out of ten indicators in the case of research and innovation. While for labor market insertion, the minimum requirement is to meet two out of the three indicators.

In U-Ranking 2026, the total amount of 71 universities included in the ranking is sufficiently high for the data available to allow a contrast of the hypothesis to which we referred earlier: if research results can predict correctly those of teaching or not. The project has examined this specific methodological objective, with the results presented in chapter 5.

2.3. DISAGGREGATION OF ACTIVITIES

A further shortcoming noticed when analyzing current rankings is that many deal with universities in a unitary manner, not recognizing the diversity of the areas of knowledge in which these institutions can offer professional development or conduct research or innovation. This problem needs little explanation: to be more useful, a ranking has to provide the user with as much information as possible on the specific areas or scientific fields of their choice, since universities may not be homogeneous in the quality of each of their scientific or teaching areas.

It is for this reason that ranking systems can be improved by providing disaggregated data by areas of study, fields of knowledge or specific degrees. This last level of detail could be very significant for students, given that their fundamental interest is generally linked to the quality of the specific studies that they want to pursue.

For the disaggregation, the U-Ranking project has worked in several directions. Firstly, it followed the criteria that it is important to start with the most disaggregated data available, maintaining its detail whenever possible, so as not to lose the wealth of its heterogeneity. Secondly, the disaggregated data had to be homogenized properly before adding it to the synthetic indicators. And third, the problems of combining (for the construction of some of the indicators studied) the data disaggregated according to scientific fields or degrees with other data aggregated at university or area of study level had to be solved. When there is no disaggregated data, or its disaggregation makes no sense, the aggregated data has been allocated to the various elements of the set, following the criteria considered more reasonable in each case.

Addressing the above problems is not technically considered to be trivial. For example, in the case of the rankings on specific bachelor's degrees of Spanish universities, to deal with data on areas at different levels of disaggregation, a series of matrices have been created to connect one another. In order to do this, accurate connections had to be established between university, area of study, Web of Science category, areas of the National Evaluation and Foresight Agency (ANEP) and bachelor's degrees.

In allocating research results to each degree, the starting point was data disaggregated by the Web of Science categories (268 items). Given that one classification is not perfectly nested in another, both classifications have been connected, and the two types of errors that could be made have been taken into account:

1. *Inclusion error.* That is, attributing to a given degree the research carried out by

teachers from other areas. For example, attributing to the Pharmacy degree of a given university, the research in "Hematology" that has actually been conducted by teachers from the Faculty of Medicine and who only teach in Medicine.

2. *Exclusion error.* That is, excluding research by teachers in areas that are not exactly the subject of the degree courses they teach in, as a result of being too restrictive when allocating areas to degrees. For example, if in Economy we only allocate the category "Economics", then important research may be missed in the area of "Business and Finance", theoretically more related to Business Administration degrees but also carried out by professors who teach in the degree of Economy.

These problems do not have a perfect solution and one of the alternatives have to be chosen. Therefore, we have opted for a more inclusive criterion: when in doubt about whether to associate a category or scientific field to a degree we have chosen to include it, minimizing exclusion errors on the grounds that there are more serious errors.

2.4. INDICATORS, AREAS AND DIMENSIONS

The main pillar of a ranking system is the rigor of the procedure followed when dealing with existing problems so that the created classification is based on appropriate data and is treated with reasonable methodological criteria. Many of the rankings have clear shortcomings in this aspect, which international literature has analyzed in detail.

The U-Ranking system considers all university activities and structures them according to the three following major dimensions:

- *Teaching*
- *Research and innovation*
- *Labor market insertion*

The assessment of the first two dimensions can take into account multiple areas of activity. However, many experts agree that an excessive number of indicators obscure the meaning of a ranking and complicate the construction of synthetic indices, a complex matter as it is. Following a criterion of (relative) simplicity, four **areas** have been studied in each of the dimensions aforementioned:

- *Access to financing*
- *Output obtained*
- *Quality (particularly in the results and in some cases, resources and processes)*
- *Internationalization of the activities*

Finally, the labor market insertion dimension considers three areas. The first focuses on employment levels, and the other two measure job quality in two ways: the suitability of the level of education for the job performed and the income earned from the job. The three areas are:

- *Employment rate*
- *Employed as graduates*
- *Average Contribution Base (income)*

The main reference to assess universities should be the results, but these can be studied from the perspective of total volume or from the perspective of their quality. If there were a market that assessed the differences in quality, then results showing a higher quality would have a higher price. However, these prices hardly exist in the area of public universities. The differences in rates, currently very diverse between regions and degrees, respond in many cases to factors that have nothing to do with quality. However, some indicators can supplement, in part, this limited information. Thus, for example, there are indicators on the quality of teaching and research and also on a very relevant feature today regarding the specialization (and quality) of universities: their internationalization.

The assessment of the quality of the output is incomplete if the impact of the university system on its environment is not taken into account. A

university can generate high-quality products, but if its size is very small, its contribution to technological development or to the production of human capital through its graduates may have a much smaller influence on the productive environment than a university with somewhat lower levels of quality in its output but a significantly larger size. This obliges us to introduce also the size factor in the rankings system, which is the reason for generating the U-Ranking Volume.

In the case of teaching and research and innovation, each of the four areas mentioned has been analyzed using two and three indicators taking into account the dimension that is being studied for each area. Instead, each of the three areas of labor market insertion is measured by one indicator. Table 2.1 shows the indicators studied, after analyzing the availability of data and discussing alternatives with the group of experts working on the project. Agreements were reached by analyzing the suitability of each indicator in capturing significant data on the area and dimension it forms part of it.[9] It is important to stress that the data used is obtained from sources allowing the project database and the rankings based on it not to require universities to provide data directly to U-Ranking.

The logic underlying the selection of indicators, disclosed in summary form, is the following:

Teaching

- Teaching resources are characterized by budgetary allocations per student, and faculty and research staff per student, with special attention paid to faculty members with PhD.
- Teaching output is measured by using results obtained by students, analyzing how many students undergo evaluation, how many succeed in those evaluations and how many drop out.
- The quality of teaching is very difficult to observe, and we studied as a proxy for quality the percentage of students who complete their bachelor's degrees within the expected timeframe or earlier, and the retention rate, i.e. the percentage of students who upon graduation decide to continue their studies with a master's degree at the same university.
- The internationalization of teaching is shown by the percentage of foreign students and the percentage of students who leave the Spanish University System to participate in mobility programs.

Research and innovation

- The research process is characterized by data referring to two types of resources: on the one hand, competitive public funds obtained both for research projects and staff, fellows, and qualified technical support, and, on the other hand, the percentage of PhD students out of the total number of postgraduate students.
- Output is accounted by citable papers published in each area and the number of doctoral theses, which are an indicator of the training activity of a researcher in a given area. The number of patents is also included in this area.
- The quality of the research is reflected in the average impact the publications have and the citations that these papers generate.
- Finally, a greater proportion of international publications, international co-authoring and the percentage of research funds from external sources indicate a greater internationalization in research activity.

Labor market insertion

- The level of employment is measured by the Social Security affiliation rate among graduates four years after obtaining their degree. The indicator is limited to Spanish graduates who reside in Spain in order to avoid possible bias in universities with a high number of foreign students. In many cases,

[9] In order to ensure the transparency of the process in developing indicators, the definition of each indicator, its source and its time frame are all included in Annex 1 and in the following website of the project: https://u-ranking.es/methodology.

these graduates return to their countries of origin after completing their studies and, although they are likely to be employed, they are not registered with the Spanish Social Security System and are therefore not included in the data provided by the sources used to measure labor market insertion.

- The match between the level of education and the job position is assessed through the percentage of members of a contribution group with higher education (engineers, graduates, senior management, diploma holders, and technical engineers) four years after obtaining their degree.
- Income is approximated by the average annual contribution base of graduates who are employed on a full-time contract four years after obtaining their degree.

As shown in **table 2.1**, U-Ranking 2026 is calculated based on 23 indicators[10], ten for the evaluation of teaching results, another ten for research and innovation activity and three for the results on labor market insertion. In the case of U-Ranking Universities by areas of study, 19 of the 23 indicators are obtained by areas of study and the remaining four for the university as a whole. However, the level of detail increases in the case of the U-Ranking Degrees (see chapter 3), in which five of the ten indicators of teaching are obtained for each degree and five of the ten indicators of research and innovation are classified by degree groups, that is, an aggregation in 122 groups of the 3,556 degrees and double degrees offered by the Spanish universities analyzed.

Table 2.1. **List of indicators, areas and dimensions**

Dimension	Area	Indicator
Teaching	Resources	Faculty member per 100 students
		Budget per student
		Percentage of faculty members with PhD
	Production	Success rate in bachelor's degree studies
		Evaluation rate in bachelor's degree studies
		Overall dropout rate in undergraduate studies
	Quality	Graduation efficiency rate
		Retention rate
	Internationalization	Percentage of foreign students
		Percentage of students in international mobility programs
Research and innovation	Resources	Competitive public funding secured for projects and research staff per PhD faculty member
		Percentage of doctoral students
	Production	Citable documents with ISI reference per faculty member with PhD
		Number of national patents per 100 faculty members with PhD
		Doctoral theses read per 100 faculty members with PhD
	Quality	Mean impact factor
		Percentage of publications in the first quartile
		Citations per document
	Internationalization	European research funds per faculty member with PhD
		Percentage of publications with international co-authorship
Labor market insertion	Employment	Average Social Security System employment rate
	Job-education match	Employed as graduates
	Income	Average contribution base

Source: Own elaboration.

[10] See Annex 1 for a more detailed description of the definition, source of information and period considered.

2.5. PERIOD COVERED BY THE DATA

University rankings aspire to offer an image of the current position of each institution, though they should not be conceived of as a snapshot of a given year. Many indicators have the character of a flow, and as such, can present high variability from year to year, both in the quality of the information and in the distance between the actual reality and what the information reflects, given the delays in the information registered and available. In addition, other indicators reflect the accumulation of results over long periods of time.

The rankings referred to usually recognize this problem by taking comparison periods longer than a single year, either using moving averages and even considering the complete history of the University (as in the case of the treatment of the Nobel Prize and Fields Medal winners in the Shanghai Ranking). Considering multi-year periods when elaborating the indicators provides greater interannual stability of the rankings and permits specific random disturbances to be smoothed out by considering a longer time range.

Our approach follows this criterion, considering that one cannot reasonably expect abrupt changes in the universities' real situation. Thus, the ranking should avoid giving that impression. Therefore, as information has become available, we have converged toward a 6-year moving average for nearly all the indicators. All of the indicators on research and innovation are already calculated as a mean of six years. Furthermore, since the 6th edition of U-Ranking, teaching results are reached using data by university from six academic years. In the case of labor market insertion, the results of graduates in the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-19 academic years are analyzed four years after obtaining their degree, that is, their job situation in 2021, 2022, and 2023, respectively.

Table 2.2 shows the updating in terms of years and time series registered by the indicators used in the ranking for 2026, covering data for the majority of indicators at least until the year 2024 or the 2023-24 academic year.

Table 2.2. **Time series used in U-Ranking 2026**

Dimension	Area	Indicator	Period
Teaching	Resources	Faculty member per 100 students	2018-19 a 2023-24
		Budget per student	2018-19 a 2023-24
		Percentage of faculty members with PhD	2018-19 a 2023-24
	Production	Success rate in bachelor's degree studies	2018-19 a 2023-24
		Evaluation rate in bachelor's degree studies	2018-19 a 2023-24
		Overall dropout rate in undergraduate studies	2014-15 a 2019-20[1]
	Quality	Graduation efficiency rate	2014-15 a 2019-20[1]
		Retention rate	2017-18 a 2022-23[2]
	Internationalization	Percentage of foreign students	2018-19 a 2023-24
		Percentage of students in international mobility programs	2018-19 a 2023-24
Research and innovation	Resources	Competitive public funding secured for projects and research staff per PhD faculty member	2019-2024
		Percentage of doctoral students	2019-2024
	Production	Citable documents with ISI reference per faculty member with PhD	2019-2024
		Number of national patents per 100 faculty members with PhD	2019-2024
		Doctoral theses read per 100 faculty members with PhD	2019-2024
	Quality	Mean impact factor	2019-2024
		Percentage of publications in the first quartile	2019-2024
		Citations per document	2019-2024
	Internationalization	European research funds per faculty member with PhD	2019-2024
		Percentage of publications with international co-authorship	2019-2024
Labor market insertion	Employment	Average Social Security System employment rate	2022 a 2024
	Job-education match	Employed as graduates	2022 a 2024
	Income	Average contribution base	2022 a 2024

Note: [1] First-year program, [2] Final-year program.
Source: Own elaboration.

In sum, the methodology on which the calculation of the U-Ranking system is based leads one to expect that the rankings of universities will not present sudden changes from one year to another, but they contain new information that can generate changes. The existence of an inertia in the rankings seems to be a desirable attribute, since the quality of university institutions does not change radically in the short term, although some of their annual results may do so.

2.6. CRITERIA FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF INDICATORS

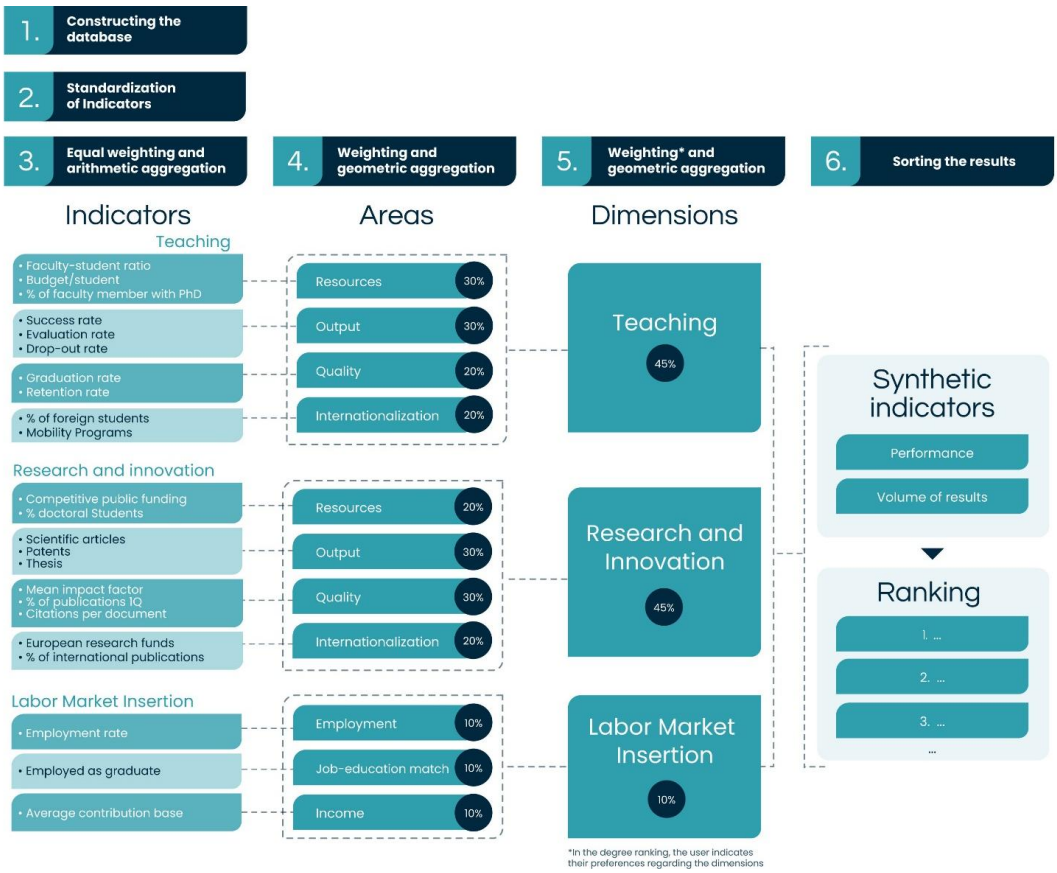
A key aspect to trust the meaning of the rankings is that the processes used in its elaboration should be transparent with strong statistical foundations for the construction of indicators. In this regard, the project team contacted experts in the subject and analyzed the methodological principles established in the specialized literature, especially in the *Handbook on constructing composite indicators: Methodology and user guide* (Nardo et al. 2008).

The underlying process of drawing up any of the rankings of universities constructed is structured according to the following six steps—the fifth one being unnecessary in the case of the partial rankings of teaching, research and innovation, and labor market insertion. The process is repeated both for the university as a whole and for each area of study through the following steps:

1. Preparation of the data bank
2. Standardization of indicators
3. Weighting and aggregation of indicators within the areas of each dimension
4. Weighting and aggregation of area indicators, within the dimensions
5. Weighting and aggregation of the dimensions
6. Obtaining of rankings

Figure 2.1 graphically illustrates the time sequence of the steps. To complete each of them it is necessary to solve technical problems, as described and indicated below.

Figure 2.1. **Methodology**



Source: Own elaboration.

2.6.1. Constructing the database and missing data

The starting point is to have the necessary available information on the variables to be considered in order to construct each indicator. The data used for the synthetic indices are obtained from public information systems and statistical sources. The main source of information is the Integrated System of University Information (SIIU) of the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities. The Bibliometric data regarding the research performance of all Spanish universities (based on information provided by Clarivate) and on patents (Espacenet) is provided by the INAECU elaborated by the IUNE Observatory. Information has also been collected from the State Bureau of Investigation on competitive resources and research contracts. Information on European research funds has been obtained from the European Commission's Horizon Dashboard.

For data on the revenue of private universities, public annual accounts and other information from the universities' website section on transparency or audited reports have been used.

The data has been collected with the maximum level of disaggregation available (degree, area of study, area or field of study, ANEP areas), so that the standardizations within each field make the results more comparable.

The database provides the starting indicators for the rankings, both for measuring activity in each area and for university activity as a whole. In the case of rankings by area of study, when the information allows it, they are calculated at that level of disaggregation, which in this edition is 19 of the 23 indicators considered. In the case of the remaining four indicators, the value of the university for all the areas of study is considered.

A first technical problem to be solved is the treatment of missing data from certain universities in some variables used. Such gaps may be due to several factors, whether technical (an error in loading the data), or of availability (the university may not have generated certain information or not done so in time) and even strategic (a university may opt not to give certain information because it is not in its interests to do so).

Not facing this problem rigorously would condition the comparability of the universities, the quality of the aggregate indices, and the final results. The methodology applied and the improvements made in the sources of information used have reduced the percentage of indicators with missing values to 0.1% of the nearly 9,000 values of indicators used, thus, no further treatment is required to compensate for the absence of data. The following are the criteria that have led to this methodological approach:

First, given that U-Ranking takes into account the specialization by areas of study of the different universities, it is important to distinguish whether a possible lack of data is due to the absence of activity in that particular area—for example, a university does not register drop-out rates in Sciences because it does not offer classes for that area of study or is too recent—or due to one of the reasons stated above. Therefore, the first step in identifying the missing data is to determine which areas of study are offered by a university. The following criteria are established to identify the areas of study in each university that are non-existent or of little importance, reduced or too recent to evaluate its performance:

a) In terms of teaching, it must offer at least one bachelor's degree related to the area of study being evaluated, and it must be taught in its own centers.

b) In terms of research, it must have at least 10 full-time equivalent professors with doctorates assigned to the area of study.

c) In the case of labor market insertion, the university must have at least two of the three indicators required for measurement. It should be noted that this requires the university's activity in the area to have a maturation period of at least 8 years, at least

one graduating class with four additional years in order to record data[11].

Second, it should be noted that the indicators are based on the calculation of moving averages, 6 years for most of the cases, except for those indicators of labor market insertion, which use averages of employment outcomes 4 years after graduation from three cohorts. If a university does not present any data for the years considered, an average is estimated with data from the available years, thus, reducing the chances of a variable with no data.

In addition, for indicators in which there are a greater number of universities without data, the information is constructed from exhaustive administrative registers, so if a university does not appear it is because it has no activity or no results in that area and therefore its value is 0. This information is based on competitive resources and research contracts from the State Bureau of Investigation, national patents granted from the Espacenet database or income data from European projects from Horizon Dashboard. Closely linked to the previous reasons is the improvement in the sources of information and their consolidation over time in the collection of university data.

After applying these criteria, the number of data missing is considerably reduced. Out of the 8,955 indicators in U-Ranking 2026, 5 values are missing, which represents less than 1% of the total. It has been verified that the results do not suffer substantial differences if the missing values are not estimated. Therefore, to not estimate the missing data proves to be the most accurate decision, since it is robust with the methodology applied previously, it simplifies the calculation method, making it easier to reproduce the ranking.

Finally, the minimum requirement for a university to be evaluated in U-Ranking is that it has at least 20 of the 23 indicators used to calculate the synthetic index, as well as the three variables that measure size (student body, full-time equivalent faculty members with PhD and consolidated revenues). This prevents a university from being partially evaluated, offering incomplete images of its activity.

U-Ranking 2026 analyzes a total of 71 universities, including all of the Spanish public universities offering bachelor's degrees (48) and 23 private universities. However, the number of universities varies according to the areas analyzed for the reasons outlined above—the university does not offer teaching in that area, it does not have faculty assigned to the area, or activity in that area is recent or limited. Table 2.3 shows the number of universities ranked by their overall performance[12] in each area. There are significant differences between areas. In Social and Legal Sciences, practically all universities (69) appear in the ranking, except for the Polytechnic University of Catalonia and the two private universities in the Canary Islands (Fernando de Pessoa University and the European University of the Canary Islands). However, in other areas, of the 23 private universities, only 5 (22%) in the case of Science and 8 in Arts and Humanities are active and appear in the rankings.

Treatment of the outliers can be done once the database from which the various indices are obtained is available. An outlier is considered to be any variable outside the interval defined by the percentile value 25 minus one and a half times the interquartile range and the percentile value 75 plus one and a half times the interquartile range of this same ratio. These values are corrected by assigning them the maximum or minimum value — depending on the case— of this interval.

[11] The labor market insertion indicators analyze the results of the cohorts of graduates from the 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 academic years, recording their employment status four years after obtaining their degree (2022, 2023, and 2024).

[12] As will be discussed more in detail, for a university to be included in this classification, it must possess synthetic indicators across all three of the dimensions under consideration.

Table 2.3. **Number of universities analyzed in U-Ranking by area of study**

	Public universities		Private universities		Total universities	
	Number	% over total public analyzed	Number	% over total private analyzed	Number	% over total universities analyzed
Arts and Humanities	42	87.5	8	34.8	50	70.4
Social and Legal studies	47	97.9	22	95.7	69	97.2
Sciences	42	87.5	5	21.7	47	66.2
Engineering and Architecture	47	97.9	12	52.2	59	83.1
Health Sciences	42	87.5	18	78.3	60	84.5
Global	**48**	**100.0**	**23**	**100.0**	**71**	**100.0**

Source: Own elaboration.

2.6.2. Standardization of indicators

One of the pillars upon which the construction of synthetic indicators is based is the proper standardization of the information, that is, its transformation in order to homogenize it and make possible its comparison and aggregation. There are numerous systems of standardization, such as the Gaussian standard (subtracting from each variable its arithmetic mean and dividing by its standard deviation), relative order (ordering the values according to their relative value), distances from the mean or the median, and the ratio between the variable and its mean or its median.

The standardization chosen must be in consonance with the method of aggregation to be used subsequently. Because as a general rule the geometric aggregation method has been chosen, requiring the value of the standardized variables to be positive, we must exclude the Gaussian and absolute distances from the mean and from the median, which necessarily generate negative values, as alternatives of standardization.

For this reason, the standardization method chosen is the ratio between the variable and its median. Taking into account that the median separates each distribution into two halves, the standardized results will be centered on the value 1: values below the median are bounded between 0 and 1, while those above will be greater than 1.

2.6.3. Weighting and aggregation of indicators within an area

Once the 23 standardized indicators for each university are obtained, they are aggregated to obtain a synthetic indicator for each area. Thus, for example, to obtain the indicator for the *quality* area in the *Research* dimension we aggregate the standardized values of the *Mean impact factor of publications* and the *Percentage of publications in the first quartile*.

As in the case of standardization, there exist numerous aggregation procedures, such as the arithmetic, the geometric or those based on factor analysis. The choice of one or the other has implications in the substitutability of the indicators or the importance of extreme values (both large and small). The aggregation criterion chosen implies a weighting of the indicators, which is important to bear in mind.

It must be taken into account that some universities might have zeros in some indicator of a specific area (for example, they may not possess *Patents*). For this reason, we have opted in this phase for an arithmetic aggregation, ruling out the geometric aggregation because the presence of a zero in the product would cause the whole area analyzed to take a nil value.

As the weighting of the indicators shows the importance assigned to each variable when aggregating it into a synthetic indicator, we also reflect on this question. This is a classic problem in the construction of synthetic indices and generally requires a judgment on the relative importance of each element. In the case of economic aggregates, the weights are offered by prices —which reflect the market valuation of the goods, services or factors exchanged— but in many other cases there are no prices and the indicators have to be constructed following other criteria, frequently based on subjective opinions.

There are three possible approaches to weighting: 1) assignation of identical weights (which also implies a judgment, since the weight of one indicator is conditioned by the number of indicators included); 2) reference consultation among experts to identify the most widely held opinions (by means of surveys or methods such as the Delphi); 3) weighting according to the user's preferences. These three alternatives have been used according to the level of aggregation to be achieved.

At this first level of aggregation (changing simple indicators into synthetic indicators for each area) we have opted for the first system, that is, equal weighting. This is because in most cases the indicators capture different aspects of the area analyzed, but there are no clear arguments for granting one of them greater or lesser importance. Also, the nature of the information that each indicator captures is fairly homogeneous and in that case, there is less interest in giving greater weight to one indicator or another, because in many cases they are correlated. This occurs, for example, in the case of the mean impact of publications index and the percentage of these in the first quartile. Consequently, the different simple indicators will enter into the calculation of the arithmetic mean with the same weight.

2.6.4. Weighting and aggregation of the area indicators within each dimension

At the second level of aggregation the indicators of the different areas are grouped into an indicator for each of the dimensions considered: teaching, research and innovation, and labor market insertion. At this stage there are reasons for following a different criterion, as after the arithmetic aggregation of the previous stage no area indicator presents zeros. A *geometric* aggregation method will be used.

Among the most interesting properties of geometric aggregation is that it limits the substitutability among the components that it aggregates. In other words, geometric aggregation penalizes the universities that have neglected any of the four transversal areas related to teaching and research and innovation (*Resources, Output, Quality, Internationalization*) or the three related to labor market insertion as against those that attend to them in a balanced manner.

One reason for using weights instead of equal distribution is that if all the areas were aggregated with the same weight, this being a geometric mean the number of areas considered would influence the result. For example, if we had decided to group the indicators of quality and internationalization in a single area, their influence on the dimension would have been less than if considered separately. Another reason is that, unlike what occurred with the basic indicators, in this case there may be reasons to grant different values to each area.

Thus, the decisions on the number of areas to be considered and their weights are relevant, and so we asked experts about the importance that should be given to each area. To make this valuation easier we followed the criterion that the number of areas should be small, and similar within each dimension. A survey of former university experts was conducted by applying the

Table 2.4. **Weights by area**

Dimension	Area	Weight	Indicator	Weight
Teaching	Resources	30.0%	Faculty member per 100 students	10%
			Budget per student	10%
			Percentage of faculty members with PhD	10%
	Production	30.0%	Success rate in bachelor's degree studies	10%
			Evaluation rate in bachelor's degree studies	10%
			Overall dropout rate in undergraduate studies	10%
	Quality	20.0%	Graduation efficiency rate	10%
			Retention rate	10%
	Internationalization	20.0%	Percentage of foreign students	10%
			Percentage of students in international mobility programs	10%
Research and innovation	Resources	20.0%	Competitive public funding secured for projects and research staff per PhD faculty member	10%
			Percentage of doctoral students	10%
	Production	30.0%	Citable documents with ISI reference per faculty member with PhD	10%
			Number of national patents per 100 faculty members with PhD	10%
			Doctoral theses read per 100 faculty members with PhD	10%
	Quality	30.0%	Mean impact factor	10%
			Percentage of publications in the first quartile	10%
			Citations per document	10%
	Internationalization	20.0%	European research funds per faculty member with PhD	10%
			Percentage of publications with international co-authorship	10%
Labor market insertion	Employment	33.3%	Average Social Security System employment rate	33.3%
	Job-education match	33.3%	Employed as graduates	33.3%
	Income	33.3%	Average contribution base	33.3%

Source: Own elaboration.

Delphi method[13]. Throughout the thirteen years of the project's existence, both the indicators and the amount of them have undergone slight changes in order to improve the information available in university databases, which provides a more accurate picture of university activity. These adjustments have involved a slight redistribution of the weights assigned in the area of teaching, while maintaining the priority given to resources and output results. Table 2.4 shows the weights assigned to the different areas. It can be seen that in the areas of teaching and research and innovation, the weight of each area is equal to the sum of the indicators, with each one being assigned 10%.[14]

2.6.5. Weighting and aggregation of the dimensions to obtain the rankings

The last phase of the methodology establishes how the different rankings of the project are drawn up. The result of the previous phase offers rankings for the three dimensions separately, so no further step beyond those described in the above sections is necessary. The global rankings, U-Ranking and U-Ranking Volume, combine the three dimensions of teaching, research and innovation, and labor market insertion, a new geometric aggregation is needed and the most

[13] Two rounds of consultations were carried out, after which a 2.1 percentage point reduction was obtained in the average interquartile range.

[14] In previous editions, the following weights were assigned to teaching: resources 25.4%, output (30.4%), quality (23.9%), and internationalization (20.3%).

reasonable criteria for doing so should be decided.

In the transition from the dimensions to the final ranking we consider that the importance attributed to each dimension can be different depending on the interests of the people contemplating the ranking, that is, of its potential users: students, researchers, managers, society. For this reason, we have concluded that the user's perspective can be the key to giving more or less importance to each of the dimensions. It could be unconvincing to impose weights from a specific standpoint —for example, that of a group of experts, who consider that research is the most important—. For individuals with another standpoint, such as students or the career guidance staff, it is more important to attend to the teaching aspects and job expectations, while for firms the capacity of technological transfer of the universities or qualified human capital.

After due reflection, therefore, we have opted to consider two alternatives.

1. First, U-Ranking Degrees offers the option of the system earlier described as *personalized ranking*, based on the user's own preferences. We understand that in this case users are more likely to seek to compare the universities with fairly closely defined interests and diverse criteria, probably different from those of the experts. For this reason, with the help of a web tool, users can decide the importance of each of the three dimensions when placing the degrees in order, and the tool automatically offers them the ranking corresponding to the preferences revealed by the user.

   To apply this first approach, we have considered various alternatives for the choice of weights by the user. We opted for the procedure known as Budget Allocation Process, that is, for the distribution by the user of 100 points among the dimensions to be valued. This method, widely used in marketing to find out a consumer's valuation of the characteristics of a product, has the principal advantage of forcing the user to adopt a more active and reflexive position by distributing points, being therefore more aware of the opinion that he/she displays.

2. Second, for the general rankings (U-Ranking and U-Ranking Volume), corresponding to the universities' activities as a whole, the three dimensions are weighted on the basis of the experts' opinions, according to a survey such as that mentioned above when aggregating areas into dimensions, and a Delphi process to achieve convergence among the experts' opinions.

The weights assigned to teaching and research and innovation are 45% each, with the remaining 10% to labor market insertion results.

The incorporation of labor market insertion as a third dimension has led to a revision of the weights assigned in previous editions to teaching (56%) and research and innovation (44%). A weight of 10% is given to labor market insertion because, as has been noted in other studies, the environment is also a determining factor in job placement. Thus, the link between university activity and results is not the same in teaching and research as it is in employment. The quality of teaching and research is directly controlled by the university, who are almost exclusively responsible for what they achieve. However, in terms of labor market insertion, their direct responsibility is employability, i.e., producing graduates with the right skills, but labor market insertion also depends on other factors such as geographic location or economic cycle, so, in our opinion, less weight should be given to this dimension.

This 10% is primarily deducted from the 56% weighting previously assigned to teaching, as labor market insertion generally depends more on the studies undertaken—which often train final-year graduates for the labor market—and on the quality of teaching than on research activities. A weighting of 45% to teaching instead of 46% has been decided, to better balance it with research and innovation, as establishing such a minimal difference between the two functions would be unjustified.

These weights are included as a default option for calculating the personalized.

2.7. PERFORMANCE RANKINGS VS. VOLUME RANKINGS

When comparing universities, it is relevant whether or not their size is taken into account. Making one choice or the other is not in itself a methodological advantage or failure but implies adopting a particular perspective which affects the rankings and must be borne in mind when interpreting the results.

In the same way as when analyzing the activity of a firm or a country we can consider its volume of output or its achieved performance, and both positions are reasonable, the same occurs in the analysis of the results of universities. Neither of the two approaches is, *a priori*, more valid than the other, and the choice depends on the intended use of the results. The per capita GDP is more useful than total gross domestic product (GDP) when comparing the quality of life between countries or regions, but the volume or the growth of GDP is also important for explaining, for example, the employment generated or the importance of a country in the global economy. So, although in some cases the performance reached to obtain the results may be more important than their volume, in other cases the size may be relevant. A very productive and at the same time large university is more beneficial to society than one that offers the same level of productivity but has a small size; likewise, a very large university with a poor level of results is a much bigger problem than a small university with the same level of results.

2.7.1. Interest in both approaches

Another reason to pay attention to this aspect is that the existing rankings adopt on occasions an approach based on the performance by which the results are obtained and in other cases deal with the volume of results. For example, some widely cited international rankings—especially, the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), known as the Shanghai Ranking—are, mainly, volume rankings.

The Shanghai Ranking is rather one of volume, because most of the variables from which it is built —number of Nobel prize- winners or Fields medalists among their ex-students or staff, widely cited researchers, publications in Nature or Science, articles published in indexed journals— are not relativized by the size of the university. Such variables make up the greater part of the weight in the ranking, while only one indicator (academic performance) is expressed in *per capita* terms. So, the universities' positions in this ranking are conditioned both by their quality and by their size, both qualities being necessary for reaching good positions.

Other rankings, on the other hand, make their comparisons from the point of view of quality. It is the case of the QS World Universities Ranking, whose indicators are taken from surveys of academic reputation or are variables standardized by size. There are rankings that expressly contemplate both approaches and make differentiated comparisons based on quality or on the total volume of results, as does the I-UGR Ranking[15] of research results.

The reason for acknowledging the interest of both approaches is that the size of institutions can be relevant for valuing the contributions of the universities, but correcting the results for size allows to compare the universities from a perspective that makes them more homogeneous. However, given that, as we said earlier, for the university system as a whole it makes a difference whether a university with high (low) productivity is large or small, we must consider whether universities would have the same position in the performance rankings as in the production volume rankings and bring out the specific significance of each ranking. To sum up:

- The rankings of volume of production are based on indicators not relativized by size and depend on both the university's performance and its size. Thus, a university may generate a greater volume of research results than another of smaller size, even though the second is more productive.

[15] This ranking was last updated in 2014.

- The performance rankings are based on indicators of results corrected by size and seek to measure the output per unit of inputs or resources used. For example, scientific output is measured as a function of the number of faculty members with PhD and the teaching results are relativized by the number of students. This enables some smaller universities to obtain a better final result in the ranking than other much larger ones.

An interesting question is whether size influences performance positively or negatively, that is, whether performance/efficiency increases or decreases with the size of the university. In the first case, the universities' positions in the rankings of volume would be favored by two factors (size and performance). The testing of the two hypotheses is an empirical matter, which can be analyzed by drawing up both types of rankings using the same approach, as will be presented later.

2.7.2. Treatment of the size of universities

All of the simple indicators with which we started with are relativized by the most appropriate variable (students, faculty members, budget, etc.), so that size does not have a direct influence on the results. Consequently, the general scheme of the methodology leads to measuring each university's results independently of its size, so these are performance rankings. Therefore, to construct volume rankings, the size variable has to be added to the indicators. This task has been undertaken following the criteria detailed below.

The first criterion is to preserve, as far as possible, the methodological homogeneity of both rankings, calculating them on the basis of the same set of indicators and the same aggregation criteria. For this reason, the ranking of volume was not drawn up simply by not relativizing those indicators that can be expressed in total terms —for example, reflecting the income from patents or the doctoral theses read without dividing them by the number of faculty members with PhD— as the Shanghai Ranking does. It is not reasonable to proceed in that way because some variables cannot be presented in absolute terms, being rates or indices, such as the percentage of publications in the first quartile or the mean impact of publications factor. If some variables are expressed in absolute terms and others are not, the relative importance of the size within the results would fall only on the variables that can be expressed in absolute terms. In that case, the importance according to size would depend implicitly on the proportion of variables that can be expressed in absolute terms. For example, in the variables considered in our study only 14 of the 20 indicators used could be expressed in absolute terms, which would be equivalent to the acknowledged importance of size being 70%. This percentage would be arbitrary because it would reflect the number of indicators that form part of the database expressed in absolute terms.

This solution is unsatisfactory, and we have explored other alternatives for introducing size. The option chosen consists of calculating the volume of results of each university by multiplying the performance index by a measure of size. We have considered three indicators of the size of a university: the number of faculty members, the number of students, and the budget. Each one has its specificities and can be a better proxy of different aspects of the university's activity that do not have the same importance in each of them. To avoid skewing the size proxy in one or other direction in the most general indices —which could favor some institutions by giving greater weight to one of the aspects— we have taken as indicator of size the arithmetic mean of the three variables, previously standardized by its mean value.

2.8. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

In the previous edition, improvements to the presentation of the results were made to facilitate comparisons between universities and to show the margin each university has to reach the performance of the highest-ranked university in each dimension and area of study. Therefore, in addition to presenting the ranked list of universities, the original index, centered on the value 1, is now offered on a new scale where the top-performing university obtains a value of 100 and the rest obtain values between 99 and 0, according to their distance from the maximum index, using the following formula:

$$U'_i = \frac{U_i}{U_{max}} \times 100:$$

Where:
U'_i is the rescaled value for university i, with a maximum of 100
U_i is the original index for university i
U_{max} is the highest index value achieved among the set of universities

Finally, under this new scale, universities are grouped by tens according to their score—taking the top-performing university (with a score of 100) as the reference—so that there can be up to ten groups:

G1	Greater than or equal to 90 points
G2	Greater than or equal to 80 and less than 90 points
G3	Greater than or equal to 70 and less than 80 points
G4	Greater than or equal to 60 and less than 70 points
G5	Greater than or equal to 50 and less than 60 points
G6	Greater than or equal to 40 and less than 50 points
G7	Greater than or equal to 30 and less than 40 points
G8	Greater than or equal to 20 and less than 30 points
G9	Greater than or equal to 10 and less than 20 points
G10	Less than 10 points

A maximum of ten levels is established, but if all universities were to achieve the maximum score, they would all be grouped in the first level, leaving the remaining groups empty. As institutions with scores that are lower than the top performer emerge, the corresponding lower groups will gradually be filled.

2.9. PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

U-Ranking 2026 analyzes 71 universities enrolling 95% of students in the Spanish University System The analysis includes all public universities and 23 private ones.[16]

Private universities are an important part of the Spanish University System.

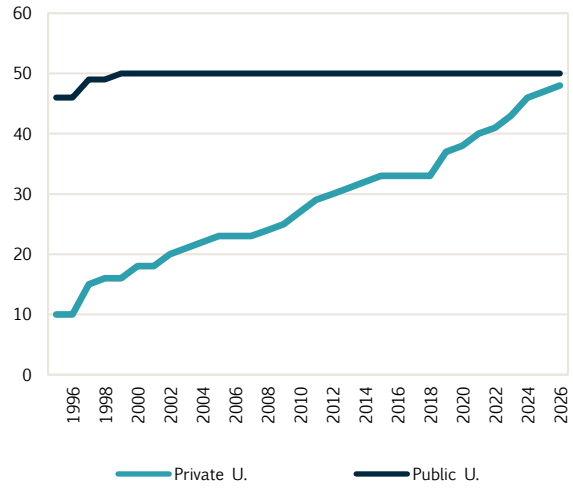
As shown in figure 2.1, they have experienced a large growth in the last twenty years, quadrupling in number to 48 institutions out of the 98 institutions recognized as universities by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (see panel a). Of these, 95 were operating during the 2025-26 academic year, and 92 had student enrollment in the previous academic year. In the past 6 years, 11 new universities have been recognized as universities, of which 4 are in Andalusia, 3 in Madrid, 1 in Galicia, 1 in the Basque Country, another in the Canary Islands and the last one in Balearic Islands. In 2020, Universidad Internacional de la Empresa was created. In 2021, Universidad Euneiz and Universidad Intercontinental de la Empresa were established and in 2022, the establishment of Universidad de Diseño, Innovación y Tecnología was approved. In 2023, two new private universities were included in the university system of Andalusia, Universidad CEU Fernando III and Universidad Tecnológica Atlántico-Mediterráneo. In 2024, three new universities were approved, two in Andalusia, Universidad Europea de Analucía and Universidad Alfonso X el Sabio Mare Nostrum, and one in the Canary Islands, Universidad Tecnológica de las Islas Canary. The Madrid campus of IE University was recognized as a separate university, and the creation of the University of Mallorca was subsequently approved in March 2026. Of these 48 private universities, 45 carried out their teaching activity during this academic course[17].

16 Two special-purpose universities, UIMP and UNIA, which are state-run institutions offering only master's degree programs, are not included.

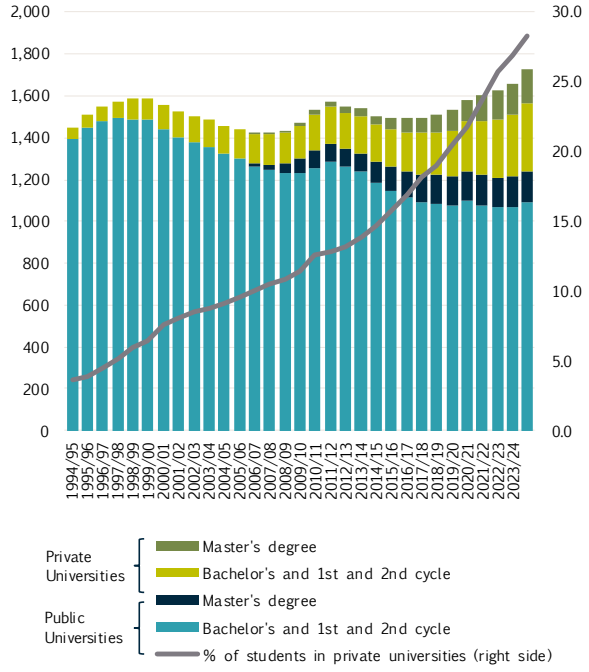
17 The three universities with no teaching activity are: IE Universidad Madrid, Universidad de Mallorca y Universidad Tecnológica de las Islas Canarias. However, three other universities had no enrolled students in the previous academic year: Universidad Tecnológica Atlántico-Mediterráneo Universidad Europea de Andalucía and Universidad Alfonso X el Sabio Mare Nostrum.

Figure 2.1. **Evolution of the number of universities and students. 1995-2026**

a) Number of public and private universities



b) University students by level of studies and type of university. 1994-1995 to 2024-2025 academic years (thousands of students and percentage)



Source: Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (2026c, 2026f).

Likewise, the number of bachelor's and master's degree students has multiplied by 8.7, from 52,000 in the 1994-95 academic year to more than 489,716 students in the 2024-25 academic year, which represents slightly under a third of university students studying in Spain, compared to 4% 30 years ago.

An important characteristic of private universities, apart from their young age of existence, is their smaller size. If we compare the number of private universities as a percentage of the total (49%) and the number of private university students as a percentage of the total (28%), it becomes clear that private universities are generally smaller.

Another distinctive feature is their greater degree of specialization in postgraduate studies, especially master's degrees. Private universities have placed great emphasis on these types of degrees, as the makeup of their students shows[18]. Whereas the proportion of master's degree students in public universities is 11%, in private universities it is 33%. Indeed, half of master's degree students in Spain study at a private university.

It is more frequent for private universities to present information gaps in certain variables than public universities, limiting, in some cases, their comparability. The U-Ranking 2026 edition has reviewed all the information available for private universities following the criteria to include those institutions that provide at least 20 out of the 23 indicators considered for the public system[19], as well as the three variables that measure for size (student body, full-time equivalent faculty members with PhD and consolidated revenues). As a result of this revision, in this edition of U-Ranking, Universitat Abat Oliba CEU is not analyzed due to a lack of sufficient information. The 23 private universities considered in U-Ranking 2026 are:

[18] This hyperspecialization has led the administration to establish in Article 5.1 of Royal Decree 640/2021, of July 27, on the creation, recognition and authorization of universities and university centers, and institutional accreditation of university centers, a minimum number of degrees (10) to create a university. Most of these requirements have been maintained or reinforced in the amendment to the aforementioned Royal Decree, namely Royal Decree 905/2025.

[19] Since the indicators are based on moving averages, the requirement has been for each of the chosen indicators to have information on the years that are necessary to calculate them.

- IE Universidad
- Mondragon Unibertsitatea
- Universidad a Distancia de Madrid
- Universidad Camilo José Cela
- Universidad Cardenal Herrera-CEU
- Universidad Católica de Valencia S. Vicente Mártir
- Universidad Católica San Antonio
- Universidad de Deusto
- Universidad de Navarra
- Universidad Europea de Canarias
- Universidad Europea de Madrid
- Universidad Europea de Valencia
- Universidad Fernando de Pessoa de Canarias
- Universidad Internacional de La Rioja
- Universidad Internacional de Valencia
- Universidad Nebrija
- Universidad Pontificia Comillas
- Universidad Pontifica de Salamanca
- Universidad San Pablo CEU
- Universitat de Vic-U. Central de Catalunya
- Universitat Internacional de Catalunya
- Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
- Universitat Ramon Llull



User personalized rankings

03

Universities develop different actions, but also different profiles exist of people and organizations interested in them: undergraduate or graduate students, professors, managers, members of the governing body or Board of Directors, heads of university policy in the Public Administration, journalists, citizens, companies, social agents, administrations, etc. The importance granted by people or groups to the different activities of the universities may be different and their interests may focus basically on one or more of their activities. For example, students are likely to focus on aspects related with the degree that they wish to study and teachers may focus more on research. Therefore, aggregating the information on each of the aspects is not only a complex problem, but the criteria may depend on the user.

Given the high number of users that might value the universities' activity from a particular viewpoint, it makes sense to consider the possibility of drawing up personalized rankings, established in a way in which they take into account the different interests of the user. The U-Ranking project considers this question and in the case of bachelor's degrees, it offers a tool that provides information on the ranking of degrees to students, their families and careers advisers, personalized according to their specific interests.

3.1. EXAMPLES OF PERSONALIZED RANKINGS

Constructing synthetic indicators by acknowledging the preferences of users has been available thanks to the interactivity permitted by web tools. Through them, the user can value personally each one of the dimensions considered, indicating which areas they want to consider and which are the most important for them. Web technology allows these preferences identified by the users themselves to be incorporated and combined with other elements contributed by the experts, such as the selection of variables and aggregating them in intermediate indicators according to criteria as described in chapter 2.

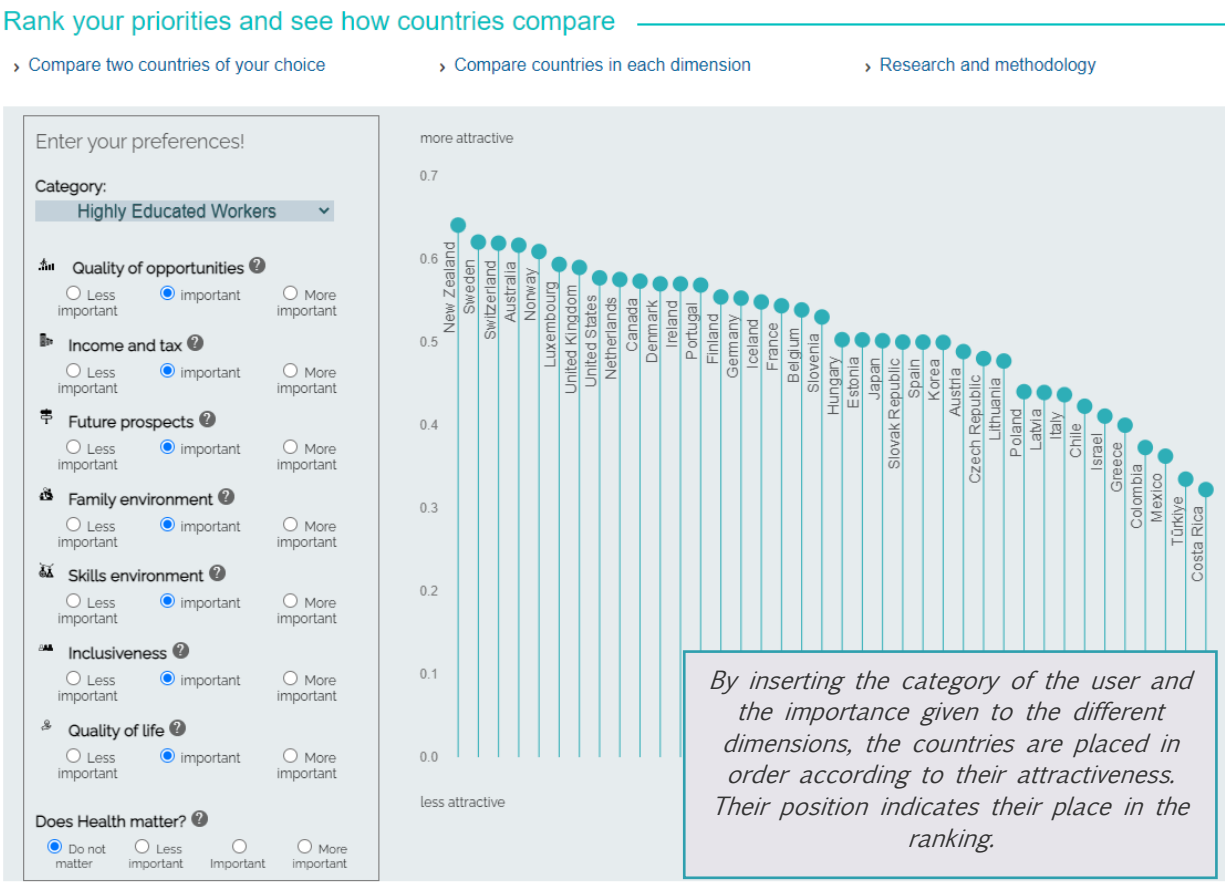
Two interesting examples of this approach, referring to very distinct areas, are those corresponding to the "Talent Attractiveness" Index, developed by the OECD (2025), and the CHE Ranking, a ranking of university degrees drawn up by the German Center for Higher Education (CHE 2025a).

The OECD (2025) draws up a synthetic index that ranks countries according to their ability to attract and retain talent based on three types of migrants: university students, entrepreneurs and workers with higher education. The index

rates country performance based on different dimensions: quality of opportunities, income and taxes, future prospects, family environment, skills, inclusion and quality of life. In order to calculate the index, the user must specify the importance given to each of the dimensions considered. Experts justify and prepare the set of relevant dimensions and variables and, once the user has introduced their valuation of each area, the web tool shows a synthetic index of talent attraction that takes into account the importance given by the user, as well as the category it belongs to (**figure 3.1**).

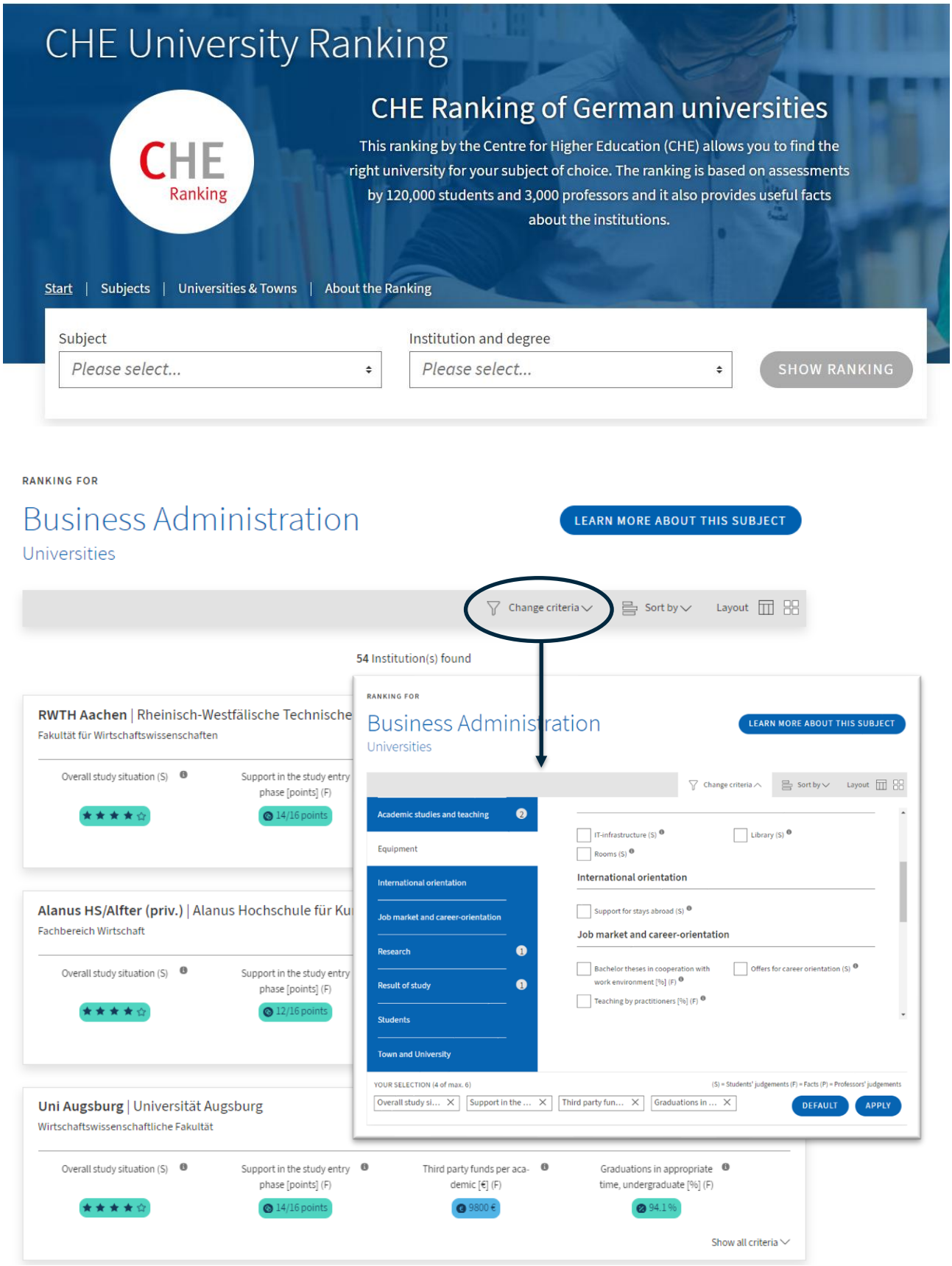
A similar approach is used by one of the university rankings, the CHE Ranking, drawn up by Germany's Center for Higher Education for the journal *Zeit*. In this case, the student who wishes to choose a degree needs to select the subject they wish to study, the type of course of their interests and the aspects they consider to be most important (teaching, subsequent employment opportunities, research, etc.). A personalized university ranking is created based on their preferences (**figure 3.2**).

Figure 3.1. **Talent Attraction Index**



Source: OECD (2025).

Figure 3.2. **CHE Ranking**



Source: CHE (2025a).

3.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE WEB TOOL FOR GENERATING PERSONALIZED RANKINGS OF DEGREES

This personalized ranking approach has been used in U-Ranking to classify degrees in order, constructing rankings of universities for the different bachelor's degrees. In the future it is intended to extend this approach to other university activities, for example, to master's degrees, when the necessary databases are available. The first step in this direction is the analysis carried out in the 2022 edition of U-Ranking on postgraduate education.

The value of a web tool like this depends much on the effort made to facilitate its use. The objective of U-Ranking is to present a simple, easy-to-use tool to minimize the number of clicks needed to obtain the relevant information, which is above all the corresponding ranking. This simple approach must be present both when limiting the degrees to be compared and when permitting the user to declare their preferences in order to draw up personalized rankings. With the aim of making the procedure more user-friendly, the website has been redesigned, as well as the Choose a University tool, which can be accessed by clicking on the icon that appears at the top of the website[20] (**figure 3.3**). Next, three questions are displayed that must be answered by the user to obtain a personalized ranking by degree, according to the student's interests in three aspects (**figure 3.4**):

- *What to study*
- *Where to study*
- *Study, research and work*

In order to harmonize the tool with the most frequent potential users we performed trials among students ages 17 to 18 years old, who are less familiar with the concepts used in the university world than the experts participating in the project. Based on these trials, the necessary corrections were made to better adapt the tool to the students and to make the results easier to understand. The tool is presented on the screen of the project's website via the *Choose a University* tab.

Figure 3.3. **Choose a university**



In the first step, the user must choose the bachelor's degree or degrees they wish to study. The 3,556[21] degrees offered by 71 universities analyzed are classified into 122 *groups of degrees* to simplify the selection process. To make the user's decision even easier, the degree groups are clustered into 26 families of degrees.

When choosing a family of degrees, as for example "Economy and Business Administration", the bachelor's degrees included in this family of degrees are displayed. This list of degrees is not extensive or literal, since "Business intelligence" and "Business analytics" have been grouped together.

The grouping of the degrees is intended to facilitate the user's selection process but does not reduce the results of the ranking. Thus, regardless of this initial simplification, the final results show all the degrees included in the selection, as well as the center where they are taught whenever there are several options.

[20] https://u-ranking.es/

[21] These are bacherlor's degrees with open enrollment for the 2024–25 academic year and for which sufficient data is available for analysis. It is important to note that newly established degrees are not included in the tool, as their performance cannot yet be evaluated.

Figure 3.4. **Steps to create a personalized ranking**

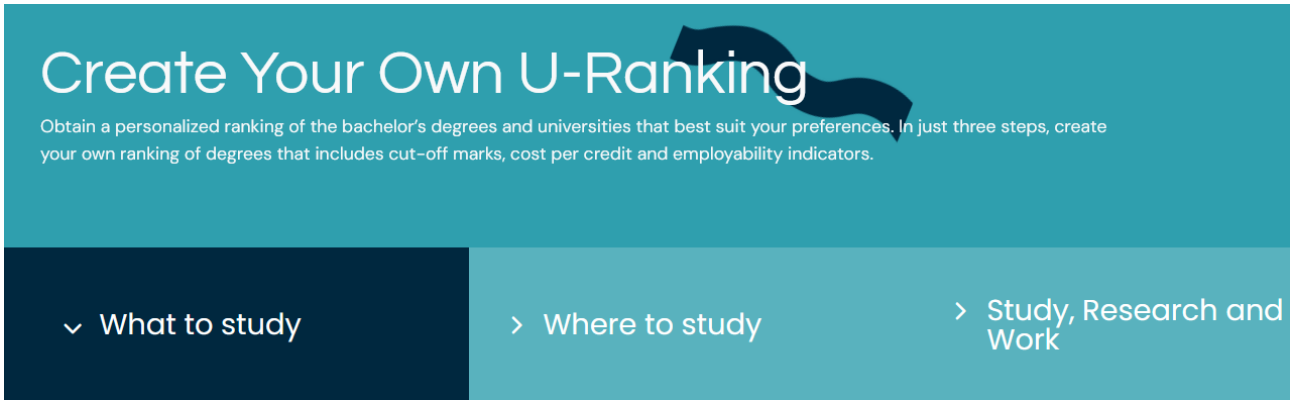
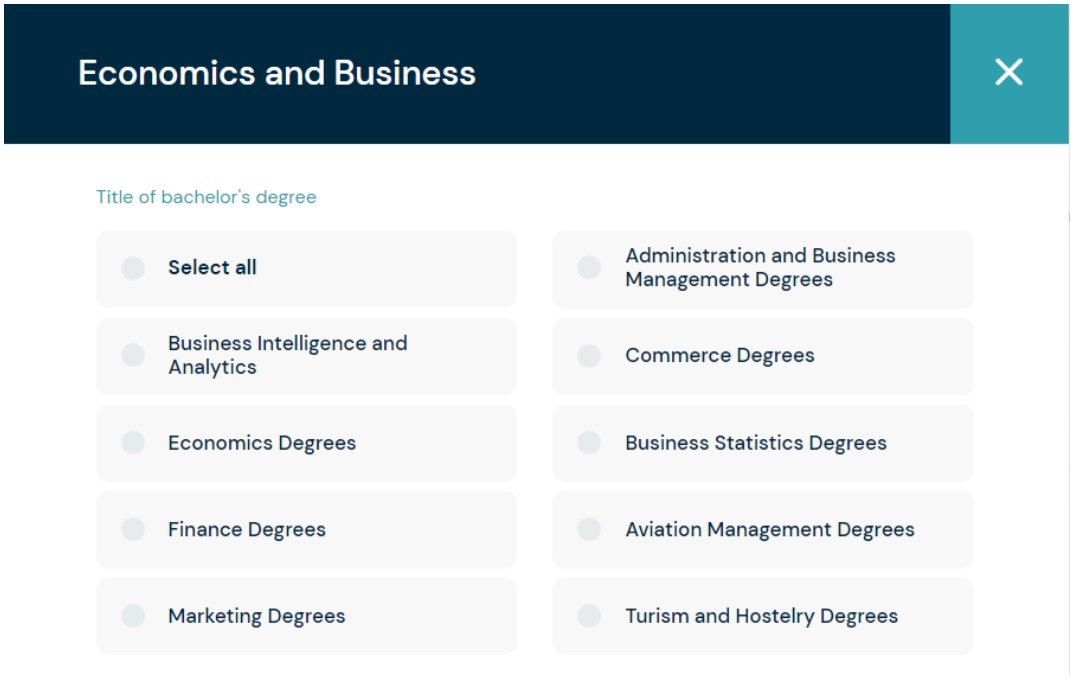


Figure 3.5. **Step 1. Choose a bachelor's degree**



The user can choose either one or several groups of degrees, whether they belong to the same family or not. For example, he/she could select the "Degree Business Intelligence and Analytics" (from the Economics family) and the "Degree in Engineering and Data Science (from the Computer Science and Telecommunications family).

The following step is to choose the autonomous community or regions considered as places in which to study (**figure 3.6**). Thus, the user must mark those chosen in the corresponding list. If the user does not want to geographically limit their choice, they can "Select all". The option of restricting the search to specific autonomous communities is a response to the fact that many students do not contemplate the idea of moving as an alternative or a restriction. In this case, their interest will be to know which of the studies offered are valued best in the territories considered. In any way, complementary information is offered to position their options in relation to the remaining offers in the Spanish University System.

Thirdly, the user must declare their preference regarding the importance they give to study, research and labor market insertion when valuing the universities' profiles (**figure 3.7**), by distributing the 100 points available to the importance they grant to teaching, research and employment. The resulting ranking will order the degrees and universities taking into account these weights. By default, 45 points are given to teaching, 45 to research and innovation and 10 to labor market insertion, which are the weights used for the U-Ranking calculation.

Once these three steps are completed, the personalized ranking corresponding to the criteria introduced is displayed (**figure 3.8**). The ranking places in order the universities that offer the bachelor's degrees chosen in the pre-selected territories according to the value of the index obtained. To facilitate interpretation, the index is presented on a new scale in which the top-performing degree within each academic field is assigned a value of 100. The remaining degrees receive values between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the top-ranked degree. A degree with an index of 50 would have a performance level equal to half that of the top-ranked one. Degrees are grouped into a maximum of 10 categories based on the tens digit of their index value.

The first column displays the performance group number assigned to each of the degrees included in the customized ranking. A maximum of 10 performance groups have been established. It is important to note that this rescaling is based on the index values of all degrees within the same academic field. Therefore, the maximum value of 100 may not appear in the user's selection if the top-performing degree belongs to a different degree group within the same field that was not selected.

The second shows the value of the index reached for each specific degree. The official name of the degree appears in the third column. As we observe in the example, various bachelor's degrees can occupy the same position in the ranking, since the indices are rounded without decimal points because greater precision is not considered to reflect, more accurately, differences among the degrees. In these cases, the degrees are ordered according to the value of the index, considering all the decimals. In the fourth column, in addition to the name of the university, the campus where the degree is taught appears. Clicking on the name of the university takes you to its website. The last five columns contain complementary information which is useful in the decision process. The cut-off mark of the last year, the price per credit on first registration and information on graduate employability which will be described in the next section.

Figure 3.6. **Step 2. Choose a Spanish region**



Figure 3.7. **Step 3. Indicate percentage of importance given to Teaching and Research and Innovation**

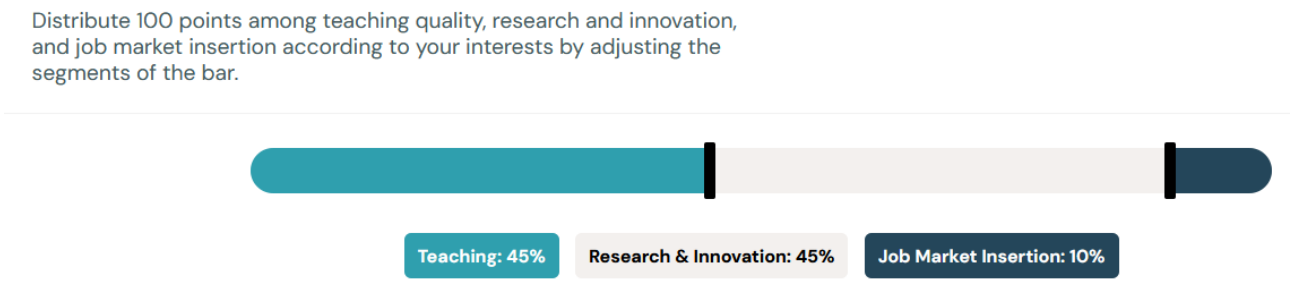
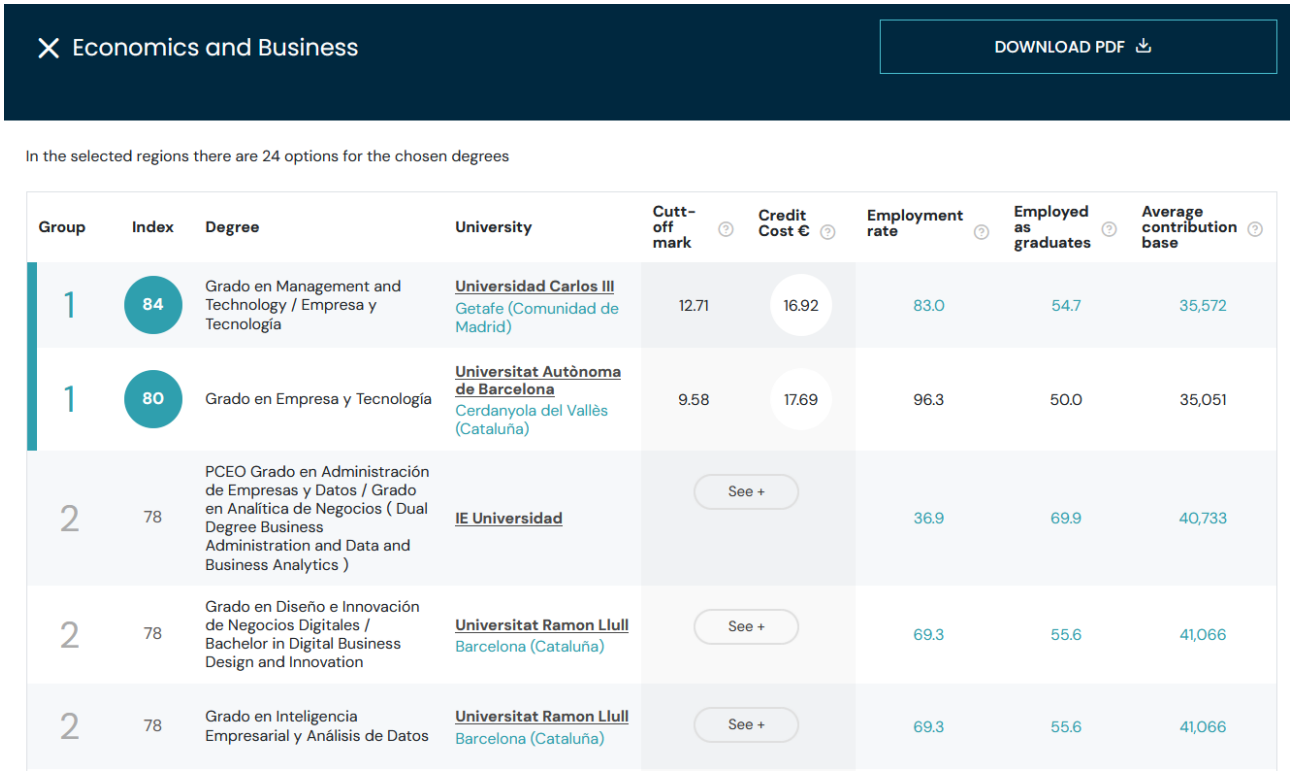


Figure 3.8. **Personalized ranking of degrees**



Group	Index	Degree	University	Cutt-off mark	Credit Cost €	Employment rate	Employed as graduates	Average contribution base
1	84	Grado en Management and Technology / Empresa y Tecnología	Universidad Carlos III Getafe (Comunidad de Madrid)	12.71	16.92	83.0	54.7	35,572
1	80	Grado en Empresa y Tecnología	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona Cerdanyola del Vallès (Cataluña)	9.58	17.69	96.3	50.0	35,051
2	78	PCEO Grado en Administración de Empresas y Datos / Grado en Analítica de Negocios (Dual Degree Business Administration and Data and Business Analytics)	IE Universidad	See +		36.9	69.9	40,733
2	78	Grado en Diseño e Innovación de Negocios Digitales / Bachelor in Digital Business Design and Innovation	Universitat Ramon Llull Barcelona (Cataluña)	See +		69.3	55.6	41,066
2	78	Grado en Inteligencia Empresarial y Análisis de Datos	Universitat Ramon Llull Barcelona (Cataluña)	See +		69.3	55.6	41,066

Table 3.1 shows the level of disaggregation of each of the indicators included in the calculation of the personalized ranking of degrees[22]. These indicators are the 23 that are used to calculate the rankings by institutions. The sources and the years used are also the same; however, the level of disaggregation varies. While the indicators in the general ranking are collected at area of study or university level, more disaggregated information is used for the personalized ranking when available. Thus, 13 of the 23 indicators involved in the calculation of the synthetic index of each degree correspond to a degree or group of degrees. It should be noted that the only difference with regards to the methodology of the general ranking is that the standardization of the indicators of the personalized ranking of degrees is done by family of degrees, not by area of study or university. In other words, the reference group for each degree would be the

[22] The dimensions, areas, and indicators used, as well as the definition of the indicators, sources, and period coincide with what is described in Annex 1 (overall ranking). As shown in the table, the only variation is in the column of level of disaggregation.

one that belongs to the same family of degrees and therefore, it is the median value of this family used for the standardization.

To sum up, the web tool for constructing personalized rankings is easy to use, very flexible, and is underpinned by a rigorous methodology identical to the one described in previous sections on how general rankings are constructed. Therefore, it is a complement to the latter with a high interest potential for students, families and careers counselors, as well as for universities themselves.

For this interest in the tool to be effective and useful, it is essential to keep all the supporting information up-to-date and to constantly improve the data offered, taking the users' experience into account. Along this line, last year's edition included information on the labor market insertion by degrees. In addition to an update of this data, this year's edition has improved the usability of the tool.

Table 3.1. **Indicators and level of disaggregation of the information used for the ranking by degree**

Dimension	Area	Indicator	Period
Teaching	Resources	Faculty member per 100 students	Area of study
		Budget per student	University
		Percentage of faculty members with PhD	Area of study
	Production	Success rate in bachelor's degree studies	Bachelor's Degree
		Evaluation rate in bachelor's degree studies	Bachelor's Degree
		Overall dropout rate in undergraduate studies	Bachelor's Degree
	Quality	Graduation efficiency rate	Area of study
		Retention rate	Bachelor's Degree
	internationalization	Percentage of foreign students	Bachelor's Degree
		Percentage of students in international mobility programs	University
Research and innovation	Resources	Competitive public funding secured for projects and research staff per PhD faculty member	Area of study
		Percentage of doctoral students	Area of study
	Production	Citable documents with ISI reference per faculty member with PhD	Area of study
		Number of national patents per 100 faculty members with PhD	University
		Doctoral theses read per 100 faculty members with PhD	Area of study
	Quality	Mean impact factor	Group of degrees
		Percentage of publications in the first quartile	Group of degrees
		Citations per document	Group of degrees
	internationalizations	European research funds per faculty member with PhD	University
		Percentage of publications with international co-authorship	Group of degrees
Labor market insertion	Employment	Average Social Security System employment rate	Bachelor's Degree
	Job-education match	Employed as graduates	Bachelor's Degree
	Income	Average contribution base	Bachelor's Degree

Source: Own elaboration.

3.3. COMPLEMENTARY INFORMATION ON GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

Graduate employability according to the degrees offered by a university influences the users' valuations of its services. The demand can be reinforced if a university offers degrees with a favorable employability outlook, especially if a certain degree has better employability results than those of the same degree in another university. Consequently, since the 8th edition of U-Ranking, employability indicators are offered instead of environmental data as in previous editions.

Labor market insertion is analyzed using the Spanish Social Security affiliation data of graduates with bachelor's degrees during the four years following graduation. In 2014, the Ministry of Universities published its first report with employability data along with the corresponding indicators on graduates from the 2009-10 academic course (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports and CCS 2014), focusing on 1st and 2nd cycle students. The 8th edition published the labor market results of the second wave of indicators corresponding to the situation from 2015 to 2018 of students who graduated in 2013-2014.

Currently, U-Ranking includes the latest data offered by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (2026d) corresponding to the situation in 2023 of bachelor's degree students who graduated in 2018-2019.

We have focused our attention on the employment situation of university graduates four years after obtaining their degree[23], taking into account three employment outcome indicators used in the calculation of the ranking:

a) Percentage in 2024 of Spanish university graduates who live in Spain and affiliated with Social Security and employed relative to the total number of graduates four years after graduating

b) Percentage in 2024 of university graduates employed in positions that match their level of education four years after graduating. University level is considered: Social Security contribution groups for professionals with higher education (engineers, graduates, senior management, and technical engineers)

c) Average annual contribution base in 2024 of graduates working as employees with a full-time contract 4 years after obtaining the degree.

Data on employability is presented as a supplementary to the ranking of degrees. The web tool offers the value of the degree for each one considered for the three indicators mentioned above. Data is available for 2,977 bachelor's degrees. For recently established degrees that do not yet have their own employment data, the tool displays the results of the corresponding field of study at the same university. If this information is also unavailable, the average for the field across the entire university system is shown, allowing users to get an idea of the expected employability levels.

[23] The report provides the data one year after graduation, but this information distorts the reality of degrees that require qualifying master's degrees to practice or additional national tests such as the MIR in medicine that make insertion unlikely one year after graduation.

Table 3.2. **Public price per credit at the time of first enrollment by region. 2025-2026 academic year (€/credit)**

Region	Average price	Min. price	Max. price
Andalusia	12.62	12.62	12.62
Aragon	17.37	13.10	20.02
Asturias	12.34	8.63	15.70
The Balearic Islands	15.56	11.18	20.08
The Canary Islands	12.50	9.47	14.59
Cantabria	13.34	9.95	15.56
Castile-La Mancha	16.09	12.13	18.87
Castile and Leon	13.64	10.41	18.45
Catalonia	18.15	17.69	18.46
The Valencian Community	15.38	12.79	18.00
Extremadura	14.19	9.88	17.74
Galicia	11.95	9.85	13.93
Madrid	18.55	16.92	20.68
Murcia	15.70	14.38	16.78
Navarre	19.29	15.10	21.38
Basque Country	16.55	13.42	18.92
La Rioja	16.89	14.08	22.68
UNED	16.21	13.00	21.60
Total Public universities	15.37*	12.90	18.24

Note: In Catalonia, the Generalitat de Catalunya, the public universities and the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), through the Agency for Management of University and Research Grants (AGAUR), have applied the "Equidad" (Equity) grants, which involve a reduction in the price paid per credit of enrollment by bachelor's and master's degree students of these universities, based on the level of family income, so the resulting prices, after deducting the grant, are those set out in Annex 6 of the Price Decree. Average tuition fee for the 2024–25 academic year.

Source: Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (2026b).

As in previous editions, 2026 also includes the price per credit for over 3,556 bachelor's degrees analyzed by U-Ranking, based on university statistics provided by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (2026b). These prices, despite the maximum limit set by the Spanish Ministry, can vary depending on the region, the university, the level of degree —bachelor, master, doctorate— the level of experimentality of the degree and the type of ownership of the center[24] offering that degree. As can be seen in **table 3.2**, the current range of fees by region is considerable, even more if differences of experimentality and level of degree are considered.

For this reason, it is relevant that the U-Ranking user will be able to easily know the price per credit at first registration for each bachelor's degree. The prices included in U-Ranking correspond to those established for the 2025-2026 academic year. Also, the cost was included by degree course or by credit offered by private universities when available on their webpage.

[24] U-Ranking also includes bachelor's degrees offered by private centers affiliated to public universities. In general, the price of these degrees includes an extra cost added on to the public prices.

Main results

04

This chapter presents the main findings of *U-Ranking 2026*, the 14th edition of the project. Both the university rankings and the personalized degree rankings have been updated and are available on the project website: https://u-ranking.es/.

As outlined in the introduction, the 2026 rankings include U-Ranking, which assesses the performance of each unit within the university system in terms of performance; U-Ranking Volume, which ranks institutions based on the total volume of their output; and U-Ranking Dimensions, which distinguishes outcomes in teaching, research and knowledge transfer, and graduate employability. All the rankings are also broken down by five fields of study: arts and humanities, social sciences and law, health sciences, sciences, and engineering and architecture.

The U-Ranking ecosystem thus enables users to explore the Spanish University System through a wide range of lenses and interests, all equally valid depending on the purpose of the analysis: identifying the most productive universities, determining which institutions contribute the greatest volume of results to the system, assessing performance in each of the system's core functions, namely teaching, research and innovation, and employability, and doing so across the different fields of study.

This chapter presents and analyses the results achieved by Spanish universities from the various perspectives considered in the project: U-Ranking, U-Ranking Volume, U-Ranking Dimensions and U-Ranking Fields of Study.

4.1. U-RANKING

Table 4.1 ranks the 71 Spanish universities analyzed according to their performance scores (*U-Ranking*). As a reminder, performance is defined as the relationship between the output achieved by the universities in the areas analyzed and the resources used to achieve it. That is, if two universities achieve the same output, the one that does so with fewer resources is considered more efficient—and therefore achieves a higher performance score. In this context, *performance* serves as an approximation to the traditional economic concept of *productivity*.

The ranking is based on a synthetic indicator calculated for each university, shown in the second column. Following the approach adopted in the previous edition, results are reported on a scaled index to facilitate interpretation: the top-performing university is assigned a score of 100 and all other universities are given proportionally lower scores based on their distance from the leader. Thus, a university with a score of 50 would have half the performance level of the leading institution. Universities are grouped according to their performance score, with up to ten possible groups, though some may be empty. The first group includes universities with a score of 90 or more; the second, those with a score between 80 and 90; the third, between 70 and 80; and so on.

Universities within the same group have broadly similar scores. Providing groupings alongside individual scores helps to smooth the interpretation, as minor differences in decimal values can otherwise result in significant changes in ranking, even when institutions perform at very similar levels. Being in the same performance group indicates that the differences between the institutions are moderate.

Applying this system, the 71 universities in this edition are grouped in 7 performance levels. Within each group of similar performance, universities are listed in order of their exact index score.

In table 4.1, universities aged 15 years or less are marked with an asterisk (*). The purpose of this annotation is to help readers adjust their interpretation of the results based on the following. A university must be able to demonstrate its teaching potential from the outset, as its graduates are expected to acquire all the competencies associated with an undergraduate degree. However, many of the outcomes in the research and innovation dimension require a longer period to materialize. This is because it takes time to build research teams and develop the necessary infrastructure, equipment and organizational capacity to realize their full potential. Marking universities founded within the last 15 years serves as a reminder that the lower scores in research and knowledge transfer often observed in younger institutions due to their relative youth. The passing of time and future editions will show the extent to which their research becomes consolidated and if they move up the corresponding rankings or, on the contrary, whether they focus on teaching activities and their research performance causes them to remain in lower positions in the research ranking, which will also weaken their positions in the overall ranking. At the end of table 4.1 is a list of universities that have not been ranked, because insufficient data is available to construct the necessary indicators. This list is included in order to highlight the value of the transparency shown by the universities that do appear in the rankings by generating and sharing the data required for inclusion, regardless of their position. Sixteen of the unranked universities are marked with an asterisk to indicate that they are newer universities (≤15 years old) and it is reasonable to expect that the lack of information is largely due to their relative youth—some indicators, such as those relating to labor market outcomes, require a considerable period of time before they become available—but that they will gradually be included into the ranking.

In this regard, when interpreting the results of a university included in the ranking, it is important to bear in mind that a significant portion of the private university sector is not included in the ranking for lack of data. This means that a university listed in the lowest performance group (Group 7 in the 2026 ranking) may in fact outperform an indeterminate number of institutions that are not included simply because of lack of information.

The following section highlights some noteworthy cardinal and ordinal differences between the universities, regarding performance.

One of the most striking aspects is that the range of index values on which the ranking is based reveals—as in previous editions—significant differences in performance among Spanish universities. Therefore, the most productive institutions achieve results three times higher than those at the bottom of the table (indices around 90 compared with those around 30).

The top-performing group in *U-Ranking*—those with an index score of 90 or above, labelled as Group 1—comprises seven universities. Leading the ranking is Universitat Pompeu Fabra. It is followed by Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Autònoma de Barcelona, Politècnica de València, Universitat de Barcelona, Autónoma de Madrid and Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. No private universities are found in this first tier.

Eight universities fall into the second-highest performance group (Group 2), with index scores between 80 and 90. This group is led by the first private university in the ranking, Universidad de Navarra, followed by Universitat Rovira i Virgili and includes the universities of Santiago, Valencia, Politécnica de Madrid, Girona, Vigo and Cantabria.

Table 4.1. **U-Ranking of Spanish universities 2026**

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. Pompeu Fabra	G1	100	**IE Universidad**	G3	72	**U. Oberta de Catalunya**	G5	59
U. Politècnica de Catalunya		94	U. de les Illes Balears		72	**U. Católica de Valencia**		55
U. Autònoma de Barcelona		93	**Mondragon Unibertsitatea**		72	**U. Europea de Madrid**		53
U. Politècnica de València		92	**U. Ramon Llull**		72	**U. Cardenal Herrera - CEU**		52
U. de Barcelona		92	U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		72	UNED	G6	50
U. Autónoma de Madrid		90	U. de León		71	**U. Nebrija**		46
U. Carlos III		90	U. de Alicante		71	**U. Pontificia de Salamanca**		43
U. de Navarra	G2	88	**U. de Deusto**		71	**U. Fernando Pessoa-Canarias***		43
U. Rovira i Virgili		86	U. de Valladolid		71	**U. Internacional de La Rioja**		40
U. de Santiago de Compostela		85	U. da Coruña		70	**U. Camilo José Cela**		40
U. de València		84	U. de Murcia		70	**UDIMA**		39
U. Politécnica de Madrid		83	U. de Oviedo		70	**U. Europea de Canarias**	G7	38
U. de Girona		83	U. de Sevilla		70	**U. Internacional Valenciana**		35
U. de Vigo		81	U. de Almería	G4	69	**U. Europea de Valencia***		34
U. de Cantabria		80	U. Pablo de Olavide		68	**CUNEF***		
U. de Lleida	G3	78	U. de Castilla-La Mancha		67	**ESIC***		
U. del País Vasco		78	U. de La Rioja		67	**U. Abat Oliba CEU**		
U. de Burgos		78	U. de Málaga		67	**U. Alfonso X el Sabio**		
U. de Alcalá		77	U. de Jaén		66	**U. Alfonso X el Sabio Mare Nostrum***		
U. Internacional de Catalunya		77	U. de La Laguna		66	**U. Católica Santa Teresa de Jesús**		
U. Pública de Navarra		76	U. de Cádiz		66	**U. CEU - Fernando III***		
U. de Zaragoza		75	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		64	**U. de Diseño, Innovación y Tecnología***		
U. de Salamanca		75	**U. Pontificia Comillas**		64	**U. de las Hespérides***		
U. de Granada		75	**U. San Pablo - CEU**		62	**U. del Atlántico Medio***		
U. Politécnica de Cartagena		75	**U. Católica San Antonio**		62	**U. Euneiz***		
U. de Córdoba		74	U. de Huelva		61	**U. Europea de Andalucía***		
U. Complutense		74	U. de Extremadura		60	**U. Europea del Atlántico***		
U. Jaume I		73	U. Rey Juan Carlos		60	**U. Europea Miguel de Cervantes**		
U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya		73				**U. Francisco de Vitoria**		
						U. Intercontinental de la Empresa*		
						U. Internacional de la Empresa*		
						U. Internacional Isabel I de Castilla*		
						U. Internacional Villanueva*		
						U. Loyola Andalucía*		
						U. San Jorge		
						U. Tecnológica Atlántico-Mediterráneo*		

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. The 19 universities without a score could not be analyzed due to lack of data. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

The third tier, Group 3, comprises institutions with performance scores between 70 and 80 and is the largest group, containing 27 universities. The fact that the largest share of universities scores above 70 reflects the strong average performance of our higher education system. Heading this group is Universitat de Lleida, followed by País Vasco, Burgos and Alcalá. Six private universities appear in this group: Universitat Internacional de Catalunya, Universitat de Vic-Universitat Central de Catalunya, IE Universidad, Mondragón, Ramon Llull and Deusto. This group includes several large institutions, such as Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Universidad de Granada and Universidad de Sevilla, as well as the other three public universities in the Valencian Community—Jaume I, Alicante and Miguel Hernández.

Group 4, with scores between 60 and 70, is led by Universidad de Almería and includes several Andalusian universities, such as Pablo de Olavide, Málaga, Cádiz, Jaén and Huelva, both the public universities in the Canary Islands, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Universidad de Extremadura, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos and three private institutions. Leading the private universities in this group is Universidad Pontificia Comillas, San Pablo-CEU and Universidad Católica de San Antonio.

Groups 5 (score ≥50 and <60), 6 (score ≥40 and <50) and 7 (score ≥30 and <40) are composed almost entirely of private universities, with the exception of the public distance-learning institution UNED, which appears in Group 6. It is worth reiterating that many institutions not included in the ranking—due to insufficient data—could well rank below those listed in these groups. These omitted institutions are shown in a shaded box at the end of the table.

As noted in the introduction, this 14th edition of *U-Ranking* consolidates the numerous and significant methodological changes introduced in the previous edition, including the incorporation of graduate employability as a ranking dimension and revisions to certain indicators as a result of improvements in data availability. These changes —especially the inclusion of employability—inevitably altered the ranking positions of the 2025 edition, making comparisons with the 2024 edition heavily influenced by the methodological changes. Nevertheless, the 2026 edition now allows for a direct comparison with the previous edition, as both share the same set of indicators and dimensions.

Taking the above into account, it is worth examining the extent to which universities maintain stable positions under the new set of indicators and dimensions. It should be noted that a high degree of volatility between two consecutive editions would not be a desirable outcome from a methodological perspective, since a university system does not undergo significant transformation from one year to the next. Equally, a complete absence of movement would also be undesirable, as it would suggest that the indicator system lacks sufficient sensitivity to capture the changes in university performance that inevitably occur over time: the number of published articles rises or falls, dropout rates vary, more or fewer competitive research grants are secured, and so forth.

In this regard, a comparison of the 2025 and 2026 editions shows that the 15 universities occupying the top positions, namely those belonging to the first two groups, were already in the top groups in 2025. The only change is that Universidad de Navarra moved from Group 1 to Group 2. In other words, the criteria used to construct the ranking refine the ordering of the highest-performing universities, with some changes occurring within groups, but the institutions that performed best continue to do so.

In 2026, Universitat Pompeu Fabra continues in first place, joined by the universities also featured in the top five positions in 2025: Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Universitat Politècnica de València, and the University of Barcelona. In short, the university system confirms that institutions which stand out continue to do so consistently, even when a new factor such as employability is taken into account, whose year-to-year evolution could have had an impact that was difficult to anticipate. Although all universities in this group are located in regions with stronger demand for highly qualified labor, changes in the employability indicator between 2025 and 2026 have not, in themselves, altered the composition of the leading group.

4.2. U-RANKING VOLUME

Table 4.2 shows the index and ranking of the 71 Spanish universities evaluated by volume of output (*U-Ranking Volume*). Unlike the performance ranking, this index also incorporates university size. The interest in the volume index is important because a small university may have high performance (for instance, its faculty may publish nearly all their articles in top-quartile journals), but its overall impact on society and the university system as a whole will be limited due to its small size. When assessing the output volume, the focus is on the total number of contributions a university makes to the system. A university with 100 faculty members publishing 100 articles is more productive than one with 1,000 faculty members publishing 500, but the latter contributes more in absolute terms.

However, a very large university may have lower performance (e.g. a smaller proportion of its articles published in top-quartile journals), but if its overall output (i.e. total number of articles published in top-quartile journals) is greater in absolute terms, it will have a more substantial impact.

Given these considerations, the choice between performance and volume depends on the objectives of the analyst assessing the university system. For this reason, U-Ranking, unlike other rankings, provides both perspectives. The choice of one ranking or the other will depend on the purpose of the analysis—just as in economics, the focus may at times be on productivity and other times on total output. What *U-Ranking* offers is precisely the possibility of choosing between these two perspectives.

Table 4.2. **U-Ranking Volume of Spanish universities 2026**

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. Complutense	G1	100	U. Pompeu Fabra	G8	24	U. Politécnica de Cartagena	G10	9
U. de Barcelona	G2	89	**U. Oberta de Catalunya**		24	**Mondragon Unibertsitatea**		9
U. de València		83	U. de Extremadura		24	**U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya**		9
U. de Granada	G3	78	U. da Coruña		24	**U. Internacional de Catalunya**		8
U. de Sevilla		77	U. Rovira i Virgili		23	U. de La Rioja		7
U. del País Vasco		76	**U. Ramon Llull**		22	**U. Nebrija**		6
U. Politècnica de València	G4	64	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		21	**U. Internacional Valenciana**		6
U. Autònoma de Barcelona		62	U. Jaume I		20	**U. Camilo José Cela**		4
U. Politécnica de Madrid		61	**U. Internacional de La Rioja**		20	**U. Pontificia de Salamanca**		3
U. Politècnica de Catalunya	G5	58	U. de Girona		20	**IE Universidad**		3
U. Autónoma de Madrid		56	U. de Cantabria	G9	19	**UDIMA**		3
U. de Zaragoza		50	U. de les Illes Balears		19	**U. Europea de Valencia***		2
U. de Santiago de Compostela	G6	47	U. de Jaén		18	**U. Europea de Canarias**		1
U. de Málaga		44	U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		17	**U. Fernando Pessoa-Canarias***		1
UNED		43	U. de Almería		17	**CUNEF***		
U. de Murcia		40	U. Pública de Navarra		16	**ESIC***		
U. de Salamanca	G7	38	U. de Lleida		15	**U. Abat Oliba CEU**		
U. Carlos III		37	**U. Europea de Madrid**		15	**U. Alfonso X el Sabio**		
U. de Castilla-La Mancha		36	U. de León		15	**U. Alfonso X el Sabio Mare Nostrum***		
U. de Alicante		35	U. Pablo de Olavide		15	**U. Católica Santa Teresa de Jesús**		
U. Rey Juan Carlos		34	**U. San Pablo - CEU**		13	**U. CEU - Fernando III***		
U. de Valladolid		33	**U. de Deusto**		13	**U. de Diseño, Innovación y Tecnología***		
U. de Oviedo		33	U. de Huelva		13	**U. de las Hespérides***		
U. de Vigo		30	**U. Pontificia Comillas**		12	**U. del Atlántico Medio***		
U. de Alcalá	G8	28	U. de Burgos		12	**U. Europea de Andalucía***		
U. de Córdoba		28	**U. Católica San Antonio**		12	**U. Europea del Atlántico***		
U. de Cádiz		26	**U. Católica de Valencia**		10	**U. Europea Miguel de Cervantes**		
U. de La Laguna		26	**U. Cardenal Herrera - CEU**		10	**U. Francisco de Vitoria**		
U. de Navarra		26				**U. Intercontinental de la Empresa***		
						U. Internacional de la Empresa*		
						U. Internacional Isabel I de Castilla*		
						U. Internacional Villanueva*		
						U. Loyola Andalucía*		
						U. San Jorge		
						U. Tecnológica Atlántico-Mediterráneo*		

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. The 19 universities without a score could not be analyzed due to lack of data. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

In *U-Ranking Volume*, there are more groups of universities because the range of index values is much wider. In the performance ranking, the lowest score was 34, whereas in the volume ranking it drops to 1, reflecting the presence of very small institutions. Unlike the performance ranking, which classified the 71 universities into 7 groups, *U-Ranking Volume* divides them into the maximum of 10 groups (one for each 10-point band: 0–9, 10–19, ..., 90–100). A broader distribution highlights the greater heterogeneity of the university system in terms of the size–performance combination and therefore introduces greater variability into the ranking.

Universidad Complutense de Madrid leads the volume ranking, alone in Group 1 (score 90–100). It is followed, in Group 2 (score ≥80 and <90), by the universities of Barcelona and Valencia. The universities of Granada, Sevilla and País Vasco, in that order, make up Group 3 (score ≥70 and <80), while the polytechnic universities of Valencia and Madrid, along with Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, form Group 4 (score ≥60 and <70).

The volume ranking highlights the predominance, among private universities, of institutions that are significantly smaller in size than their public counterparts. As a result, private universities tend to rank lower in the volume-based assessment than they did in the performance-based ranking. In **table 4.2**, all the private universities appear in Group 8 and below, with the majority concentrated in Groups 9 and 10. Universidad de Navarra (top among the private institutions), Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) and Universitat Ramon Llull and Internacional de La Rioja are all placed in Group 8 (score ≥20 and <30). These four are the highest-ranked private universities in terms of

output volume, combining relatively strong results with a larger scale of activity.

As noted in the discussion of the performance ranking, despite the methodological changes introduced in 2025 relative to 2024, which are maintained in 2026, the comparison with the previous years reveals a remarkable degree of stability in this ranking, reflecting the structural nature of university size. Not only does the group of the top 15 universities remain unchanged, but their relative order also remains the same.

4.3. U-RANKING DIMENSIONS: TEACHING, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AND LABOR MARKET INSERTION

The methodology used in *U-Ranking* constructs also indicators for specific outcomes in teaching, research and innovation, and graduate employability. The results for each dimension can also be analyzed separately to create individual rankings for teaching, research and innovation, and employability. Each of these can be calculated using either the performance or the volume approach. The presentation of rankings by function provides insight into whether universities vary in their performance in each of the three areas, without engaging in debate over the relative importance of each activity, a matter that cannot be overlooked when combining performance across dimensions into a single index, as described in the methodology section.

Tables 4.3 to **4.5** present the rankings for all the Spanish universities for each dimension. The performance rankings reveal a clear pattern of specialization among private universities: they all perform better, compared to the overall ranking, in teaching and employability, but less well in research and innovation.

Focusing on teaching performance, **table 4.3** shows a private university—Universidad de Navarra—at the top of the teaching ranking. It appears in the highest performance group (score >90), along with five other private universities (Ramon Llull, IE University, Mondragon Unibertsitatea, Universitat Internacional de Catalunya and Universidad Pontificia Comillas) and three public universities: Universitat Politècnica de València, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid and Pompeu Fabra University. An important finding is that teaching performance across the university system is significantly more homogeneous than in performance in the overall ranking. The top-ranked university records a score only twice as high as that of the lowest-ranked one, whereas in the general ranking it was three times higher. As a result, all the universities are in just five groups. The group of universities scoring above 80 and 70 points are particularly large, comprising 18 and 35 universities, respectively, and include a mix of public and private institutions. Three of the top five universities in Group 2, for example, are public (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Universitat de València and Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, while the remaining two are private (Deusto and CEU San Pablo).

This relative homogeneity in teaching performance and the balance between public and private universities breaks down completely when we turn to research and innovation performance, as shown in **table 4.4**. The research performance of the top university is ten times that of the lowest-ranked institution, and the universities are spread across nine performance groups. Moreover, the first private university—once again, Universidad de Navarra—does not appear until Group 4 (score ≥60 and <70). The lowest-performing groups, Groups 7, 8 and 9, are composed almost exclusively of private universities.

The research and innovation performance ranking is led by Universitat Pompeu Fabra, in a group with an index score of 90 or above, accompanied by two other Catalan universities: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and Universitat de Barcelona. The second-highest performance group (score ≥80 and <90) comprises the polytechnic universities of Catalonia and Valencia, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela and Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. In Group 3 (score ≥70 and <80), we find Universidad Carlos III, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Vigo, Girona and Valencia.

Table 4.3. **U-Ranking of Spanish universities 2026. Teaching**

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. de Navarra	G1	100	U. de León	G3	79	**U. Católica San Antonio**	G4	69
U. Ramon Llull		97	U. de Burgos		78	U. de La Laguna		66
U. Politècnica de València		93	U. de Salamanca		77	U. Rey Juan Carlos		64
IE Universidad		93	U. Rovira i Virgili		77	**U. Pontificia de Salamanca**		63
Mondragon Unibertsitatea		92	U. de Valladolid		77	**UDIMA**		63
U. Internacional de Catalunya		92	U. de Almería		77	**U. Fernando Pessoa-Canarias***		61
U. Pontificia Comillas		91	U. de Jaén		77	**U. Camilo José Cela**	G5	58
U. Carlos III		91	**U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya**		77	**U. Oberta de Catalunya**		58
U. Pompeu Fabra		90	**U. Internacional Valenciana**		76	UNED		51
U. Politècnica de Catalunya	G2	88	U. Jaume I		76			
U. de València		87	U. Politécnica de Madrid		76			
U. de Deusto		87	U. de Santiago de Compostela		76			
U. Autónoma de Madrid		86	U. de Alicante		75			
U. San Pablo - CEU		85	**U. Católica de Valencia**		75			
U. Pública de Navarra		84	U. Pablo de Olavide		75			
U. Europea de Madrid		84	U. de Vigo		75			
U. Internacional de La Rioja		83	U. de Córdoba		75			
U. Cardenal Herrera - CEU		83	U. Politécnica de Cartagena		74			
U. de Zaragoza		83	**U. Nebrija**		74			
U. del País Vasco		82	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		73			
U. de Granada		81	U. de Málaga		73			
U. de La Rioja		81	U. de Huelva		72			
U. de Barcelona		80	U. da Coruña		72			
U. Europea de Valencia*		80	U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		72			
U. de Lleida		80	U. de Murcia		72			
U. de Cantabria		80	**U. Europea de Canarias**		71			
U. Complutense		80	U. de Castilla-La Mancha		71			
U. de Oviedo	G3	79	U. de Sevilla		71			
U. Autònoma de Barcelona		79	U. de Extremadura		71			
U. de Girona		79	U. de les Illes Balears		70			
U. de Alcalá		79	U. de Cádiz		70			

CUNEF*
ESIC*
U. Abat Oliba CEU
U. Alfonso X el Sabio
U. Alfonso X el Sabio Mare Nostrum*
U. Católica Santa Teresa de Jesús
U. CEU - Fernando III*
U. de Diseño, Innovación y Tecnología*
U. de las Hespérides*
U. del Atlántico Medio*
U. Euneiz*
U. Europea de Andalucía*
U. Europea del Atlántico*
U. Europea Miguel de Cervantes
U. Francisco de Vitoria
U. Intercontinental de la Empresa*
U. Internacional de la Empresa*
U. Internacional Isabel I de Castilla*
U. Internacional Villanueva*
U. Loyola Andalucía*
U. San Jorge
U. Tecnológica Atlántico-Mediterráneo*

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. The 19 universities without a score could not be analyzed due to lack of data. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Turning to **table 4.5**, which presents the results for the graduate employability dimension, again we observe a remarkable degree of uniformity across the Spanish university system—greater even than in the teaching dimension. The performance of the top university is only 1.4 times higher than that of the university with the lowest employability score. Another clear sign of the overall consistency in this dimension is that nearly all the universities fall within the top three performance groups (score ≥70, ≥80 and ≥90).

The ranking is led by Universidad de Nebrija, in a group of 22 universities of which only six are public and three are polytechnic universities: those of Madrid, Catalonia and Cartagena. As with teaching performance, private universities are well positioned in terms of graduate employability. For a more in-depth discussion of these findings, readers are referred to the analysis undertaken by the authors of U-Ranking in the report specifically on this issue, published in conjunction with the twelfth edition of the ranking (Pérez and Aldás 2024). In broad terms, the strong employability performance observed can be attributed to a combination of factors, including the more favorable social backgrounds of students, the concentration of these universities in metropolitan areas characterized by strong demand for skilled labor, their specialization in programs with high employability outcomes, and the more intensive and personalized support provided to graduates in their transition to the labor market.

Table 4.4. **U-Ranking of Spanish universities 2026. Research and innovation**

University	Group	Index
U. Pompeu Fabra	G1	100
U. Autònoma de Barcelona		94
U. de Barcelona		91
U. Politècnica de Catalunya	G2	86
U. Rovira i Virgili		82
U. de Santiago de Compostela		82
U. Autónoma de Madrid		82
U. Politècnica de València		80
U. Carlos III	G3	76
U. Politécnica de Madrid		76
U. de Vigo		75
U. de Girona		74
U. de València		70
U. de Cantabria	G4	67
U. de Burgos		66
U. de Navarra		65
U. de Alcalá		63
U. de Lleida		63
U. de Córdoba		62
U. del País Vasco		61
U. de les Illes Balears		61
U. Politécnica de Cartagena		61
U. de Salamanca		60
U. Miguel Hernández de Elche	G5	58
U. Jaume I		58
U. Complutense		58
U. de Granada		58
U. de Murcia		57
U. da Coruña		57
U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya		56
U. de Alicante	G5	56
U. de Sevilla		56
U. Pública de Navarra		56
U. de Zaragoza		56
U. de León		53
U. de Valladolid		53
U. de La Laguna		53
U. Internacional de Catalunya		52
U. de Almería		52
U. Pablo de Olavide		51
U. de Castilla-La Mancha		51
U. de Cádiz		50
U. de Oviedo		50
U. de Málaga		50
U. de Jaén	G6	47
U. de Deusto		47
U. Oberta de Catalunya		47
IE Universidad		46
U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		45
U. de La Rioja		45
Mondragon Unibertsitatea		45
U. Rey Juan Carlos		45
U. Católica San Antonio		44
U. Ramon Llull		43
U. de Huelva		41
U. de Extremadura		41
UNED	G7	37
U. San Pablo - CEU		36
U. Pontificia Comillas		35
U. Católica de Valencia		31
U. Europea de Madrid	G8	25
U. Cardenal Herrera - CEU		25
U. Fernando Pessoa-Canarias*		21
U. Pontificia de Salamanca		21
U. Nebrija		21
U. Camilo José Cela	G9	19
UDIMA		17
U. Europea de Canarias		14
U. Internacional de La Rioja		14
U. Internacional Valenciana		11
U. Europea de Valencia*		10
CUNEF*		
ESIC*		
U. Abat Oliba CEU		
U. Alfonso X el Sabio		
U. Alfonso X el Sabio Mare Nostrum*		
U. Católica Santa Teresa de Jesús		
U. CEU - Fernando III*		
U. de Diseño, Innovación y Tecnología*		
U. de las Hespérides*		
U. del Atlántico Medio*		
U. Euneiz*		
U. Europea de Andalucía*		
U. Europea del Atlántico*		
U. Europea Miguel de Cervantes		
U. Francisco de Vitoria		
U. Intercontinental de la Empresa*		
U. Internacional de la Empresa*		
U. Internacional Isabel I de Castilla*		
U. Internacional Villanueva*		
U. Loyola Andalucía*		
U. San Jorge		
U. Tecnológica Atlántico-Mediterráneo*		

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. The 19 universities without a score could not be analyzed due to lack of data. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

The results of the different dimensions discussed above refer to performance-based results, but, as previously emphasized, the volume-based perspective is also of interest, particularly when the aim is to assess overall impact on the system as a whole, regardless of whether that impact is achieved with greater or lesser efficiency.

Table 4.6 presents the volume-based results for the teaching dimension. Here, Universidad Complutense de Madrid leads the ranking and stands alone in Group 1, with an index above 90. It is followed in Group 2 (score >80 and <90) by the Universidad de Granada, and in Group 3 (score ≥70 and <80), the universities of València, País Vasco, Barcelona and Sevilla.

The smaller relative size of private universities means that, although they performed strongly in the performance ranking, they are less prominent here. The highest-ranked private institution, International University of La Rioja, does not appear until Group 7 (score ≥30).

Table 4.5. U-Ranking of Spanish universities 2026. Labor market insertion

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. Nebrija	G1	100	U. de La Rioja	G2	87	U. de Cádiz	G3	79
U. Internacional de Catalunya		99	U. Autònoma de Barcelona		87	U. de Granada		79
U. Fernando Pessoa-Canarias*		99	**U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya**		86	U. Rey Juan Carlos		79
U. Pontificia Comillas		98	U. de Alcalá		86	U. Jaume I		78
U. Camilo José Cela		98	U. de les Illes Balears		86	U. de Jaén		78
U. Internacional Valenciana		98	U. Autónoma de Madrid		86	**U. Europea de Canarias**		77
U. Politécnica de Madrid		97	U. de Santiago de Compostela		86	U. de Málaga		77
U. de Navarra		97	U. Politècnica de València		86	U. de Huelva		77
U. Pontificia de Salamanca		96	U. de Oviedo		85	U. de Alicante		76
U. Internacional de La Rioja		95	U. de Valladolid		85	U. de Almería		74
U. Cardenal Herrera - CEU		95	U. de Barcelona		85	U. Pablo de Olavide		74
U. Católica de Valencia		94	U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		85			
U. San Pablo - CEU		94	U. de Salamanca		84			
UDIMA		94	U. de León		84			
U. Europea de Madrid		94	U. de La Laguna		84			
Mondragon Unibertsitatea		93	UNED		84			
U. Politécnica de Cartagena		93	U. de València		83			
U. Católica San Antonio		92	U. de Sevilla		83			
U. de Lleida		91	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		83			
U. Politècnica de Catalunya		91	U. Pompeu Fabra		82			
U. del País Vasco		91	**U. Europea de Valencia***		82			
U. Carlos III		90	U. da Coruña		81			
U. Pública de Navarra	G2	89	U. Complutense		81			
U. Rovira i Virgili		89	U. de Burgos		81			
U. Ramon Llull		89	U. de Vigo		81			
U. Oberta de Catalunya		89	U. de Extremadura		81			
U. de Castilla-La Mancha		89	U. de Córdoba		81			
U. de Zaragoza		88	U. de Murcia		80			
U. de Deusto		88	U. de Girona		80			
IE Universidad		88						
U. de Cantabria		87						

CUNEF*
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U. Abat Oliba CEU
U. Alfonso X el Sabio
U. Alfonso X el Sabio Mare Nostrum*
U. Católica Santa Teresa de Jesús
U. CEU - Fernando III*
U. de Diseño, Innovación y Tecnología*
U. de las Hespérides*
U. del Atlántico Medio*
U. Euneiz*
U. Europea de Andalucía*
U. Europea del Atlántico*
U. Europea Miguel de Cervantes
U. Francisco de Vitoria
U. Intercontinental de la Empresa*
U. Internacional de la Empresa*
U. Internacional Isabel I de Castilla*
U. Internacional Villanueva*
U. Loyola Andalucía*
U. San Jorge
U. Tecnológica Atlántico-Mediterráneo*

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. The 19 universities without a score could not be analyzed due to lack of data. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Fuente: Fundación BBVA-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026)

Table 4.7 presents the volume-based results for research and knowledge transfer, led by Universitat de Barcelona in Group 1. In Group 2 appears Universidad Complutense de Madrid (score ≥80). Universitat de València, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and Universidad de Sevilla make up Group 3 (score ≥70). In research and knowledge, the smaller size of private universities is compounded, as previously noted, by their lower level of research specialization. As a result, the top-ranked private universities—UOC (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya) and Universidad de Navarra—appear in Group 8 (score ≥20 and <30).

Employability is perhaps the dimension in which the volume-based analysis is most relevant, as the number of graduates entering suitable employment has a greater impact on the available human capital in the system than the efficiency with which that human capital is produced (although the latter also matters in terms of rational resource use). From this volume perspective, **table 4.8** shows that Universidad Complutense de Madrid leads the ranking as the sole member of Group 1, followed in Group 2 by the universities of Sevilla and País Vasco and in Group 3 by the universities of Barcelona, Granada and Valencia.

Table 4.6. **U-Ranking Volume of Spanish universities 2026. Teaching**

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. Complutense	G1	100	U. de Córdoba	G8	26	U. Politécnica de Cartagena	G10	9
U. de Granada	G2	80	U. de La Laguna		25	**U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya**		9
U. de València	G3	79	**U. Europea de Madrid**		23	**U. Internacional de Catalunya**		8
U. del País Vasco		75	U. da Coruña		23	U. de La Rioja		8
U. de Sevilla		73	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		22	**U. Camilo José Cela**		5
U. de Barcelona		73	**U. Oberta de Catalunya**		22	**U. Europea de Valencia***		5
U. Politècnica de València	G4	60	U. Pompeu Fabra		20	**UDIMA**		4
U. de Zaragoza	G5	52	U. de Jaén		20	**U. Pontificia de Salamanca**		4
U. Politécnica de Madrid		52	U. Jaume I		19	**IE Universidad**		3
U. Politècnica de Catalunya		50	U. Rovira i Virgili	G9	19	**U. Europea de Canarias**		1
U. Autónoma de Madrid		50	U. de Almería		18	**U. Fernando Pessoa-Canarias***		1
U. Autònoma de Barcelona	G6	49	U. de Cantabria		18	**CUNEF***		
U. de Málaga		45	U. de Girona		17	**ESIC***		
UNED		41	U. de les Illes Balears		17	**U. Abat Oliba CEU**		
U. de Santiago de Compostela	G7	39	U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		16	**U. Alfonso X el Sabio**		
U. Internacional de La Rioja		38	**U. San Pablo - CEU**		16	**U. Alfonso X el Sabio Mare Nostrum***		
U. de Murcia		38	U. Pública de Navarra		16	**U. Católica Santa Teresa de Jesús**		
U. de Salamanca		36	**U. Pontificia Comillas**		16	**U. CEU - Fernando III***		
U. de Castilla-La Mancha		36	U. de León		16	**U. de Diseño, Innovación y Tecnología***		
U. Carlos III		35	U. Pablo de Olavide		15	**U. de las Hespérides***		
U. de Oviedo		35	U. de Lleida		15	**U. del Atlántico Medio***		
U. Rey Juan Carlos		34	**U. de Deusto**		15	**U. Euneiz***		
U. de Alicante		34	**U. Cardenal Herrera - CEU**		14	**U. Europea de Andalucía***		
U. de Valladolid		34	U. de Huelva		14	**U. Europea del Atlántico***		
U. Ramon Llull	G8	28	**U. Católica de Valencia**		13	**U. Europea Miguel de Cervantes**		
U. de Navarra		28	**U. Internacional Valenciana**		12	**U. Francisco de Vitoria**		
U. de Alcalá		26	**U. Católica San Antonio**		12	**U. Intercontinental de la Empresa***		
U. de Cádiz		26	**Mondragon Unibertsitatea**		11	**U. Internacional de la Empresa***		
U. de Extremadura		26	U. de Burgos		11	**U. Internacional Isabel I de Castilla***		
U. de Vigo		26	**U. Nebrija**		10	**U. Internacional Villanueva***		
						U. Loyola Andalucía*		
						U. San Jorge		
						U. Tecnológica Atlántico-Mediterráneo*		

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. The 19 universities without a score could not be analyzed due to lack of data. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Table 4.7. **U-Ranking Volume of Spanish universities 2026. Research and innovation**

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. de Barcelona	G1	100	**U. de Navarra**	G8	22	U. de La Rioja	G10	5
U. Complutense	G2	88	U. da Coruña		22	**U. Cardenal Herrera - CEU**		5
U. de València	G3	78	**U. Oberta de Catalunya**		21	**U. Nebrija**		3
U. Autònoma de Barcelona		71	U. de Girona		20	**U. Camilo José Cela**		2
U. de Sevilla		70	U. de Extremadura	G9	18	**U. Internacional Valenciana**		2
U. de Granada	G4	68	U. de Cantabria		18	**IE Universidad**		2
U. del País Vasco		68	U. Jaume I		18	**U. Pontificia de Salamanca**		1
U. Politècnica de València		63	U. de les Illes Balears		18	**UDIMA**		1
U. Politécnica de Madrid		63	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		17	**U. Europea de Valencia***		1
U. Politècnica de Catalunya	G5	59	U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		16	**U. Fernando Pessoa-Canarias***		<1
U. Autónoma de Madrid		57	**U. Ramon Llull**		15	**U. Europea de Canarias**		<1
U. de Santiago de Compostela		51	U. de Almería		15			
U. de Zaragoza	G6	42	U. de Jaén		15			
U. de Málaga	G7	37	U. de Lleida		14			
U. de Murcia		36	U. Pública de Navarra		13			
UNED		36	U. de León		13			
U. Carlos III		35	U. Pablo de Olavide		13			
U. de Salamanca		34	U. de Burgos		11			
U. de Vigo		31	U. de Huelva		10			
U. de Castilla-La Mancha		31	**U. de Deusto**		10			
U. de Alicante		31	**U. Católica San Antonio**	G10	9			
U. Rey Juan Carlos	G8	29	U. Politécnica de Cartagena		9			
U. de Valladolid		28	**U. San Pablo - CEU**		8			
U. Pompeu Fabra		27	**U. Europea de Madrid**		8			
U. de Oviedo		27	**U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya**		8			
U. de Córdoba		26	**U. Internacional de La Rioja**		8			
U. de Alcalá		26	**U. Pontificia Comillas**		7			
U. Rovira i Virgili		24	**Mondragon Unibertsitatea**		7			
U. de La Laguna		24	**U. Católica de Valencia**		6			
U. de Cádiz		23	**U. Internacional de Catalunya**		6			

CUNEF*
ESIC*
U. Abat Oliba CEU
U. Alfonso X el Sabio
U. Alfonso X el Sabio Mare Nostrum*
U. Católica Santa Teresa de Jesús
U. CEU - Fernando III*
U. de Diseño, Innovación y Tecnología*
U. de las Hespérides*
U. del Atlántico Medio*
U. Euneiz*
U. Europea de Andalucía*
U. Europea del Atlántico*
U. Europea Miguel de Cervantes
U. Francisco de Vitoria
U. Intercontinental de la Empresa*
U. Internacional de la Empresa*
U. Internacional Isabel I de Castilla*
U. Internacional Villanueva*
U. Loyola Andalucía*
U. San Jorge
U. Tecnológica Atlántico-Mediterráneo*

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. The 19 universities without a score could not be analyzed due to lack of data. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Table 4.8. U-Ranking Volume of Spanish universities 2026. Labor market insertion

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. Complutense	G1	100	**U. de Navarra**	G8	26	**U. Internacional de Catalunya**	G10	9,0
U. de Sevilla	G2	84	**U. Ramon Llull**		25	**U. Camilo José Cela**		8,9
U. del País Vasco		81	**U. Europea de Madrid**		25	U. de La Rioja		8,3
U. de Granada	G3	76	U. da Coruña		25	**UDIMA**		5,6
U. de Barcelona		76	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		25	**U. Pontificia de Salamanca**		5,5
U. de València		75	U. Rovira i Virgili		22	**U. Europea de Valencia***		5,0
UNED	G4	66	U. de les Illes Balears		20	**IE Universidad**		2,9
U. Politécnica de Madrid		65	U. de Jaén		20	**U. Europea de Canarias**		1,5
U. Politècnica de València	G5	54	U. Jaume I	G9	19	**U. Fernando Pessoa-Canarias***		1,4
U. de Zaragoza		54	U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		19			
U. Autònoma de Barcelona		53	U. de Cantabria		19			
U. Politècnica de Catalunya		51	U. Pompeu Fabra		18			
U. Autónoma de Madrid	G6	49	**U. San Pablo - CEU**		18			
U. de Málaga		47	U. de Girona		17			
U. de Castilla-La Mancha		43	U. de Almería		17			
U. de Santiago de Compostela		43	U. Pública de Navarra		17			
U. Internacional de La Rioja		42	**U. Pontificia Comillas**		17			
U. de Murcia		42	U. de León		17			
U. Rey Juan Carlos		41	U. de Lleida		17			
U. de Salamanca	G7	39	**U. Cardenal Herrera - CEU**		16			
U. de Oviedo		37	**U. Católica San Antonio**		16			
U. de Valladolid		36	**U. Católica de Valencia**		15			
U. Carlos III		34	**U. Internacional Valenciana**		15			
U. de Alicante		34	U. Pablo de Olavide		15			
U. Oberta de Catalunya		33	U. de Huelva		15			
U. de La Laguna		31	**U. de Deusto**		14			
U. de Extremadura	G8	29	**U. Nebrija**		13			
U. de Cádiz		29	U. de Burgos		11			
U. de Alcalá		28	**Mondragon Unibertsitatea**		11			
U. de Vigo		27	U. Politécnica de Cartagena		11			
U. de Córdoba		27	**U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya**		10			

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U. CEU - Fernando III*
U. de Diseño, Innovación y Tecnología*
U. de las Hespérides*
U. del Atlántico Medio*
U. Euneiz*
U. Europea de Andalucía*
U. Europea del Atlántico*
U. Europea Miguel de Cervantes
U. Francisco de Vitoria
U. Intercontinental de la Empresa*
U. Internacional de la Empresa*
U. Internacional Isabel I de Castilla*
U. Internacional Villanueva*
U. Loyola Andalucía*
U. San Jorge
U. Tecnológica Atlántico-Mediterráneo*

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. The 19 universities without a score could not be analyzed due to lack of data. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

4.4. U-RANKING FIELDS OF STUDY

A further innovation in this thirteenth edition was the inclusion of a breakdown of the *U-Ranking* and *U-Ranking Dimensions* results by field of study. With this breakdown we can see the extent to which each university specializes in particular fields. For instance, a university may have deliberately focused on technology—or may have been steered in that direction by its historical development—as in the case of the polytechnic universities. Others may cover all fields of study, as is typical of institutions with roots in generalist studies. This kind of specialization, when aggregated into an overall index, as in the rankings presented earlier, can either favor or penalize a university. For example, the higher employability of graduates from technical degrees may boost the employability scores of polytechnic institutions. But what happens if we assess performance—across all dimensions, including employability—in the field of engineering and architecture on its own? By isolating the effect of specialization, we can evaluate performance more precisely and consider the influence of other factors, such as regional location, the range of degree options available to new students, type of university (public or private), and so on.

Table 4.9 presents the ranking of universities for each of the five fields of study—arts and

humanities, social sciences and law, sciences, engineering and architecture, and health sciences—across the main dimensions of university activity (overall, teaching, research and innovation, and employability). We begin with this table because it provides an overview of the system as a whole and allows us to highlight a number of stylized facts—empirical patterns that will be explored further in the subsequent rankings by field of study.

The first notable point is that not all universities appear in every field and dimension. As explained in Chapter 2 on methodology, in the teaching dimension, fields in which a university does not offer degree programs in its own faculties in the 2025–2026 academic year are excluded. In the research dimension, a field is excluded if the university has fewer than ten full-time equivalent doctoral staff. For employability, a university must provide information for at least two of the three required indicators, which means having at least one cohort of graduates who completed their studies more than four years ago (the time needed, for instance, to measure employment affiliation four years after graduation). Blank cells in the table indicate that the university has not been ranked in that particular field. It can be seen that the number of such blanks increases lower down the ranking, often because these are newer universities or institutions that specialize in only a few fields, which results in gaps in others.

The second observation is that the relative homogeneity seen across the system in teaching and employability performance is also evident within individual fields of study, while the substantial heterogeneity in research performance likewise persists across fields. This is reflected in the limited color gradation, largely consisting of greens denoting high levels of performance, in the employability results, compared with the much wider range of colors observed for research, spanning from green (high performance) to ochre (low performance).

The third point is that some dimensions exhibit more variation between fields, whereas others are more consistent. The first case is exemplified in the employability dimension: in social sciences and law, the average distances between universities lower down the ranking and the top-performing institution are significantly greater (reflected in a higher number of yellow cells), whereas in fields such as health sciences and engineering and architecture, many universities perform at levels similar to the leader (more green cells). The second case—greater consistency across fields—can be seen in the research and innovation dimension, where, with few exceptions,[25] universities that lag behind the leader in one field also do so in others.

Lastly, the analysis by field of study also highlights universities that have a clear specialization in a particular field, in which they achieve notably higher performance than in other fields. Clear examples—visible in the overall ranking column—include Universidad Pontificia Comillas in arts and humanities, Pablo de Olavide, Ramon Llull and Jaume I in sciences and IE University in social sciences and law.

Having outlined these general trends, **tables 4.10** to **4.14** present the synthetic rankings (i.e. overall scores aggregating all dimensions) for each field of study. **Table 4.10** shows that, in arts and humanities, Universitat Pompeu Fabra leads a group of six universities with index scores above 90. Alongside Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Universitat de Barcelona and Universitat Politècnica de València (which offers Fine Arts programs), the first private university to appear is Universidad de Navarra. The second group (score ≥80) is led by Universidad de Alcalá, followed by Burgos, Valencia and País Vasco, and Universidad Pontificia Comillas as the sole private sector representative.

[25] For example, Universitat de Vic-Universitat Central de Catalunya is significantly closer in performance to Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona—the leader in sciences—than it is to the top performers in other fields, particularly health sciences.

Table 4.9. **Performance Index by dimension and area of study**

University	GLOBAL						TEACHING						RESEARCH AND INNOVATION						LABOR MARKET INSERTION					
	Global	Arts and Humanities	Social and Legal studies	Sciences	Engineering and Architecture	Health Sciences	Global	Arts and Humanities	Social and Legal studies	Sciences	Engineering and Architecture	Health Sciences	Global	Arts and Humanities	Social and Legal studies	Sciences	Engineering and Architecture	Health Sciences	Global	Arts and Humanities	Social and Legal studies	Sciences	Engineering And Architecture	Health Sciences
U. Pompeu Fabra	100	100	100		100	100	90	81	94		81	86	100	100	100	83	100	100	82	83	76		76	94
U. Politècnica de Catalunya	94				91		88			100	85	92	86		96	92	75		91		70		84	88
U. Autònoma de Barcelona	93	96	92	98	95	96	79	76	81	67	76	84	94	98	97	100	93	94	87	80	75	92	88	92
U. Politècnica de València	92	92	90	100	86		93	92	91	90	92		80	77	83	78	62		86	68	68	87	83	
U. de Barcelona	92	90	83	96	91	93	80	77	79	75	80	83	91	84	77	85	81	89	85	80	78	92	85	89
U. Autónoma de Madrid	90	77	82	91	88	88	86	84	85	74	78	89	82	55	70	76	75	74	86	74	78	92	92	91
U. Carlos III	90		93		88		91	91	89		90		76	86	88	56	65		90		80		94	
U. de Navarra	88	92	87	88	87	89	100	95	95	90	100	93	65	68	70	57	57	71	97	98	83	97	89	100
U. Rovira i Virgili	86	92	86	95	88	81	77	75	75	70	77	83	82	90	88	87	76	65	89	86	77	91	90	92
U. de Santiago de Compostela	85	79	78	83	88	81	76	71	74	63	74	82	82	69	74	74	81	65	86	75	69	91	82	94
U. de València	84	79	79	87	90	77	87	81	89	75	79	89	70	58	63	67	80	56	83	92	73	92	81	88
U. Politécnica de Madrid	83		82		77		76		79	60	72		76	76	75	66	60	76	97		75		90	
U. de Girona	83	77	75	79	80	76	79	71	73	63	73	85	74	65	69	67	68	57	80	83	70	87	78	90
U. de Vigo	81	75	81	85	76	75	75	79	75	65	65	83	75	56	79	77	65	54	81	71	69	79	89	93
U. de Cantabria	80		68	86	75	75	80	83	75	71	76	85	67	67	53	68	55	53	87		70	100	84	96
U. de Lleida	78	72	81	76	77	70	80	72	81	73	82	81	63	56	69	53	54	48	91	76	85	88	86	90
U. del País Vasco	78	80	75	88	76	75	82	81	81	75	77	84	61	60	60	69	54	53	91	95	78	96	89	97
U. de Burgos	78	84	80	88	76	70	78	73	80	81	73	76	66	72	72	66	58	53	81	96	70	82	87	80
U. de Alcalá	77	86	76	79	73	71	79	88	79	70	67	81	63	67	66	61	57	50	86	82	72	83	90	91
U. Internacional de Catalunya	77		70			67	92	60	85		84	98	52		48		49	36	99		86			97
U. Pública de Navarra	76		74		70	74	84	95	84	77	80	84	56	65	56	57	44	53	89		81		87	93
U. de Zaragoza	75	76	72	79	73	67	83	84	82	70	74	93	56	53	55	58	51	38	88	85	74	95	91	94
U. de Salamanca	75	76	81	75	74	72	77	78	78	62	68	79	60	57	76	60	59	54	84	81	69	87	89	93
U. de Granada	75	74	73	75	75	72	81	80	80	69	74	86	58	53	61	53	56	48	79	75	64	90	87	90
U. Politécnica de Cartagena	75		79		68		74		82		67		61		70	54	49		93		62		88	
U. de Córdoba	74	66	72	75	73	66	75	72	75	62	70	82	62	46	63	60	55	41	81	77	65	84	87	95
U. Complutense	74	73	68	74	74	68	80	78	79	69	69	83	58	52	52	52	58	45	81	75	72	91	91	88
U. Jaume I	73	79	73	88	73	76	76	84	75	77	71	74	58	56	63	67	56	66	78	88	67	91	81	87
U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya	73	77	77	80	77	56	77	65	73	55	71	82	56	72	73	79	61	29	86	77	76	87	91	91
IE Universidad	72		87				93	68	97		96		46		69		29		88		86			
U. de les Illes Balears	72	72	72	80	70	76	70	73	70	64	64	76	61	53	65	67	55	62	86	93	79	92	87	91
Mondragon Unibertsitatea	72		70		80		92		95		96		45		44		49		93		87		93	
U. Ramon Llull	72	74	84	88	77	61	97	83	100	81	87	95	43	50	62	65	50	30	89	80	85	86	86	87
U. Miguel Hernández de Elche	72	57	67	78	67	67	72	76	70	70	64	79	58	34	58	57	51	47	85	59	63	88	84	85
U. de León	71	74	70	72	69	66	79	77	78	64	75	86	53	52	55	54	47	40	84	92	69	85	86	89
U. de Alicante	71	73	70	76	70	65	75	81	73	63	73	85	56	50	60	60	50	40	76	83	65	88	83	88
U. de Deusto	71	72	82		75	66	87	87	88		86	95	47	44	68		48	38	88	100	85		87	77
U. de Valladolid	71	76	69	79	71	71	77	85	75	71	70	78	53	52	57	58	53	51	85	82	70	99	87	98
U. da Coruña	70	74	68	72	65	69	72	70	73	66	65	79	57	61	55	53	46	49	81	76	67	78	84	87

Table 4.9. **Performance Index by dimension and area of study**

University	GLOBAL						TEACHING						RESEARCH AND INNOVATION						LABOR MARKET INSERTION					
	Global	Arts and Humanities	Social and Legal studies	Sciences	Engineering and Architecture	Health Sciences	Global	Arts and Humanities	Social and Legal studies	Sciences	Engineering and Architecture	Health Sciences	Global	Arts and Humanities	Social and Legal studies	Sciences	Engineering and Architecture	Health Sciences	Global	Arts and Humanities	Social and Legal studies	Sciences	Engineering And Architecture	Health Sciences
U. de Murcia	70	67	67	71	73	65	72	68	72	59	67	77	57	51	55	56	58	43	80	78	69	85	89	90
U. de Oviedo	70	69	64	72	66	66	79	78	78	71	72	82	50	46	46	48	44	42	85	81	71	91	88	93
U. de Sevilla	70	67	68	74	66	71	71	69	69	63	65	78	56	49	61	56	49	52	83	75	63	92	87	93
U. de Almería	69	62	69	72	66	67	77	79	79	64	66	78	52	37	55	52	48	46	74	72	59	91	89	83
U. Pablo de Olavide	68	69	65	78		69	75	80	74	67	68	81	51	45	49	61	57	49	74	80	71	87		77
U. de Castilla-La Mancha	67	72	62	68	67	60	71	77	71	65	65	68	51	51	46	46	49	41	89	83	74	88	91	97
U. de La Rioja	67	69	65	73	54	77	81	90	78	67	77	71	45	38	45	51	26	67	87	100	78	94	85	99
U. de Málaga	67	63	65	69	63	66	73	72	76	60	64	77	50	42	48	51	44	45	77	73	63	85	87	88
U. de Jaén	66	68	64	71	65	62	77	75	76	70	70	75	47	47	47	47	42	41	78	78	66	80	89	83
U. de La Laguna	66	61	56	73	67	61	66	66	67	60	57	67	53	42	39	58	57	43	84	75	70	89	83	92
U. de Cádiz	66	67	61	72	61	62	70	71	69	66	59	75	50	47	48	52	44	39	79	80	58	84	87	93
U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	64	68	62	76	61	64	73	77	70	75	67	83	45	46	47	53	40	39	83	81	70	73	82	94
U. Pontificia Comillas	64	80	68		62	43	91	100	89		89	95	35	47	43		30	14	98	99	95		93	89
U. San Pablo - CEU	62		57	67	65	60	85	89	80	75	78	100	36	34	33	38	39	28	94		78	95	87	97
U. Católica San Antonio	62		64		66	57	69	77	67	30	56	81	44		51		56	31	92		82		96	92
U. de Huelva	61	60	60	62	60	55	72	71	74	65	65	69	41	38	42	36	39	34	77	73	67	91	88	80
U. de Extremadura	60	67	62	64	54	54	71	78	70	56	60	78	41	42	48	45	33	29	81	88	62	92	87	91
U. Rey Juan Carlos	60	61	58	64	60	59	64	64	66	53	55	76	45	44	43	50	45	36	79	69	71	86	93	91
U. Oberta de Catalunya	59	70	72		59	54	58	52	62		58	64	47	67	70		41	35	89	97	84		94	82
U. Católica de Valencia	55		53	63		51	75	77	72	62		85	31	36	30	40		23	94		86	88		88
U. Europea de Madrid	53	49	54		47	51	84	80	84	54	86	95	25	21	28	27	17	20	94	71	77		94	94
U. Cardenal Herrera - CEU	52		42			46	83		72		79	89	25		19		31	17	95		73			94
UNED	50	53	54	48	48		51	45	56	40	46	59	37	43	41	33	33		84	93	82	95	93	73
U. Nebrija	46		44		50	60	74	74	77		58	67	21	43	18		28	41	100		98		94	92
U. Pontificia de Salamanca	43		51			25	63	56	61		67	67	21		33		11	6	96		92			89
U. Fernando Pessoa-Canarias*	43					34	61		33			68	21					11	99					88
U. Internacional de La Rioja	40	52	44		41		83	80	85		68		14	23	17	25	15	14	95	94	93		100	
U. Camilo José Cela	40		40			44	58	59	56		53	79	19		20			18	98	79	100		87	82
UDIMA	39		44			36	63		65		53	82	17		22			11	94		90		99	77
U. Europea de Canarias	38		32				71		68			92	14		11			9	77		66			
U. Internacional Valenciana	35		34				76	66	78			85	11	17	10	24	19	8	98		96			
U. Europea de Valencia*	34		40			27	80	79	84			91	10		15	21		6	82		76			76

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. The universities are ranked according to their overall performance index. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Fuente: Fundación BBVA-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026)

Table 4.10. **U-Ranking of Spanish universities 2026. Arts and Humanities**

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. Pompeu Fabra	G1	100	U. Complutense	G3	73
U. Autònoma de Barcelona		96	**U. de Deusto**		72
U. Politècnica de València		92	U. de Castilla-La Mancha		72
U. Rovira i Virgili		92	U. de les Illes Balears		72
U. de Navarra		92	U. de Lleida		72
U. de Barcelona		90	**U. Oberta de Catalunya**		70
U. de Alcalá	G2	86	U. de Oviedo	G4	69
U. de Burgos		84	U. de La Rioja		69
U. del País Vasco		80	U. Pablo de Olavide		69
U. Pontificia Comillas		80	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		68
U. de València	G3	79	U. de Jaén		68
U. Jaume I		79	U. de Murcia		67
U. de Santiago de Compostela		79	U. de Sevilla		67
U. de Girona		77	U. de Extremadura		67
U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya		77	U. de Cádiz		67
U. Autónoma de Madrid		77	U. de Córdoba		66
U. de Zaragoza		76	U. de Málaga		63
U. de Valladolid		76	U. de Almería		62
U. de Salamanca		76	U. Rey Juan Carlos		61
U. de Vigo		75	U. de La Laguna		61
U. de Granada		74	U. de Huelva		60
U. da Coruña		74	U. Miguel Hernández de Elche	G5	57
U. de León		74	UNED		53
U. Ramon Llull		74	**U. Internacional de La Rioja**		52
U. de Alicante		73	**U. Europea de Madrid**	G6	49

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Table 4.11 presents the ranking for social sciences and law, once again led by Universitat Pompeu Fabra, heading a group of four universities with scores above 90 that also includes Carlos III University, Autònoma de Barcelona, and Politècnica de València. The second group (score ≥80) is led by IE University and includes a wide array of public institutions—such as the University of Barcelona, Rovira i Virgili University, Technical University of Madrid, University of Salamanca, Autonomous University of Madrid, and University of Lleida. However, private universities are also well represented in this field, notably Universidad de Navarra, Ramon Llull and University of Deusto, in that order.

Table 4.12 presents the results for the sciences field, where Universitat Politècnica de València leads a group of five universities, all public institutions: Universidad de Barcelona, Autònoma de Barcelona, Rovira i Virgili, and Autónoma de Madrid. The second group (score ≥80) is led by Universidad del País Vasco, alongside Universitat Jaume I, Universidad de Burgos, València, Cantabria, Vigo, Santiago de Compostela, and the Universidad de las Islas Baleares. The private universities in this group are University of Navarra, Ramon Llull University, and University of Vic–Central University of Catalonia.

Table 4.13 shows the results for engineering and architecture, headed by Universitat Pompeu Fabra in a group of five universities, all public institutions, which also includes: Autònoma de Barcelona, Universitat de Barcelona, Politècnica de Catalunya, and the Universitat de València. The second group (score ≥80) is led by Carlos III, followed by the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Universidade Santiago de Compostela, Rovira i Virgili, Politècnica de València, and Universitat de Girona among the public universities, together with Universidades de Navarra and Mondragon among the private institutions.

Finally, in health sciences, **table 4.14** shows that Universitat Pompeu Fabra once again leads the field, with a score above 90, which also includes Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and Universitat de Barcelona. Universidad de Navarra heads the second group (score ≥80), which also comprises the Autónoma de Madrid, Rovira i Virgili and Santiago de Compostela.

Table 4.11. U-Ranking of Spanish universities 2026. Social and Legal studies

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. Pompeu Fabra	G1	100	U. de Valladolid	G4	69
U. Carlos III		93	U. de Almería		69
U. Autònoma de Barcelona		92	U. Complutense		68
U. Politècnica de València		90	U. de Sevilla		68
IE Universidad	G2	87	**U. Pontificia Comillas**		68
U. de Navarra		87	U. da Coruña		68
U. Rovira i Virgili		86	U. de Cantabria		68
U. Ramon Llull		84	U. de Murcia		67
U. de Barcelona		83	U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		67
U. de Deusto		82	U. Pablo de Olavide		65
U. Autónoma de Madrid		82	U. de Málaga		65
U. Politécnica de Madrid		82	U. de La Rioja		65
U. de Salamanca		81	U. de Oviedo		64
U. de Vigo		81	**U. Católica San Antonio**		64
U. de Lleida		81	U. de Jaén		64
U. de Burgos		80	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		62
U. de València	G3	79	U. de Castilla-La Mancha		62
U. Politécnica de Cartagena		79	U. de Extremadura		62
U. de Santiago de Compostela		78	U. de Cádiz		61
U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya		77	U. de Huelva		60
U. de Alcalá		76	U. Rey Juan Carlos	G5	58
U. de Girona		75	**U. San Pablo - CEU**		57
U. del País Vasco		75	U. de La Laguna		56
U. Pública de Navarra		74	**U. Europea de Madrid**		54
U. de Granada		73	UNED		54
U. Jaume I		73	**U. Católica de Valencia**		53
U. de les Illes Balears		72	**U. Pontificia de Salamanca**		51
U. de Córdoba		72	**U. Internacional de La Rioja**	G6	44
U. de Zaragoza		72	**U. Nebrija**		44
U. Oberta de Catalunya		72	**UDIMA**		44
Mondragon Unibertsitatea		70	**U. Cardenal Herrera - CEU**		42
U. de Alicante		70	**U. Europea de Valencia***		40
U. de León		70	**U. Camilo José Cela**		40
U. Internacional de Catalunya		70	**U. Internacional Valenciana**	G7	34
			U. Europea de Canarias		32

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Table 4.12. U-Ranking of Spanish universities 2026. Sciences

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. Politècnica de València	G1	100	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	G3	76
U. Autònoma de Barcelona		98	U. de Córdoba		75
U. de Barcelona		96	U. de Granada		75
U. Rovira i Virgili		95	U. de Salamanca		75
U. Autónoma de Madrid		91	U. de Sevilla		74
U. del País Vasco	G2	88	U. Complutense		74
U. Jaume I		88	U. de La Rioja		73
U. de Burgos		88	U. de La Laguna		73
U. de Navarra		88	U. de León		72
U. Ramon Llull		88	U. de Cádiz		72
U. de València		87	U. de Oviedo		72
U. de Cantabria		86	U. da Coruña		72
U. de Vigo		85	U. de Almería		72
U. de Santiago de Compostela		83	U. de Murcia		71
U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya		80	U. de Jaén		71
U. de les Illes Balears		80	U. de Málaga	G4	69
U. de Alcalá	G3	79	U. de Castilla-La Mancha		68
U. de Girona		79	**U. San Pablo - CEU**		67
U. de Valladolid		79	U. Rey Juan Carlos		64
U. de Zaragoza		79	U. de Extremadura		64
U. Pablo de Olavide		78	**U. Católica de Valencia**		63
U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		78	U. de Huelva		62
U. de Lleida		76	UNED	G6	48
U. de Alicante		76			

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Table 4.13. U-Ranking of Spanish universities 2026. Engineering and Architecture

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. Pompeu Fabra	G1	100	U. de Granada	G3	75	U. de Sevilla	G4	66
U. Autònoma de Barcelona		95	U. de Cantabria		75	**U. San Pablo - CEU**		65
U. de Barcelona		91	U. de Salamanca		74	U. da Coruña		65
U. Politècnica de Catalunya		91	U. Complutense		74	U. de Jaén		65
U. de València		90	U. de Murcia		73	U. de Málaga		63
U. Carlos III	G2	88	U. Jaume I		73	**U. Pontificia Comillas**		62
U. Autónoma de Madrid		88	U. de Córdoba		73	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		61
U. de Santiago de Compostela		88	U. de Zaragoza		73	U. de Cádiz		61
U. Rovira i Virgili		88	U. de Alcalá		73	U. de Huelva		60
U. de Navarra		87	U. de Valladolid		71	U. Rey Juan Carlos		60
U. Politècnica de València		86	U. de Alicante		70	**U. Oberta de Catalunya**	G5	59
U. de Girona		80	U. Pública de Navarra		70	U. de Extremadura		54
Mondragon Unibertsitatea		80	U. de les Illes Balears		70	U. de La Rioja		54
U. Politécnica de Madrid	G3	77	U. de León	G4	69	**U. Nebrija**		50
U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya		77	U. Politécnica de Cartagena		68	UNED	G6	48
U. Ramon Llull		77	U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		67	**U. Europea de Madrid**		47
U. de Lleida		77	U. de La Laguna		67	**U. Internacional de La Rioja**		41
U. de Burgos		76	U. de Castilla-La Mancha		67			
U. del País Vasco		76	U. de Almería		66			
U. de Vigo		76	**U. Católica San Antonio**		66			
U. de Deusto		75	U. de Oviedo		66			

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Table 4.14. U-Ranking of Spanish universities 2026. Health Sciences

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. Pompeu Fabra	G1	100	U. da Coruña	G4	69	U. Rey Juan Carlos	G5	59
U. Autònoma de Barcelona		96	U. Pablo de Olavide		69	**U. Católica San Antonio**		57
U. de Barcelona		93	U. Complutense		68	**U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya**		56
U. de Navarra	G2	89	U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		67	U. de Huelva		55
U. Autónoma de Madrid		88	**U. Internacional de Catalunya**		67	U. de Extremadura		54
U. Rovira i Virgili		81	U. de Zaragoza		67	**U. Oberta de Catalunya**		54
U. de Santiago de Compostela		81	U. de Almería		67	**U. Europea de Madrid**		51
U. de València	G3	77	**U. de Deusto**		66	**U. Católica de Valencia**		51
U. de La Rioja		77	U. de Oviedo		66	**U. Cardenal Herrera - CEU**	G6	46
U. Jaume I		76	U. de Córdoba		66	**U. Camilo José Cela**		44
U. de Girona		76	U. de León		66	**U. Pontificia Comillas**		43
U. de les Illes Balears		76	U. de Málaga		66	**UDIMA**	G7	36
U. del País Vasco		75	U. de Alicante		65	**U. Fernando Pessoa-Canarias***		34
U. de Cantabria		75	U. de Murcia		65	**U. Europea de Valencia***	G8	27
U. de Vigo		75	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		64	**U. Pontificia de Salamanca**		25
U. Pública de Navarra		74	U. de Jaén		62			
U. de Salamanca		72	U. de Cádiz		62			
U. de Granada		72	U. de La Laguna		61			
U. de Valladolid		71	**U. Ramon Llull**		61			
U. de Sevilla		71	U. de Castilla-La Mancha		60			
U. de Alcalá		71	**U. San Pablo - CEU**		60			
U. de Burgos		70	**U. Nebrija**		60			
U. de Lleida		70						

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Beyond the general observations noted in connection with **table 4.9**, the overall rankings by field of study reveal an additional pattern: many universities that have entered a field outside their traditional area of specialization—and have done so more recently—tend to perform very well. This may be because later entrants have more flexibility in selecting degree programs and research specializations, which in turn enables them to achieve very strong results. A notable example is engineering and architecture, a field not led by polytechnic universities, where generalist institutions like Barcelona and Valencia, which entered the field later, show very strong results. Conversely, in fields such as social sciences and law, polytechnic universities like the one in Valencia—which joined the field later—also rank among the top-performing institutions.

The analysis by field of study in terms of performance leads to two key conclusions. First, performance-based rankings can be complex, because universities with relatively little activity in a particular field—and therefore low output volume—can achieve high-performance scores. This is precisely because their smaller scale implies that fewer resources are required to produce a given set of results. For example, universities in which the field of engineering and architecture play a minor role may find it easier to be efficient in that field than polytechnic universities, where these subjects are central and account for a much larger share of activity.

This insight reinforces the importance of using a volume-based approach for certain types of analysis, especially when the goal is to assess a university's total contribution to the system within each field. While efficiency is certainly important, understanding the absolute contribution is equally vital. As shown in **tables 4.15** to **4.19**, volume-based rankings appear to offer a clearer picture of the real situation, as significant output is required to stand out in any given field.

Thus, Universidad Complutense and Universitat de Barcelona lead in arts and humanities; Universitat de València and Universidad Complutense in social sciences and law; Universitat de Barcelona in sciences; the polytechnic universities of Catalonia and Madrid in engineering and architecture; and Complutense and Barcelona in health sciences. The second positions are held by Granada in arts and humanities; Barcelona and Granada in social sciences and law; Complutense and Autónoma de Madrid in sciences; Universitat Politècnica de València in engineering and architecture; and Universitat de València in health sciences.

The natural specializations of certain universities —the generalist approach of Valencia, Barcelona, Complutense de Madrid and Granada, as well as the technological focus of the polytechnic universities—become much more apparent when using the volume-based approach. The key conclusion, however, is that the most important thing is that a ranking should enable readers, researchers and other interested audiences to choose the most appropriate perspective based on the matter they wish to consider, as U-Ranking does. Rankings based solely on either volume or performance can be misleading if they steer the reader towards a narrowly one-dimensional interpretation of realities that are inherently complex.

Table 4.20 offers a clear picture of how volume and performance rankings interact within each field of study. It lists, for each field, the universities that make up Group 1—the top performers—in each ranking approach.

Table 4.15. **U-Ranking Volume of Spanish universities 2026. Arts and Humanities**

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. Complutense	G1	100	U. Rey Juan Carlos	G9	17
U. de Barcelona		94	U. de Cádiz		16
U. de Granada	G3	71	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		15
U. Autònoma de Barcelona	G4	65	U. Rovira i Virgili		15
U. de València	G5	56	U. Jaume I		15
U. de Sevilla		56	U. Pablo de Olavide		14
UNED		55	**U. de Navarra**		13
U. del País Vasco		51	U. de les Illes Balears		12
U. Autónoma de Madrid	G6	48	U. de Jaén		11
U. Politècnica de València		47	U. de Extremadura		11
U. de Salamanca		47	U. de Girona		11
U. de Santiago de Compostela	G7	37	U. de Lleida	G10	9
U. de Murcia		32	U. de León		8
U. de Zaragoza		31	U. de Burgos		8
U. de Málaga		31	U. da Coruña		8
U. de Alicante	G8	28	U. de Huelva		7
U. Pompeu Fabra		27	**U. Internacional de La Rioja**		7
U. de Oviedo		24	U. de Almería		7
U. de Alcalá		23	**U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya**		6
U. de Valladolid		23	U. de La Rioja		6
U. de Córdoba		22	**U. Pontificia Comillas**		6
U. de Castilla-La Mancha		22	**U. de Deusto**		5
U. de La Laguna		21	**U. Ramon Llull**		5
U. de Vigo		20	U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		4
U. Oberta de Catalunya		20	**U. Europea de Madrid**		3

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Table 4.16. **U-Ranking Volume of Spanish universities 2026. Social and Legal studies**

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. de València	G1	100	U. de Oviedo	G8	28	**Mondragon Unibertsitatea**	G9	14
U. Complutense		99	U. de Extremadura		28	**U. San Pablo - CEU**		14
U. de Barcelona	G2	85	U. da Coruña		26	**U. Católica San Antonio**		13
U. de Granada		84	U. de Cádiz		26	**U. Nebrija**		13
U. del País Vasco	G3	77	U. Pablo de Olavide		25	U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		12
U. de Sevilla		70	U. Jaume I		25	**U. Católica de Valencia**		10
U. Autònoma de Barcelona	G4	62	**U. de Deusto**		25	**U. Internacional Valenciana**		10
UNED	G5	57	U. de La Laguna		23	U. Politécnica de Madrid	G10	9
U. Carlos III		52	U. de Almería		23	**U. Camilo José Cela**		8
U. de Zaragoza		52	U. de les Illes Balears		23	U. de La Rioja		8
U. Rey Juan Carlos		52	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		23	**IE Universidad**		7
U. Autónoma de Madrid		51	U. de Córdoba		23	**U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya**		6
U. de Málaga		50	U. Rovira i Virgili		22	**U. Internacional de Catalunya**		6
U. Internacional de La Rioja	G6	45	U. de Alcalá		21	**U. Cardenal Herrera - CEU**		6
U. de Murcia		45	U. de Jaén		21	**UDIMA**		6
U. de Alicante		44	U. de Girona		20	**U. Pontificia de Salamanca**		5
U. Ramon Llull		43	**U. Pontificia Comillas**	G9	18	**U. Politécnica de Cartagena**		4
U. Oberta de Catalunya		42	U. Pública de Navarra		18	**U. Europea de Valencia***		2
U. de Salamanca		40	U. Politècnica de València		18	**U. Europea de Canarias**		1
U. Pompeu Fabra	G7	39	U. de Huelva		17			
U. de Santiago de Compostela		38	U. de Burgos		15			
U. de Castilla-La Mancha		38	U. de Cantabria		15			
U. de Valladolid		36	U. Europea de Madrid		15			
U. de Vigo		33	U. de Lleida		15			
U. de Navarra		30	U. de León		15			

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Table 4.17. **U-Ranking Volume of Spanish universities 2026. Sciences**

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. de Barcelona	G1	100	U. de Girona	G9	17
U. Complutense	G2	89	U. de les Illes Balears		17
U. Autónoma de Madrid		82	U. de Castilla-La Mancha		16
U. Autònoma de Barcelona	G3	77	U. Rovira i Virgili		16
U. de Granada	G4	66	U. de Almería		14
U. del País Vasco		63	U. da Coruña		14
U. de València		61	**U. de Navarra**		14
U. de Sevilla	G5	53	U. de León		13
U. de Santiago de Compostela	G6	46	U. de Jaén		12
U. Politècnica de València		41	U. de Cantabria		12
U. de Zaragoza		40	U. Pablo de Olavide		11
U. de Salamanca	G7	32	U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		11
U. de Murcia		30	U. Rey Juan Carlos		10
U. de Oviedo	G8	29	U. Jaume I	G10	9
U. de Córdoba		28	U. de La Rioja		7
U. de Alicante		27	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		7
U. de Vigo		27	U. de Lleida		6
U. de Málaga		26	U. de Burgos		6
U. de Cádiz		25	**U. Ramon Llull**		6
U. de Alcalá		24	U. de Huelva		5
U. de La Laguna		23	**U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya**		5
U. de Valladolid		20	**U. Católica de Valencia**		4
U. de Extremadura		20	**U. San Pablo - CEU**		2
UNED		20			

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Table 4.18. **U-Ranking Volume of Spanish universities 2026. Engineering and Architecture**

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. Politècnica de Catalunya	G1	100	U. de Córdoba	G10	9	U. de Murcia	G10	5
U. Politécnica de Madrid		99	**Mondragon Unibertsitatea**		9	U. de Huelva		5
U. Politècnica de València	G2	80	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Cana-		9	U. de les Illes Balears		5
U. de Sevilla	G7	37	U. Jaume I		8	**U. de Deusto**		4
U. del País Vasco		34	U. de València		8	**U. Europea de Madrid**		4
U. Carlos III	G8	29	**U. de Navarra**		8	**U. Internacional de La Rioja**		3
U. de Zaragoza	G9	19	**U. Oberta de Catalunya**		8	**U. San Pablo - CEU**		2
U. de Granada		18	U. de Girona		8	**U. de La Rioja**		2
U. de Málaga		17	U. de Santiago de Compostela		8	**U. Católica San Antonio**		2
U. de Vigo		15	**U. Ramon Llull**		7	**U. Nebrija**		1
U. de Oviedo		15	U. de La Laguna		7	**U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya**		1
U. de Castilla-La Mancha		15	U. Autónoma de Madrid		7			
U. de Valladolid		14	U. de Jaén		7			
U. da Coruña		13,78	U. de Extremadura		7			
U. Politécnica de Cartagena		13	U. de Lleida		7			
U. Rey Juan Carlos		12	U. de Salamanca		6			
U. de Alicante		11	U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		6			
U. de Alcalá		11	U. de León		6			
U. Complutense		11	U. de Barcelona		6			
U. de Cantabria		11	UNED		6			
U. Autònoma de Barcelona		10	**U. Pontificia Comillas**		6			
U. Rovira i Virgili		10	U. de Almería		6			
U. de Cádiz		10	U. de Burgos		5			
U. Pública de Navarra		10	U. Pompeu Fabra		5			

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Table 4.19. **U-Ranking Volume of Spanish universities 2026. Health Sciences**

University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index	University	Group	Index
U. Complutense	G1	100	**U. Católica San Antonio**	G8	26	U. Pompeu Fabra	G9	12
U. de Barcelona		99	**U. Católica de Valencia**		23	U. de Girona		12
U. de València	G2	88	U. de Córdoba		23	U. de Alicante		11
U. de Granada	G4	68	U. de La Laguna		22	U. de Jaén		11
U. Autònoma de Barcelona		67	U. Rovira i Virgili		22	U. da Coruña		11
U. de Sevilla		61	U. de Valladolid		22	U. de Almería		10
U. de Santiago de Compostela		60	U. de Extremadura		21	**U. de Deusto**	G10	9
U. del País Vasco	G5	53	U. de Oviedo		20	U. Pública de Navarra		8
U. de Murcia	G6	44	**U. Internacional de Catalunya**	G9	19	**U. Pontificia Comillas**		6
U. Autónoma de Madrid		43	**U. Oberta de Catalunya**		18	U. de Huelva		6
U. de Zaragoza	G7	38	U. de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria		18	**U. Europea de Valencia***		5
U. de Salamanca		37	U. de Cádiz		17	U. de Burgos		5
U. Europea de Madrid		34	**U. de Vic - U. Central de Catalunya**		17	U. de Vigo		4
U. Miguel Hernández de Elche		30	U. de Lleida		17	U. Pablo de Olavide		4
U. de Navarra		30	U. Rey Juan Carlos		16	**U. Camilo José Cela**		4
U. de Castilla-La Mancha	G8	29	**U. Ramon Llull**		15	**U. Pontificia de Salamanca**		3
U. Cardenal Herrera - CEU		28	U. de León		14	**U. Fernando Pessoa-Canarias***		2
U. de Alcalá		28	U. de les Illes Balears		14	U. de La Rioja		2
U. de Málaga		28	U. de Cantabria		13	**UDIMA**		1
U. San Pablo - CEU		27	U. Jaume I		12	**U. Nebrija**		1

Note: The top-performing university receives a score of 100, and the rest receive scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. Universities are ordered and grouped according to the index obtained to one decimal place and within each group according to the full index value. Private universities are highlighted in bold. *Universities 15 years or younger.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Table 4.20. **Universities in Group 1 of each ranking**

	U-Ranking Performance	U-Ranking Volume
Arts and Humanities	U. Pompeu Fabra U. Autònoma de Barcelona U. Politècnica de València U. Rovira i Virgili **U. de Navarra** U. de Barcelona	U. Complutense U. de Barcelona
Social and Legal studies	U. Pompeu Fabra U. Carlos III U. Autònoma de Barcelona U. Politècnica de València	U. de València U. Complutense
Sciences	U. Politècnica de València U. Autònoma de Barcelona U. de Barcelona U. Rovira i Virgili U. Autónoma de Madrid	U. de Barcelona
Engineering and Architecture	U. Pompeu Fabra U. Autònoma de Barcelona U. de Barcelona U. Politècnica de Catalunya U. de València	U. Politècnica de Catalunya U. Politécnica de Madrid
Health Sciences	U. Pompeu Fabra U. Autònoma de Barcelona U. de Barcelona	U. Complutense U. de Barcelona
Global	U. Pompeu Fabra U. Politècnica de Catalunya U. Autònoma de Barcelona U. Politècnica de València U. de Barcelona U. Autónoma de Madrid U. Carlos III	U. Complutense

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

The first conclusion reinforces the idea that the university system should be examined from two complementary and necessary viewpoints: productivity and total output. The universities appearing in each column are, in most cases, different; in other words, the institutions that stand out under one approach are not necessarily the same as those that excel under the other. The first column tends to feature smaller universities characterized by high levels of output relative to their size. Universitat Pompeu Fabra, which tops the performance ranking, stands out by appearing in the top group in four of the five fields, illustrating the basis of its leadership. However, a core group of institutions—the autonomous universities of Madrid and Barcelona, Universidad Carlos III and the polytechnic universities of Catalonia and Valencia—are present in many fields. When the goal is to evaluate efficiency in producing outcomes within specific disciplines, this is the appropriate approach to follow and U-Ranking provides the means to do so.

The second conclusion emerges from the right-hand column. Although often displaying somewhat lower levels of productivity, the volume of results generated across different fields by large, long-established universities, such as Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Universitat de València, Universitat de Barcelona, or the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid and Universitat Politècnica de València in engineering, is highly significant. Consequently, these achievements should be highlighted whenever the purpose of the analysis is to assess institutions' contributions to the system in terms of research output or human capital formation. A third conclusion that should be emphasized in the analysis by field of study is the exceptional performance of Universitat de Barcelona. It appears in the top performance group in four out of five fields (arts and humanities, sciences, engineering and architecture, and health sciences) and it also features in the top volume group in three fields (arts and humanities, sciences and health sciences). This demonstrates that high levels of productivity are not beyond the reach of large, long-established universities.

In our view, the range of good practices observed points to two feasible paths for improvement. Large universities have examples showing that productivity can be increased while maintaining scale, whereas small but highly productive institutions have examples demonstrating that growth can be achieved without sacrificing strong performance.



Technical analysis of U-Ranking

05

In the previous chapter, we presented the main results of U-Ranking 2026, focusing on the positions of universities in each of the classifications produced by the project: U-Ranking, U-Ranking Volume, U-Ranking Dimensions and U-Ranking Fields of Study.

The methodological updates introduced in the 2025 edition, which are highlighted in chapter 2, can be summarized as follows: (1) the addition of a new dimension to the ranking—graduate employability; and (2) the replacement of certain indicators, made possible by improvements in data sources over the lifetime of the project. These improvements allow for the use of indicators that align more closely with the latent variables that are intended to measure and that were not available when the ranking was initially designed. The significant methodological innovations introduced in 2025 make the 2026 edition a valuable benchmark for assessing, from a methodological perspective, their impact on the results of the university system.

The year 2025 represents a significant difference with 2024 due to the scale of the methodological changes introduced. In contrast, 2026 is basically a continuation of 2025 and therefore makes it possible to analyze the effects of the mere passage of time in the application of the new criteria. As we have repeatedly noted, a well-designed indicator system should be sufficiently sensitive to year-to-year variation to generate changes in the positions of institutions. However, it would not be credible for such a system to produce large shifts in university rankings within a higher education system whose structural characteristics remain largely unchanged over time.

Changes in variables such as those in 2025 are standard practice in any revision of statistical series, but when the adjustment is made, it is essential to perform a technical analysis of their impact in two stages: first, a comparison with the results of the edition preceding the methodological changes, which was carried out in the previous edition; and second, a comparison after one year of evolution with the edition in which the changes were introduced (2025), which is undertaken in this 2026 edition in chapter 5. Although this type of analysis has also been conducted in previous editions, it takes on particular importance in the current edition as a result of the methodological changes described above.

The behavior of the new edition will be assessed in this new edition using the robustness checks applied in previous editions. This assessment includes: a comparison between the volume-based ranking and the performance-based ranking; a comparison of U-Ranking results with those of other international rankings, especially the ARWU or Shanghai Ranking; an analysis of U-Ranking's sensitivity to changes in the weights assigned to research, teaching and employability; an examination of whether differences between the public and private university systems persist; and an assessment of whether the results of regional university

systems have changed as a result of the methodological updates.

5.1. U-RANKING VOLUME VS. U-RANKING PERFORMANCE

As noted in the previous chapter, the volume and performance rankings serve different purposes and are useful in different contexts. In some cases, it may be of interest to analyze the university system in terms of institutional productivity, in which case the performance ranking is the most appropriate tool. In other cases, however, the focus may be on assessing each university's overall contribution to the system, regardless of how efficiently it uses its resources, and for that purpose the volume ranking is the more appropriate instrument.

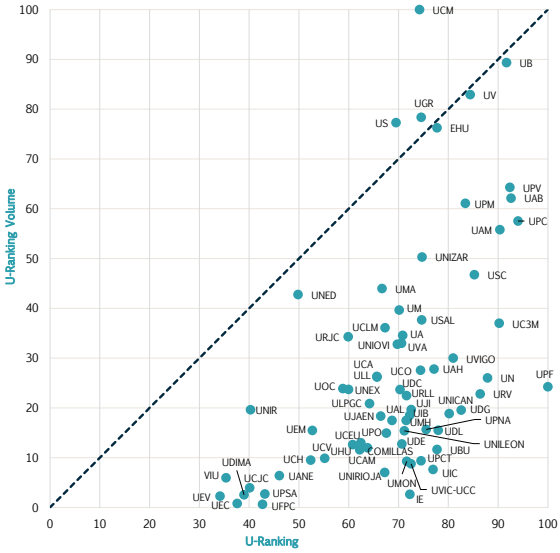
The results presented in Chapter 4 showed very different university orderings depending on the approach taken, as summarized in **figure 5.1**. The vertical axis shows the U-Ranking Volume scores, which reflect both performance and institutional size, while the horizontal axis shows the U-Ranking Performance scores, which are adjusted to remove the effect of size. Both sets of results correspond to the 2026 edition.

Several observations can be drawn from the figure. The differences in scores are greater in the volume ranking due to the influence of institutional size. The volume scores range from zero to 100, whereas the performance scores range from 32 to 100. This first pattern is consistent with what was observed in the 2025 edition.

Universities are ordered according to their results, from best to worst, along the first axis from top to bottom and along the second axis from right to left. As can be seen—and as was also the case in the 2025 edition—the spread of points in the graph is considerable, indicating that there is no clear correlation between the rankings. In general, institutional size does not appear to have a consistent influence on performance, either positive or negative.

Figure 5.1. **U-Ranking vs. U-Ranking Volume of Spanish universities**

Index 100 in each ranking



Note: See appendix 2 for a list of abbreviations.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

At the top right of the chart are the universities with the highest output (U-Ranking Volume score >70): Universidad Complutense, Universitat de Barcelona, Universitat de València, Universidad de Granada, Universidad de Sevilla and Universidad del País Vasco, but these institutions also perform well in terms of productivity (U-Ranking score >70). In other words, they are capable of combining a high volume of results with strong performance.

At the right-hand side of the chart, we can identify universities with a lower volume of results than the previous (score between 40 and 70) yet they stand out strongly along the horizontal axis corresponding to U-Ranking (score >70). This is the case of the polytechnic universities of Valencia, Catalonia and Madrid, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Autónoma de Madrid, Zaragoza and Santiago de Compostela.

Moreover, as highlighted by the lack of a clear correlation between the two rankings, there are universities with high performance (score >80) despite having a relatively low output volume (score <40). Examples include the top-ranked universities in U-Ranking, Pompeu Fabra, and Carlos III de Madrid, Rovira i Virgili and private institutions such as Navarra. Finally, there are universities that not

only have low output volumes (score <20) but also unexceptional performance, as in the case of a number of private universities, including Europea de Valencia, Europea de Canarias, Internacional de Valencia, UANE and UDIMA.

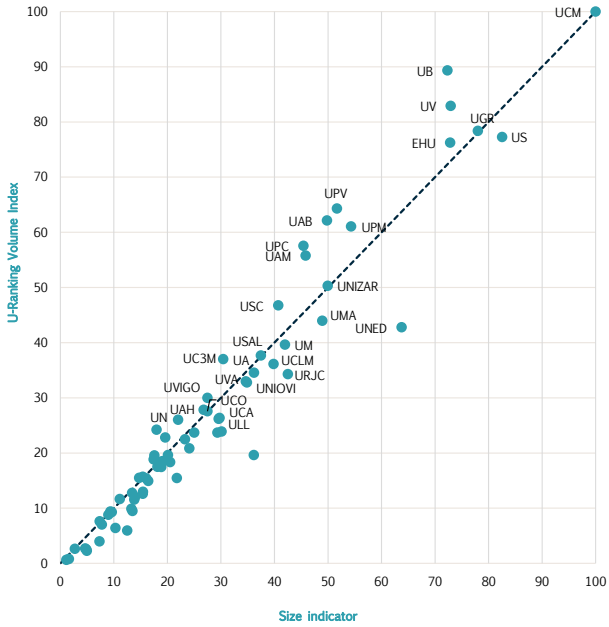
It is important to note that a university's score in U-Ranking Volume is not attributable solely to its size,[53] but rather to a combination of size and productivity. To illustrate the role of size in determining total output, **figure 5.2** plots these two variables in panels *a* (all universities) and *b* (detail of universities with a U-Ranking Volume score of 25 or below). Size is shown on the horizontal axis and each university's U-Ranking Volume score on the vertical axis. Institutions positioned above the diagonal are those that achieve above-average performance, thereby enhancing the volume of results that would be expected based on their size alone.

This representation reveals that productivity also contributes positively to the volume ranking of a considerable number of medium-to-large universities. This is the case of the Universitat de Barcelona, Universitat de València, Universitat Politècnica de València, Universidad de Madrid, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, and Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea. These institutions lie above the diagonal because their performance is higher than their size alone would predict, thanks to productivity levels that exceed the system average.

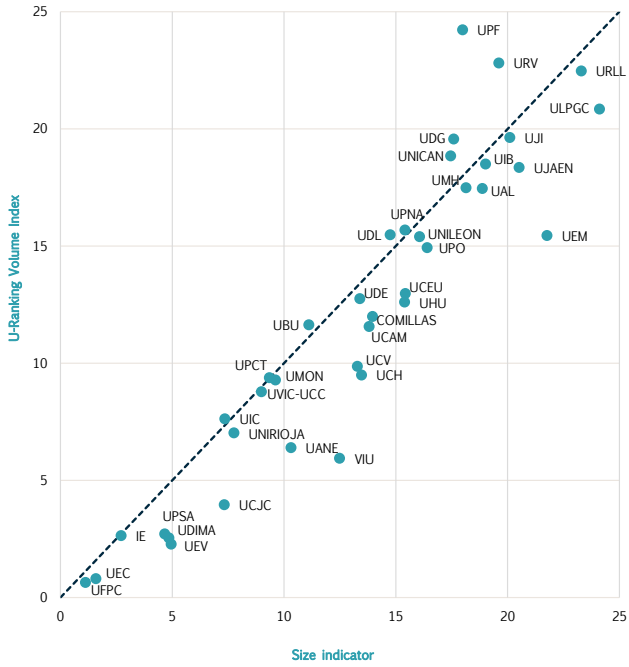
This boost in results due to strong performance can also be seen in some smaller institutions (panel *b*), such as Pompeu Fabra, Rovira i Virgili, Girona and Cantabria, which appear above the diagonal. However, the majority of smaller universities lie below the main diagonal, indicating that their productivity or performance is below the system average.

Figure 5.2. **U-Ranking Volume vs. Size indicator**

a) **Total**



b) **Universities with a U-Ranking Volume Index equal to or below 25**



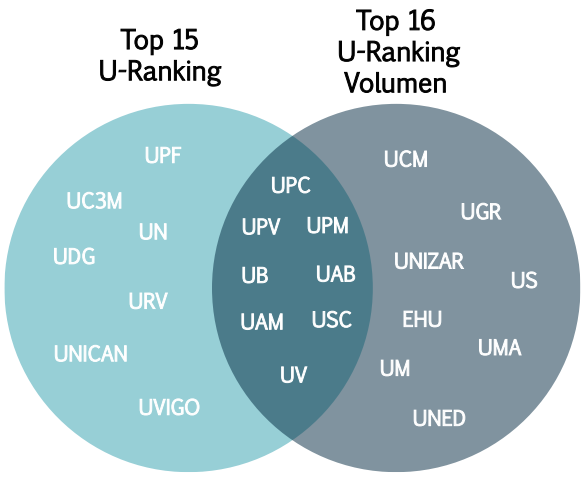
Note: The size indicator is a standard arithmetic mean of the teachers, students and budget of each university. See appendix 2 for a list of abbreviations.
Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

[53] As explained earlier, the size indicator is the normalized arithmetic mean of the number of students, number of faculty and actual income of each university.

Another way of visualizing the combined performance of the Spanish university system, both the two perspectives of performance and volume is through a Venn diagram such as that shown in **figure 5.3**. This diagram includes the top 15 universities in U-Ranking (those belonging to groups 1 and 2) and the 16 universities with the strongest results in U-Ranking Volume (those in groups 1 to 6, in total 16 universities in order to include the entire Group 6 in the volume ranking). The intersection contains the universities that occupy top positions in both rankings.

Overall, the chart identifies a group of 23 universities that appear in the top 15 positions in at least one of the U-Ranking classifications.

Figure 5.3. **U-Ranking vs. U-Ranking Volume**



Note: The top 15 universities in U-Ranking and the top 16 universities in U-Ranking Volume are included, corresponding to groups 1 and 2 of the first ranking, and groups 1 to 6 of the second.

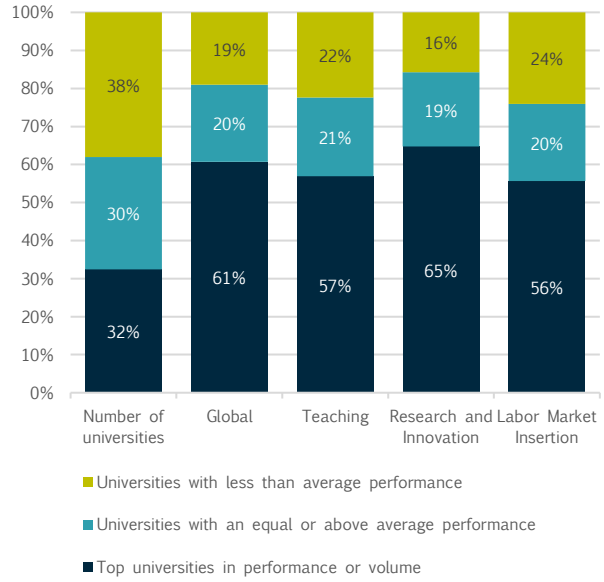
See appendix 2 for a list of abbreviations.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (2026).

As illustrated in **figure 5.4**, this group accounts for 32% of the institutions analyzed in U-Ranking, but generate 61% of the total volume of results of the Spanish university system. Breaking this down by the three dimensions that make up U-Ranking, this leading group produces 57% of teaching results, 65% of research output and 5% of employability outcomes.

Figure 5.4. **Contribution to the results of the Spanish University System**

Percentage



Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (2026).

The intersection of the two rankings contains eight universities that could be described as the "flagship" institutions of the Spanish university system because they are distinguished both by their efficient use of resources to achieve high performance and by the volume of teaching, research and innovation, and employability results they generate. The eight are: Universitat de Barcelona, the autonomous universities of Madrid and Barcelona, Universitat de València, the polytechnic universities of Madrid, Catalonia and Valencia, and Universidade de Santiago de Compostela. Together, these eight universities, which represent 11% of the universities analyzed, contribute 26% of the system's total output: 23% of teaching, 30% of research and innovation and 22% of employability results.

Surrounding these eight institutions are two valuable groups, or "tiers", but with distinctly different characteristics. One is formed by universities that are highly productive but smaller in size and therefore with a smaller volume of result: Universitat Pompeu Fabra, which tops the performance ranking, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Rovira i Virgili, Vigo, Cantabria, Girona and Universidad de Navarra, which is the only private institution among the 23 top performers. The second tier consists of universities that perform strongly in

the volume ranking but somewhat less so in terms of performance compared to universities inside the left-hand circle: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, which leads the volume ranking, the universities of Granada, Sevilla, País Vasco, Zaragoza, Málaga, Murcia and UNED.

As can be seen in figure 5.4, in addition to the group of 23 universities that occupy leading positions in either or both of the U-Ranking classifications, the 2026 edition identifies two additional groups. One of them, comprising 21 universities, has intermediate results (above the median score but not in the top 15 of either ranking). The other, with results below the median, is made up of the remaining 27 institutions, whose results fall below the median. The universities with intermediate performance (30% of the university system) account for 20% of total teaching, research and employability outcomes. Finally, the group with the weakest overall results represents 38% of the system yet contributes only 19% of the total output generated by the 71 universities in U-Ranking.

5.2. U-RANKING VS. SHANGHAI RANKING

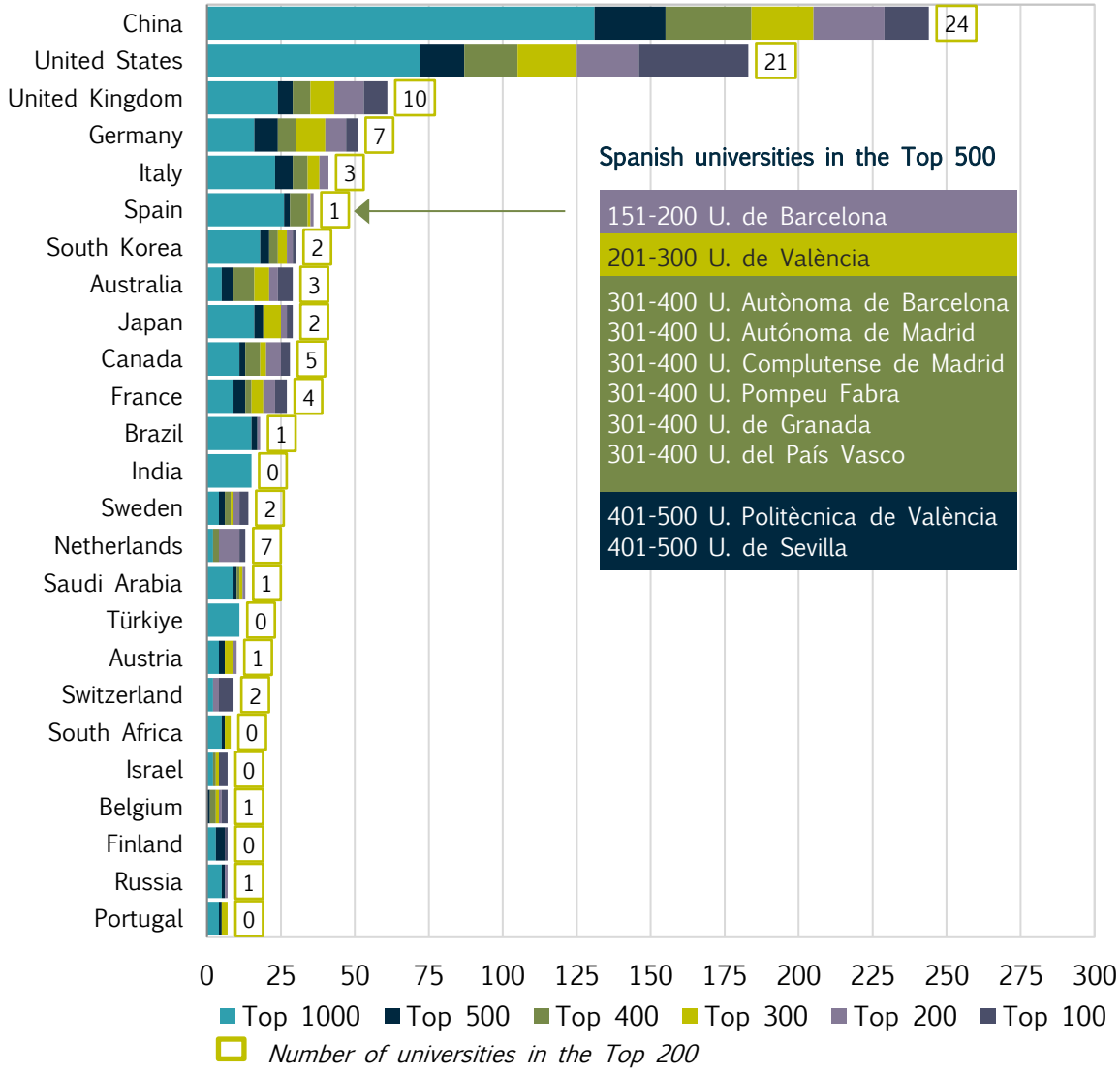
Many universities are keen to compare themselves with the world's top institutions and this aspiration helps explain the popularity of international rankings, which are increasingly numerous and diverse in their methodologies. Given the attention paid to these benchmarks, it is worth asking to what extent the results of the rankings developed by the project U-Ranking align with or differ from those of international rankings. As a point of external comparison, we will focus primarily on the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), widely known as the Shanghai Ranking, which is undoubtedly the most prominent. However, the types of variables on which ARWU is based differ substantially from those considered by U-Ranking, as does the way in which these variables are combined (CWCU 2026b).

Some degree of consistency between the results of U-Ranking and ARWU would have important implications for the analysis of the Spanish University System (SUE), as it would make it possible to place many Spanish universities that do not appear in ARWU, but are included in U-Ranking, within an international comparative framework. Achieving this objective, however, is far from straightforward.

Since its 2017 edition, the Shanghai Ranking has listed the top 1,000 universities among the more than 20,000 higher education institutions worldwide. However, in the latest ARWU edition only 36 Spanish universities (35 public and one private) appear in the top 1,000. For the top 100 universities, ARWU provides individual rankings; those ranked 101 to 200 are grouped in bands of 50; and from 201 onwards, universities are grouped in bands of 100. As shown in **figure 5.5**, in the most recent edition, 10 Spanish universities are ranked among the top 500, but none makes it into the top 100. Universitat de Barcelona ranks among the top 200 and Universitat de València among the top 300. Spain ranks sixth globally in terms of the number of universities included in the top 1,000. While 11% of Spanish universities are placed in the top 500, 38% are featured in the overall ranking, that is, among the 1,000 best universities in the world. The banded positioning system used in the Shanghai Ranking prevents a direct comparison with U-Ranking, since our index provides an individual ranking for each university, whereas the Shanghai Ranking groups institutions together beyond the top 100. However, given that ARWU publishes the data for the six indicators used in its ranking, a synthetic index has been calculated from these variables to enable an equivalent individual ranking of the 36 Spanish universities included. Having ordered the Spanish universities using this calculated index, **figure 5.6** presents a comparison of the international ranking with U-Ranking Volume (panel *a*) and U-Ranking Performance (panel *b*).

Panel *a* plots the position of Spanish universities in U-Ranking Volume on the horizontal axis and their position in the Shanghai Ranking on the vertical axis. The results show a fairly similar ordering in both rankings, which is why most universities are clustered in quadrants I and III of the figure.

Figure 5.5. **Spanish Universities in Shanghai Ranking 2026**



Note: Ordered from the countries' highest to lowest number of universities in the Top 1,000.
Source: CWCU (2026a).

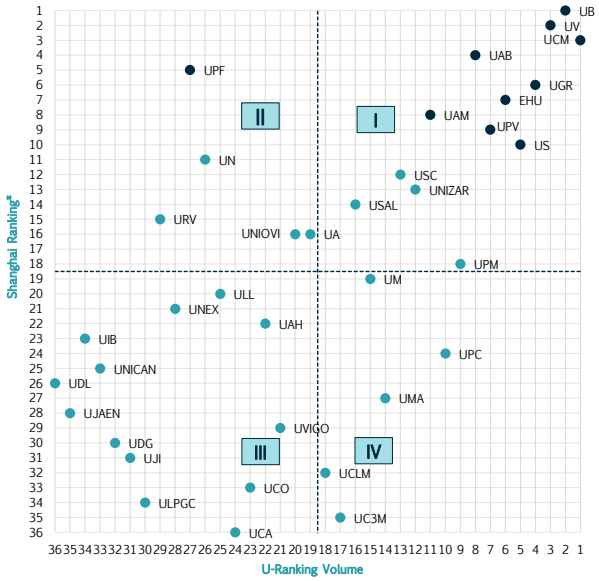
Universities in quadrant IV are comparatively better positioned in our volume ranking. Notable examples include the Universitat Politécnica de Catalunya and Universidad de Málaga, all of which rank significantly higher in U-Ranking Volume than in the Shanghai Ranking. Conversely, universities located in quadrant II are comparatively better placed in the Shanghai Ranking. A common feature in many of these cases is that they are smaller, yet very productive institutions, such as Pompeu Fabra, Rovira and Virgili and Universidad de Navarra, whose higher efficiency is also highlighted by their strong performance in the U-Ranking index.

The universities ranked among the top 500 in the 2025 Shanghai Ranking are highlighted with a dark circle. Almost all of them occupy top positions in U-Ranking Volume: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Universitat de Barcelona, Universitat de València, Universidad de Granada, Universidad del País Vasco, Universitat Politècnica de València and the autonomous universities of Madrid and Barcelona. Universitat Pompeu Fabra ranks somewhat

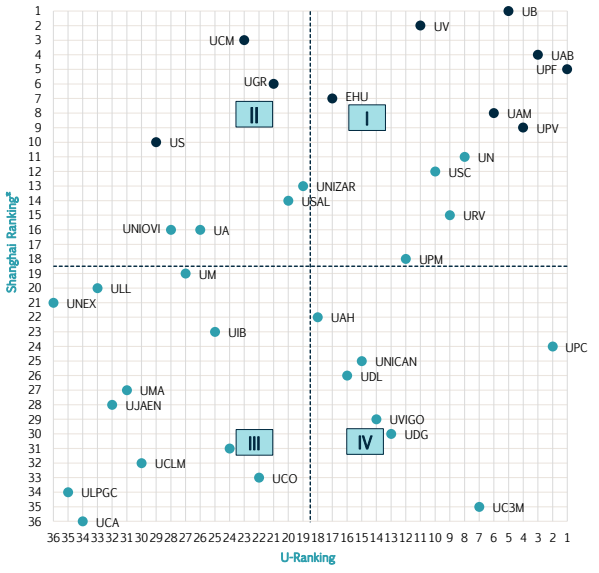
lower in U-Ranking Volume owing to its smaller size.

Figure 5.6. **U-Ranking vs. Shanghai Ranking**

a) U-Ranking Volume vs. Shanghai Ranking



b) U-Ranking vs. Shanghai Ranking



Note: Results correspond to an adaptation for 36 Spanish universities that appear in the ranking based on their score in the 5 indicators used and their relative position with respect to the university with the highest score. See appendix 2 for a list of abbreviations.

● Universities in the Top 500 of the Shanghai Ranking 2025.

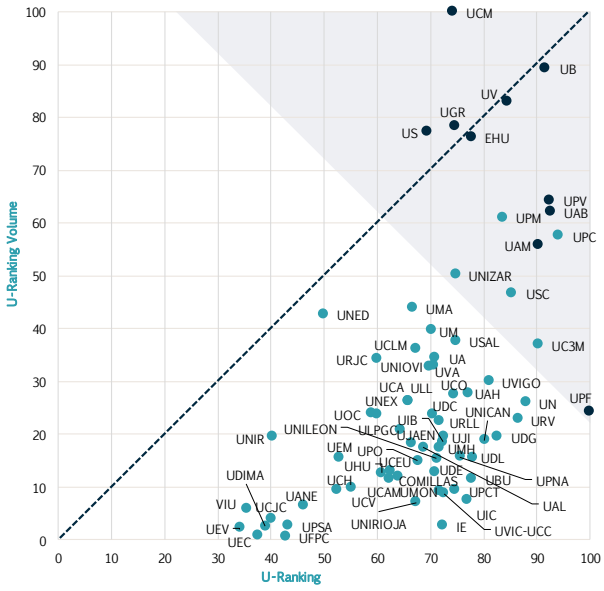
See appendix 2 for a list of abbreviations.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026) and CWCU (2026a).

The differences with ARWU are much more pronounced in the case of U-Ranking Performance (panel *b*), as the Shanghai Ranking makes little adjustment to its indicators for institutional size and so is more a ranking of output volume than of efficiency or performance.[54]

To analyze the positioning of universities that perform well in both U-Ranking classifications (performance and volume) relative to the Shanghai Ranking, **figure 5.7** highlights an area containing fifteen universities that stand out in both dimensions of U-Ranking. Within this shaded area, those that also appear in the 2025 Shanghai Ranking are marked in dark blue.

Figure 5.7. **U-Ranking and Spanish universities in the Top 500 of Shanghai Ranking**
Index 100 and TOP 500 universities



Note: See appendix 2 for a list of abbreviations.

● Universities in the Top 500 of the Shanghai Ranking 2025.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026) and CWCU (2026a).

All the universities highlighted in the Shanghai Ranking fall within the area where our volume and performance rankings converge, underscoring the international comparability of U-Ranking. However,

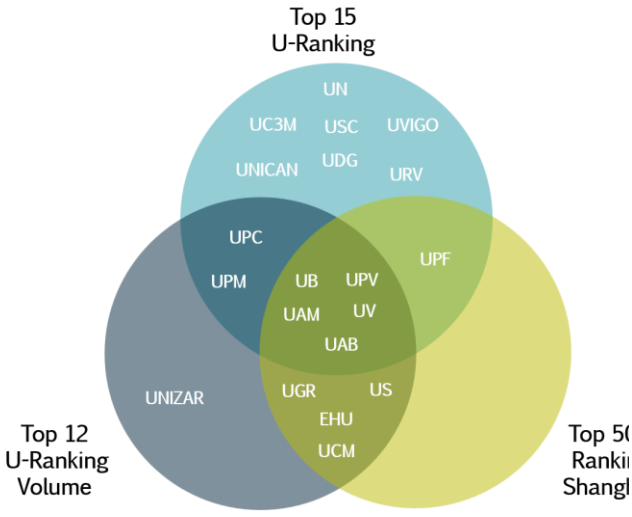
[54] For example, as we have noted, the Shanghai Ranking uses the number of faculty members who have received a Nobel Prize or a Fields Medal—not that number divided by the total number of professors at the university—as an indicator of faculty quality.

five universities appear in prominent positions in U-Ranking (within the shaded area) but are not included in the top 500 of the 2025 Shanghai Ranking: Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (ranked 901–1000), the polytechnic universities of Madrid (601–700) and Catalonia (701–800), Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (501–600) and Universidad de Zaragoza (501–600).

To illustrate how the three rankings group universities differently, we once again use a Venn diagram to show the institutions that appear in the top 15 of each classification and the overlaps. Of the 71 universities analyzed, 23 are featured among the top institutions in at least one of the three rankings (the Shanghai top 500, or the top 15/16 of U-Ranking or U-Ranking Volume).

At the center of the diagram (**figure 5.8**) are the five universities that hold prominent positions in all three rankings: Universitat de Barcelona, Universitat de València, Universitat Politècnica de València and the autonomous universities of Barcelona and Madrid.

Figure 5.8. **U-Ranking (performance and volume) vs. Shanghai Ranking**



Note: The 10 Spanish universities in the Top 500 of the Shanghai Ranking 2025 and the first 15 universities in U-Ranking and U-Ranking Volume are included that correspond to groups 1 and 2 of the first ranking and 1 to 6 of the second.

See appendix 2 for a list of abbreviations.

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026) and CWCU (2026a).

Another eight universities hold prominent positions in two of the rankings: Universitat Pompeu Fabra appears in both the Shanghai Ranking and U-Ranking; Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Universidad de Granada, Universidad de Sevilla and Universidad del País Vasco (EHU), in both the Shanghai Ranking and U-Ranking Volume; and the polytechnic universities of Catalonia and Madrid, and Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, in both U-Ranking and U-Ranking Volume. Lastly, ten universities hold prominent positions in only one of the three rankings.

In short, these results reveal substantial overlap among the rankings in identifying leading universities, but also significant differences, which reflect the distinct approaches of each ranking. In summary, of the ten Spanish universities included in the Shanghai top 500, all except Universitat Pompeu Fabra also rank highly for output volume in U-Ranking Volume and six are among our most productive institutions according to U-Ranking Performance. Thus, our classifications—particularly the volume ranking—align closely with those of the Shanghai Ranking, reinforcing their value as tools for identifying best practices and institutions with the greatest impact. At the same time, they show that rankings may differ depending on the perspective adopted in their construction. However, it is important to emphasize that certain Spanish universities are consistently well positioned regardless of the approach used.

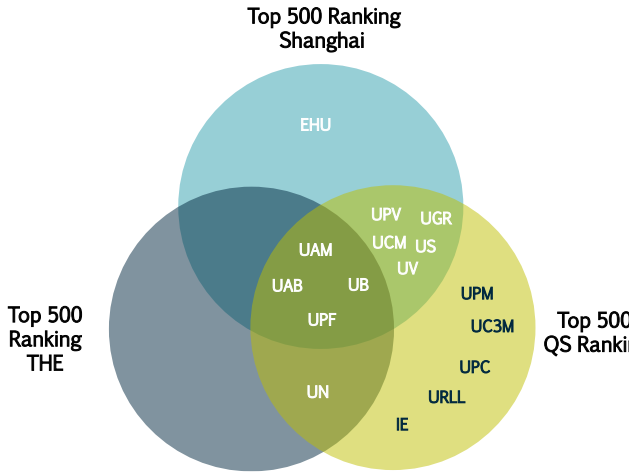
One question that needs to be answered is this: if there is a strong alignment between U-Ranking Volume and the Shanghai Ranking, what additional value does U-Ranking provide? The answer is that its contribution is threefold. First, it covers most of the Spanish university system, whereas ARWU excludes a large number of universities. If indicators are to be used by universities as benchmarks to diagnose strengths and weaknesses and guide strategic decision-making at national level, U-Ranking gives them what they need far more comprehensively than ARWU does, since the latter does not cover the vast majority of universities. Second, as noted above, ARWU follows a purely volume-based approach, while U-Ranking also provides an assessment of productivity, offering valuable insights into university performance. Finally, ARWU does not provide a comprehensive analysis

of the various dimensions of university activity, as it omits teaching and employability—both of which are included in U-Ranking.

5.3. COMPARISON WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL RANKINGS

Although the Shanghai Ranking has established itself as the most widely cited international benchmark, there are other influential global initiatives, such as the Times Higher Education (THE) ranking and the QS ranking. The main differences between these and the Shanghai Ranking are that (i) they consider the role of teaching and (ii) they include subjective assessments based on surveys of international experts and employers. The performance of Spanish universities across these three international rankings shows both similarities and differences, as can be seen in **figure 5.9**, which shows the Spanish universities that appear among the top 500 in each ranking.

Figure 5.9. **Comparison of the results of three international rankings. 2025-2026**



Note: See appendix 2 for a list of abbreviations.

Source: CWCU (2026a), THE (2026) and QS (2026).

To assess the degree of alignment between U-Ranking and the trio of international rankings, one need only compare the universities featured in those rankings with what we might call the "efficient frontier" of U-Ranking and U-Ranking Volume. The frontier consists of 15 universities that, according to our analysis, perform strongly in both rankings. They are the ones highlighted in the shaded area of **figure 5.7**.

The first conclusion is that, despite the different methodologies used in the various rankings, there is a very high degree of consistency. Of the 16 universities appearing in at least one of the three international rankings, 13 are also within the efficient frontier identified by U-Ranking of figure 5.7. Only three private universities—IE University and Ramon Llull (featured in QS) and Navarra (featured in both QS and THE)—do not appear in the U-Ranking efficient area, nor in the Shanghai Ranking.

At the intersection of all three international rankings are four universities—the autonomous universities of Madrid and Barcelona, Universitat de Barcelona and Universitat Pompeu Fabra—which also rank highly in our own indices and belong to the group of institutions located on the frontier in **figure 5.7**. These are universities that are scarcely outperformed by any others.

These findings confirm the existence of a group of Spanish universities that consistently occupy leading positions within the national system, regardless of the analytical lens used. They also demonstrate that the level of discrepancy between our ranking and the best-known international rankings is no greater than the discrepancies among those international rankings themselves.

5.4. RESEARCH, TEACHING AND LABOR MARKET INSERTION: SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

One of the main challenges inherent in constructing any composite indicator is the impact of the relative weighting assigned to its constituent components. U-Ranking's methodology explicitly acknowledges that teaching, and research and innovation, and labor-market outcomes may have different levels of importance for each user of university services. This is reflected in the "Elige Universidad" web tool, which allows users to generate customized rankings based on their own preferences regarding these dimensions.

This effect of relative weighting becomes even more significant in the 2025 edition, which includes a new dimension into the ranking framework—graduate employability—which increases the likelihood that changes in weighting will lead to substantial changes in the rankings. The 2026 edition therefore provides an opportunity to assess the behavior of the ranking after one year of evolution of the new indicators, as well as to evaluate the extent to which the ranking continues to combine an appropriate degree of responsiveness to change with stability in the overall structure of the system.

The question addressed in this section is how much the overall university rankings would change if the weight assigned to each dimension were adjusted. In previous editions, the weights used to calculate the rankings were based on the results of a Delphi method survey, which gathered the views of the experts involved in designing the project, along with other available information.[55] The inclusion of the graduate employability dimension—assigned a 10% weighting in the 2025 edition—made it necessary to reconsider the relative weights for teaching and research. The decision, which is maintained in the 2026 edition was to allocate the remaining 90% equally between teaching (45%) and research and innovation (45%). The main rationale for this decision was that employability is, fundamentally, an outcome of teaching—specifically, of an educational approach that equips graduates for entry into the labor market. It therefore seems reasonable to deduct that 10% from the 56% previously attributed to the teaching dimension. As this results in near-equal weighting between teaching and research, it was decided to assign 45% to each.

The change consisted in the addition of the employability dimension, a reduction in the relative weight assigned to teaching and only the tiniest change in the weight assigned to research and knowledge transfer. Based on the selected weightings, the sensitivity analysis that follows explores whether, after one year of implementation and with a new round of data collection, the results are sensitive—or not, in which case we shall consider them robust—to changes in these weightings.

In the **first exercise**, we focus on the sensitivity of the results to variations in the relative weightings of teaching and research, keeping the weight assigned to employability (10%) constant. Subsequently, we analyze how the ranking responds to changes in the weight assigned to employability.

Would the results change significantly if more weight were given to research, as is the case in other rankings? Could a university rise to a leading position in the ranking if the weightings for teaching, on the one hand, and research and innovation, on the other, were adjusted to better reflect its particular strengths? The answers to these questions are important for assessing whether the rankings are highly sensitive to the allocation of weights to university activities. As we shall see, the answer to each of these questions is different.

Most rankings place a strong emphasis on research because data on research output is plentiful and generally considered more precise and reliable. This bias—based on "using what can be measured"—is often defended on the grounds that teaching and research are highly correlated. However, this is a hypothesis that remains largely untested due to a lack of robust indicators of teaching outcomes and a lack of consensus on which indicators best reflect the quality of teaching at an institution. Studying the sensitivity of rankings to changes in the weighting of teaching versus research and innovation is thus no easy task. It does, however, allow us to assess whether university performance in these two dimensions is indeed correlated, or whether research-heavy rankings present a biased view that should be understood as only partial.

The fact that research is easier to measure should not be an excuse to neglect the measurement of teaching quality. Likewise, while there may be a positive correlation between quality of teaching

[55] The weights used in previous editions, before the inclusion of the employability dimension, were 56% for teaching and 44% for research and innovation. These weights were based on expert opinions and closely matched the distribution of resources between teaching and research activities in university budgets.

and research, this should not obscure the possibility of divergence: if two universities achieve similar research quality but differ in teaching outcomes, ignoring that information will skew the results in favor of one and to the detriment of the other. This point is all the more valid in the Spanish university system, where there is a marked disparity in the importance placed on research, depending on whether the university is public or private and other characteristics such as the university's age, location or strategic priorities.

To assess the extent to which the choice of weights for teaching and research and innovation affects outcomes, we conducted a sensitivity analysis of these weightings within the performance ranking. We calculated three versions of the ranking, each based on significantly different weightings of research and innovation versus teaching:

- **Option 1:** Teaching 20% / Research and Innovation 70% / Job market insertion 10%
- **Option 2:** Teaching 70% / Research and Innovation 20% / Job market insertion 10%
- **U-Ranking 2026:** Teaching 45% / Research and Innovation 45% / Job market insertion 10%

Figure 5.10 shows how the ranking position of each of the 71 Spanish universities analyzed shifts when the weight of research and innovation is varied, according to the three selected weight configurations.

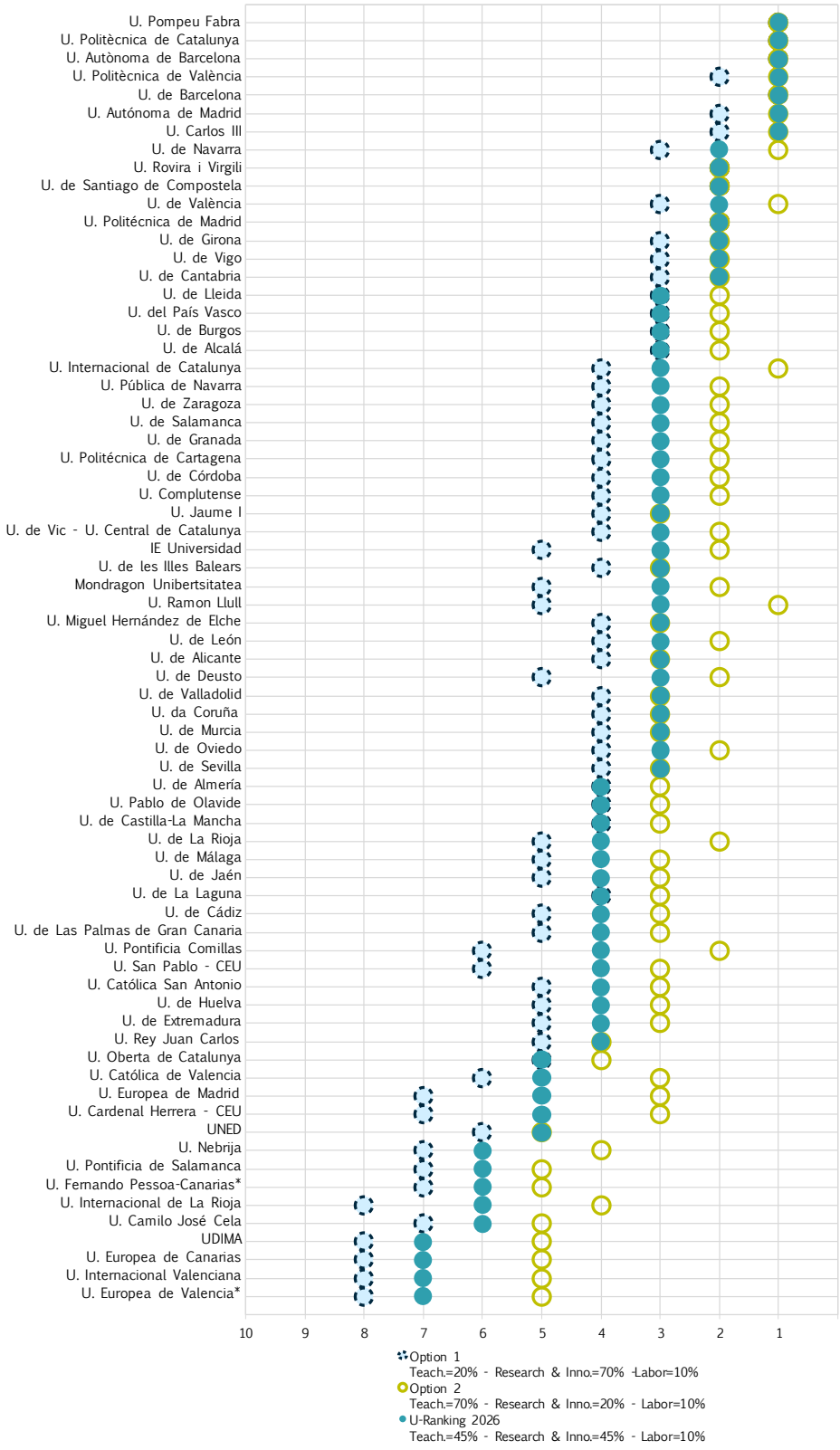
Changes in ranking position are shown by movements to the left or right of the solid-colored circle, which represents the position using the U-Ranking 2026 weightings (Option 3). The horizontal axis indicates the performance group to which the university belongs—or would belong—depending on the weightings used. Recall that there are 10 potential groups, each corresponding to a 10-point interval in the index. Thus, Group 1 includes universities with an index score between 90–100, Group 2 includes those scoring between 80 and <90 and so on.

The conclusions are as follows:

- First, using either extreme set of weights would never cause universities to move by more than two groups in which they are classified based on their performance.
- If the weight for research and innovation were increased to 70% (Option 1), nine universities (12.7%) would shift by two groups, 46 (64.8%) by only one and 16 universities (22.5%) would not change their classification at all. In summary, 87.3% of universities would not move more than one classification group. Notably, all the universities that would fall by two groups under such a sharp increase in the weight of research are private institutions: IE Universidad, Mondragon, Ramon Llull, Deusto, Pontificia Comillas, San Pablo-CEU, Europea de Madrid, Cardenal Herrera-CEU, and Universidad Internacional de La Rioja.
- If the weight of research and innovation were reduced to 20% and teaching were increased to 70% (Option 2), we find similar levels of stability. There would be no changes of three positions, 13 universities (18.3%) would move by two groups, 35 universities (49.3%) by one group and 23 (32.3%) would see no change in their group placement. Overall, 81.7% of universities would not change their classification group by more than one level.

These results highlight, as previously noted, a clear pattern in the ranking's sensitivity to changes in weights that has remained stable following the updating of the indicators from the previous year, which incorporated the major methodological change. Private universities, with their strong focus on teaching, are much more sensitive to increases in the weight assigned to research and innovation than the public universities.

Figure 5.10. **Changes in U-Ranking groups according to the variations in weights of research and innovation**



Note: Universities are ordered by their position in the global performance ranking with the following weights: 45/45/10

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

The rankings thus show sensitivity to changes in the weights allocated to teaching and to research and innovation, particularly when comparing weightings as divergent as those in Options 1 and 2. However, a university cannot drop from the top ranks to the bottom, however substantial the changes in weights, although some may climb in the ranking when greater importance is placed on either teaching or research. In U-Ranking, even radical changes in weighting never lead to shifts of more than two classification levels.

It should be recalled that sensitivity to change is a desirable property in any measurement tool. If an instrument were unresponsive to significant variations in weights—reflecting different valuations of each factor—it could not be considered useful. If it does not respond to changes in weighting, it is unlikely to respond to changes in indicator levels either, which is precisely what should determine whether a university rises or falls in the ranking. In this respect, U-Ranking is tolerant of moderate adjustments in weighting, but it responds appropriately to significant changes. The **second exercise** we conducted was to assess the impact of significant changes in the weight assigned to employability. The following scenarios were analyzed. Option 1 is based on the principle of equal weighting. It assumes that there is no reason to assign greater importance to one dimension than to another, and therefore each dimension receives the same weight (33.3%). As previously mentioned, this is not the approach we follow, as universities have a much greater capacity to influence teaching and research outcomes—whether positively or negatively—than they do employability. In the case of employability, universities certainly play a role in preparing graduates for the labor market, but so do external factors beyond their control, such as the economic development of the region in which the university is located (which affects the quantity and quality of job opportunities) and the economic cycle. Assigning labor market outcomes the same weight as teaching or research is therefore an interesting but clearly extreme assumption for sensitivity analysis purposes. Option 2 assumes a greater redistribution of the weight formerly assigned entirely to teaching, allocating 20% to employability instead. In summary:

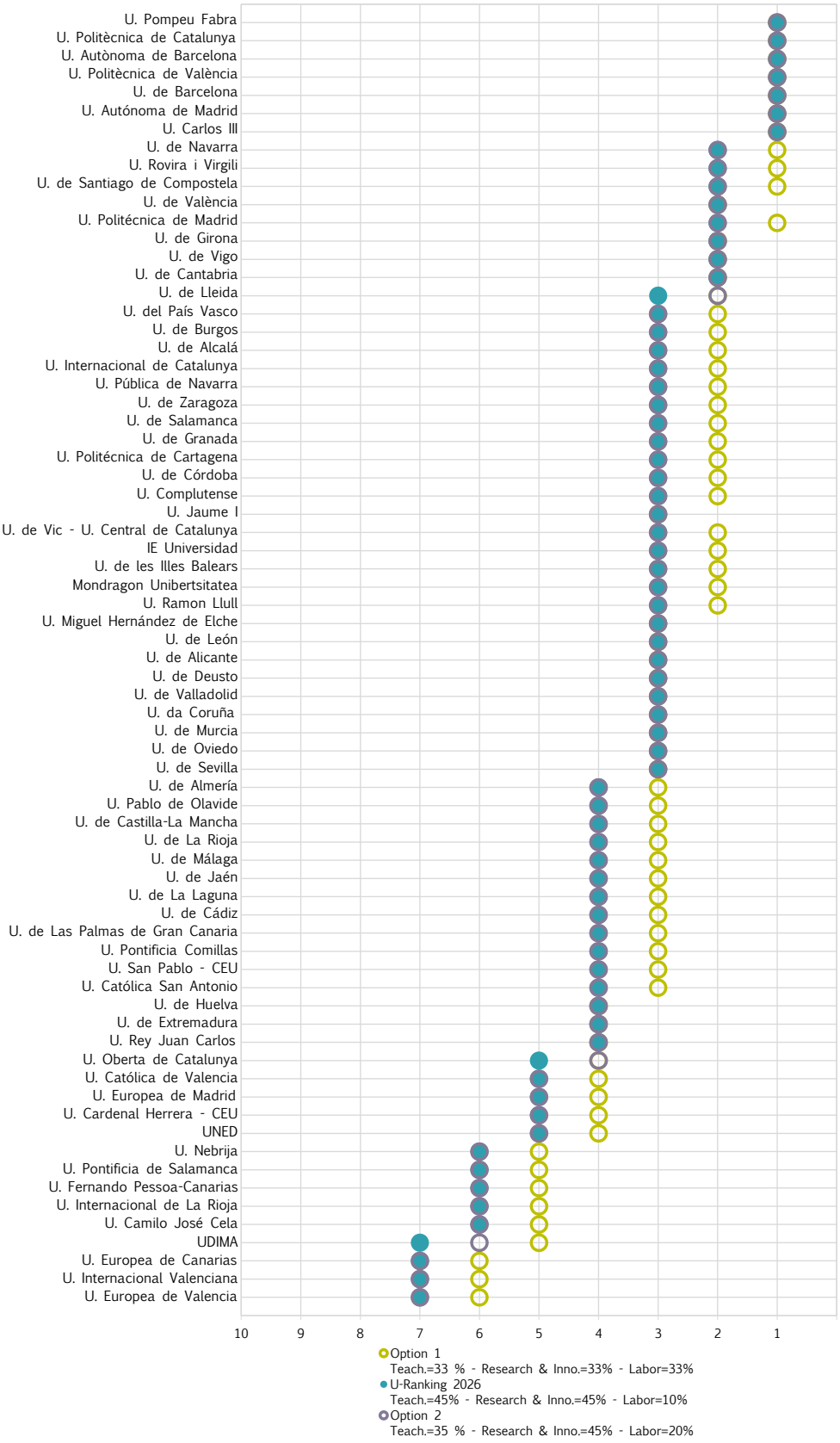
- **Option 1:** Teaching 33.3% / Research and Innovation 33.3% / Job market insertion 33.3%
- **Option 2:** Teaching 35% / Research and Innovation 45% / Job market insertion 20%
- **U-Ranking 2026:** Teaching 45% / Research and Innovation 45% / Job market insertion 10%

Figure 5.11 shows the effect on ranking group membership for each of the scenarios analyzed. The conclusion is clear: neither of the two scenarios (assigning 33.3% or 20% weight to employability) has a significant impact on the U-Ranking order. For no university would this scenario result in a shift of two classifications. In all other cases, the maximum shift observed is by one group. Under Option 1, 45 universities would move up by one group and 26 would remain unchanged.

The impact of Option 2 is even smaller. Of the 71 universities analyzed, none would shift by more than one group, only three would move by one group and 68 would maintain their current position.

In summary, once the weight assigned to research is fixed, the decision on how to distribute the remaining weight between employability and teaching has limited consequences. The chosen option (10% weight for employability) is considered justified, given the limited control universities have over outcomes in this dimension. In any case, as the project also provides a ranking for each of the dimensions, this can be used to specifically assess university performance in terms of employability.

Figure 5.11 **Changes in U-Ranking groups according to the variations in weights of labor market insertion**



Note: Universities are ordered by their position in the global performance ranking with the following weights: 45/45/10

Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

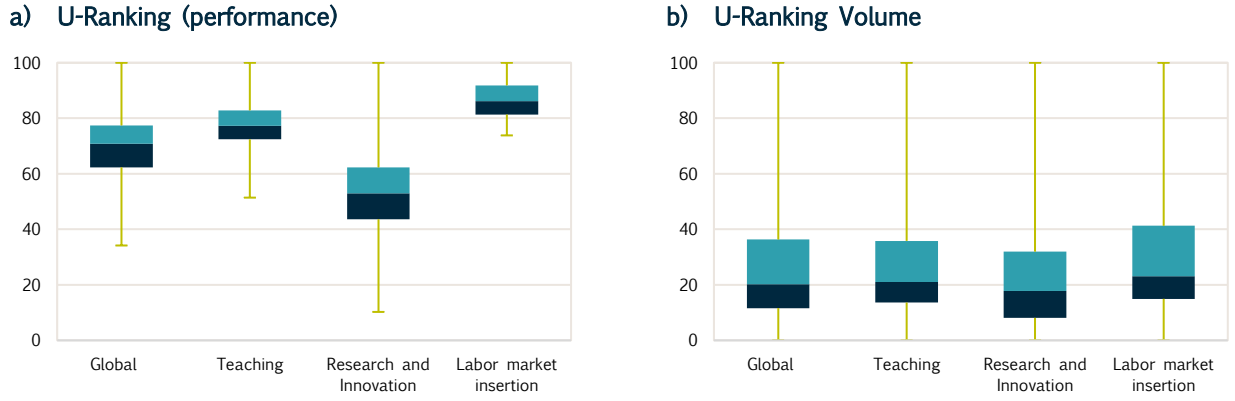
5.5. RANKINGS FOR TEACHING, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AND LABOR MARKET INSERTION

The methodology used in this project generates indicators of outcomes for teaching, employability, and research and innovation activities at universities. These three dimensions are then aggregated to produce the two overall rankings presented—U-Ranking and U-Ranking Volume. However, the individual results for each of the three dimensions can also be ordered separately to produce a teaching ranking, an employability ranking and a research and innovation ranking, as described in chapter 4. As noted earlier, each of these can be calculated in two versions: by volume of output and by performance. This offers an alternative way of assessing whether universities differ in their teaching, employability, and research and innovation outcomes, without entering into the debate about the relative importance of these activities when they are combined into a single overall index.

In this section, our aim is to go beyond merely presenting the orderings derived from these rankings, draw conclusions about the behavioral profiles that the university system exhibits in each of the three dimensions mentioned. In the next section, we shall also analyze the differences that may exist between public and private universities.

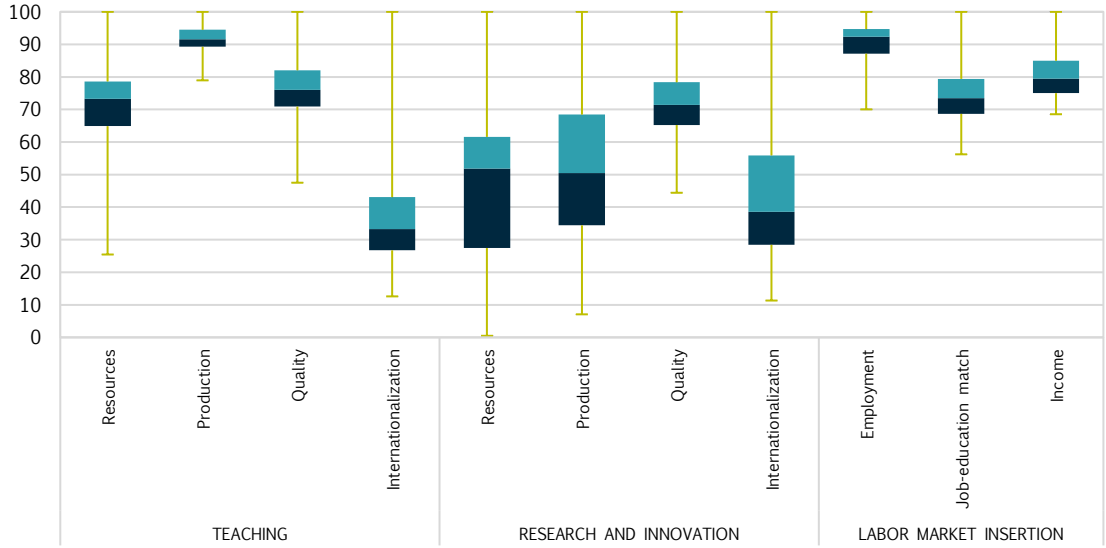
The box plots in **figure 5.12** show the distribution of index scores across the various dimensions and the overall university index in terms of performance (panel *a*) and volume of results (panel *b*). These distributions relate to the university system as a whole. The tips of the vertical green lines ("whiskers") indicate the maximum and minimum scores in each dimension, thus defining the range of variation. The upper and lower bounds of the central box mark the 75th and 25th percentiles, respectively. This interquartile range contains the middle 50% of the distribution. The boundary between the two-color blocks within the box represents the median value, that is, the value that splits the distribution into two equal halves.

Figure 5.12. **U-Ranking. Distribution of the indices obtained in each dimension**



Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Figure 5.13. **U-Ranking. Distribution of the indices obtained in each area of study**
Index 100



Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Comparing panels *a* and *b*, the following key features emerge:

- The range of scores (the distance between the tips of the whiskers, i.e. between the maximum and minimum values across the universities) is wider in the volume ranking, reflecting the effect of institutional size on performance in U-Ranking. In the volume ranking, it is almost always possible to find a university with a score close to zero and, by design, there is always one institution that leads with a score of 100.
- Volume also has a moderating effect on scores, with median values clustering closely around 20 points.
- Looking at panel *a* of the figure, which shows the distribution of performance scores, we observe that the values are considerably more homogeneous in teaching (smaller box size) and, most notably, employability than in research. Research is thus the main differentiating factor in the classification of universities. In employability, all the universities are very close to the leading institution (with low dispersion and a median index above 80). The pattern is similar, though slightly more dispersed, in teaching (with a median index slightly below 80). By contrast, in research and innovation, the average distance between the university that leads and the other universities is much greater, placing the median value close to 50.

As noted in earlier chapters, the dimensions analyzed are constructed from a series of sub-dimensions or thematic areas. For instance, employability comprises the areas of employment, job matching and earnings. The patterns observed at the dimension level may differ across specific areas, which is why in **figure 5.13** we present the same information as figure 5.12, broken down by area. The high values in the dimensions of teaching and, more particularly, employability—because most of the universities are relatively close to the leading universities—are plain to see. What stands out most, however, is the substantial gap between the system average and the leading universities in the area of teaching internationalization. Given the importance of this issue, it has recently been the subject of a recent report (Pérez and Aldás [eds.], 2026). The next section will explore whether this pattern is driven by differences in university ownership. In the research dimension, the overall range of variation (the distance between the maximum and minimum values, represented by the tips of the whiskers) is also significant, but so too is the degree of dispersion (the distance between the upper quartile—75th percentile—and the lower

quartile—25th percentile). This dispersion is somewhat lower in the area of quality, but very high in the areas of resources, output and internationalization. The next section will also examine the extent to which university ownership helps to explain these marked disparities across areas.

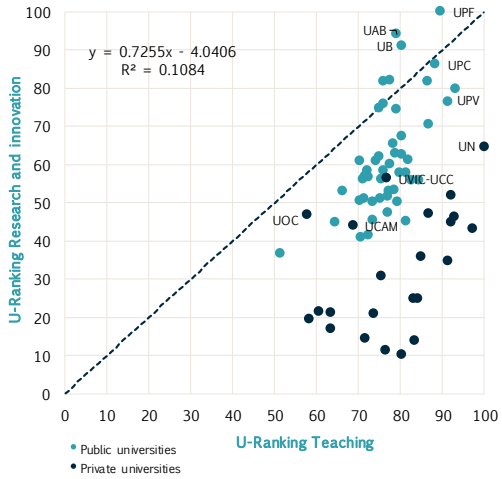
One of the issues discussed in earlier chapters was the validity of the assumption, implicit in many rankings, that research indicators can serve as a proxy for teaching performance—that is, that research output predicts or is strongly correlated with teaching outcomes. A more visual way of highlighting the differences between these areas is to examine scatter plots of the relevant indices. For this purpose, we plot the performance indices for research and innovation against those for teaching (**figure 5.14**, panel *a*) and each of these against employability (panels *b* and *c*). The plots reveal a clear pattern: observations cluster in a vertical band: high teaching scores are associated with low research scores for some universities, mainly private ones, and with high research scores for others, namely public ones. As a result, the relationship between the two variables is very weak—a finding confirmed by the coefficient of determination of the regression line, which is only slightly above 10% (0.1084).

This finding is significant, as many rankings focus exclusively on institutions' research output, assuming that strong research performance inherently reflects strong teaching performance—an assumption not supported by the data. This underlines the importance of using a multidimensional ranking approach, such as that adopted by U-Ranking.

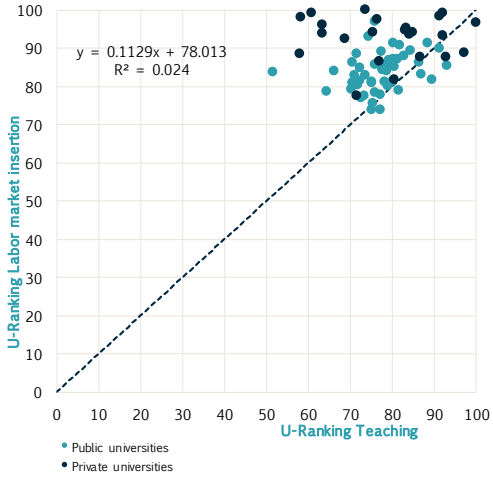
When, in panel *b*, we examine the relationship between teaching and employability, we find a strong concentration of values—for both public and private universities—at high values on both indices and with a very weak correlation in the scatter plot (R^2 = 0.024). Nevertheless, there appears to be a somewhat more evident pattern among public universities, where higher employability tends to align with higher teaching outcomes. Among private universities, however, teaching performance values vary horizontally for any given level of employability, indicating no clear correlation.

Figure 5.14. **U-Ranking dimensions**

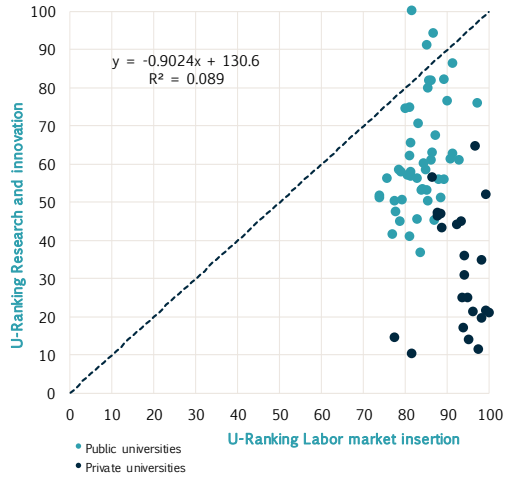
a) Teaching vs. Research and innovation



b) Teaching vs. Labor market insertion



c) Research and innovation vs. Labor market insertion



Note: See appendix 2 for a list of abbreviations.
Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Panel *c* shows the very weak relationship between employability and research in the university system, with an R^2 of just 0.1. While all the universities are clustered within a narrow, high band on the employability index, the differences in research levels are stark. It is also evident that most public universities register significantly higher research performance than their private counterparts.

5.6. COMPARATIVE RESULTS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

The increasing share of private universities within the Spanish university system makes it all the more important to compare the universities' performance according to whether they are publicly or privately owned. Undoubtedly, private universities may obtain divergent outcomes for many reasons: they are, on average, much younger and more concentrated in higher-income geographical areas, they offer a narrower range of programs compared to the public system—largely because, being fairly recently established, they have been able to choose their specializations—and they are also generally a smaller size. Nevertheless, before we can determine the reasons for the differences in performance, an issue that falls beyond the scope of this report, we first need to establish that the differences actually exist. The U-Ranking indices provide the means for addressing this question using precise data.

Figure 5.15 presents the distribution of performance and volume scores for each of the ranking dimensions developed by this project, now broken down by public and private university ownership.

Figure 5.15. **U-Ranking. Distribution of the indices obtained in each dimension by type of ownership**
Index 100



Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

- The differences (as indicated by the distance between the tips of the whiskers, i.e. the range between maximum and minimum scores) among public universities are significantly greater when looking at the volume of their outputs than at their performance. This pattern is evident across the three dimensions considered.

- In the case of private universities, since many are smaller in size, we observe much greater homogeneity in the volume index than in the performance index. The heterogeneity in performance is particularly pronounced in research activities.

- The differences in performance among universities, in general, are greater in research than in teaching or employability.

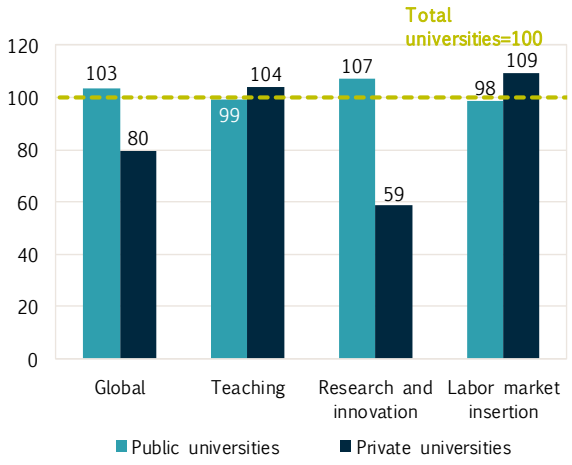
- The median performance score for public universities in teaching is 77.1, compared to 79.7 for private universities. For employability, the median for public universities is 83.5, compared to 93.2 for private ones. As we can see, the differences are relatively small in teaching and somewhat greater in employability. For research, however, the median for public universities is 59.4, the corresponding figure for private universities is only 27.4 points, less than half the level observed among public universities. As noted in Chapter 4, this is the principal distinguishing feature between the public and private sectors.

- A particularly important conclusion that emerges from figure 5.15, and one that should always be borne in mind, is the need for caution when using the labels "public universities" and, especially, "private universities" to characterize these two groups. This caution is warranted because of the substantial dispersion observed in both their overall performance indices and the indices for individual dimensions. Public universities differ markedly from one another, but the same is true, and perhaps even more so, of private universities. This heterogeneity should be taken into account whenever results are presented for either sector as a whole.

These figures are derived from the individual indices of each university, without accounting for their relative weight in the distribution. To assess each of the public and private systems as a whole, it is necessary to construct an aggregate index by dividing the total volume of results by the size of each university. The above figures are based on the individual indices of each university, without accounting for their varying weight in the distribution. To compare the public and private systems as a whole, we need to construct an aggregate index by dividing the total volume of university outputs by their combined size.

Figure 5.16 presents the average results of the U-Ranking indices in teaching, employability and research and innovation, and in the overall performance index. Taking the system-wide average as the base value of 100 (calculated as previously described), the performance of private universities is 23 points lower than that of public universities. This result is primarily due to the strong specialization of private institutions in the teaching dimension, where they achieve better performance—by 5 points—than public universities. However, their research results are significantly lower, with performance levels 48 points below those of public institutions. As noted previously, employability outcomes are fairly similar regardless of ownership, although private universities outperform the public sector by 12 points higher in this dimension.

Figure 5.16. **Average performance of the Spanish public and private universities**



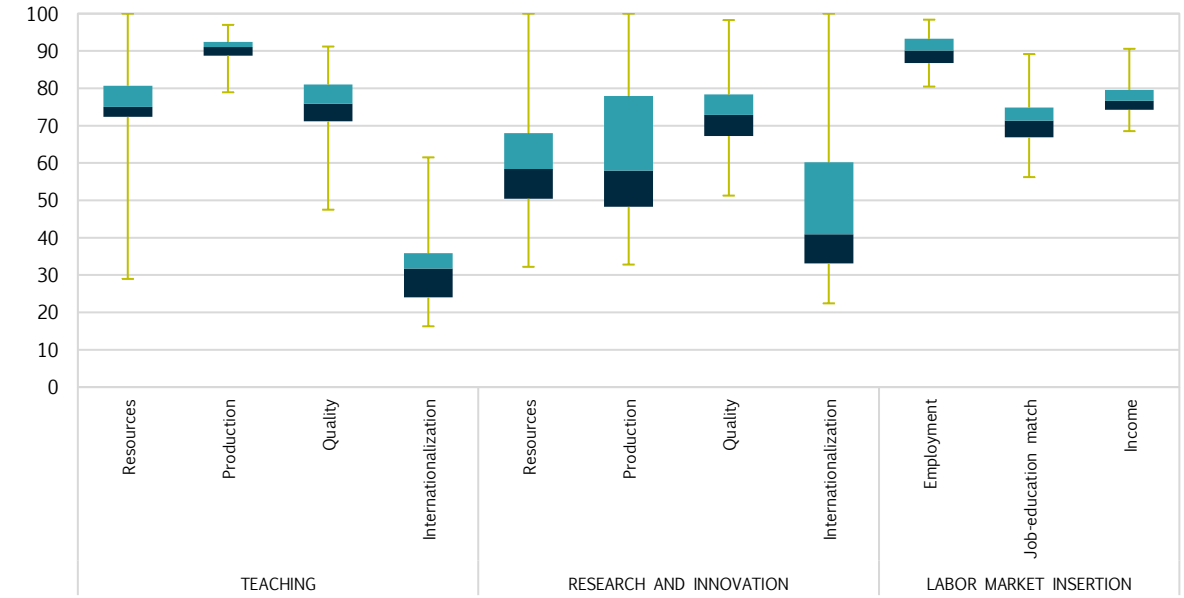
Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Note that each ranking dimension is composed of several thematic areas or specific aspects of the three activities considered. Summarizing information for each dimension level can obscure important differences across those areas. For instance, the overall performance of public and private universities in a given dimension may result from very different patterns across the individual subdimensions that make up that dimension.

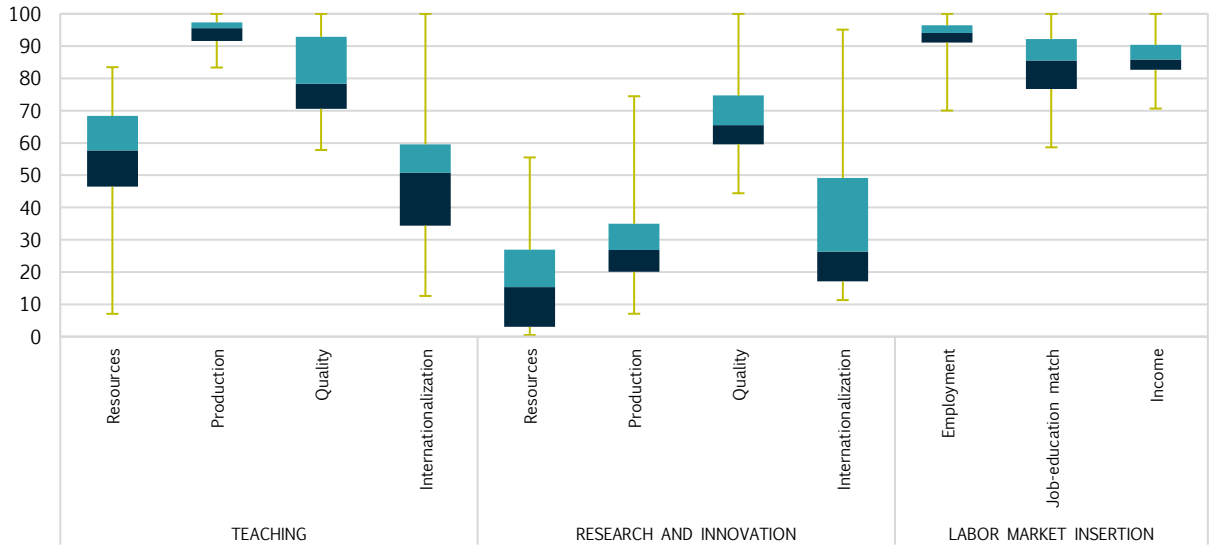
Figure 5.17 compares the simple average score of each area within each ranking dimension for public and private universities, providing some valuable detail. In the teaching dimension, private universities hold a slight advantage, supported by higher scores in the areas of output and quality—and especially in internationalization, where the gap between the two sectors is most pronounced. In the area of resources, however, public universities have the advantage.

Figure 5.17. **U-Ranking. Distribution of the indices obtained in each area by type of ownership**
Indexes 100

a) Public universities

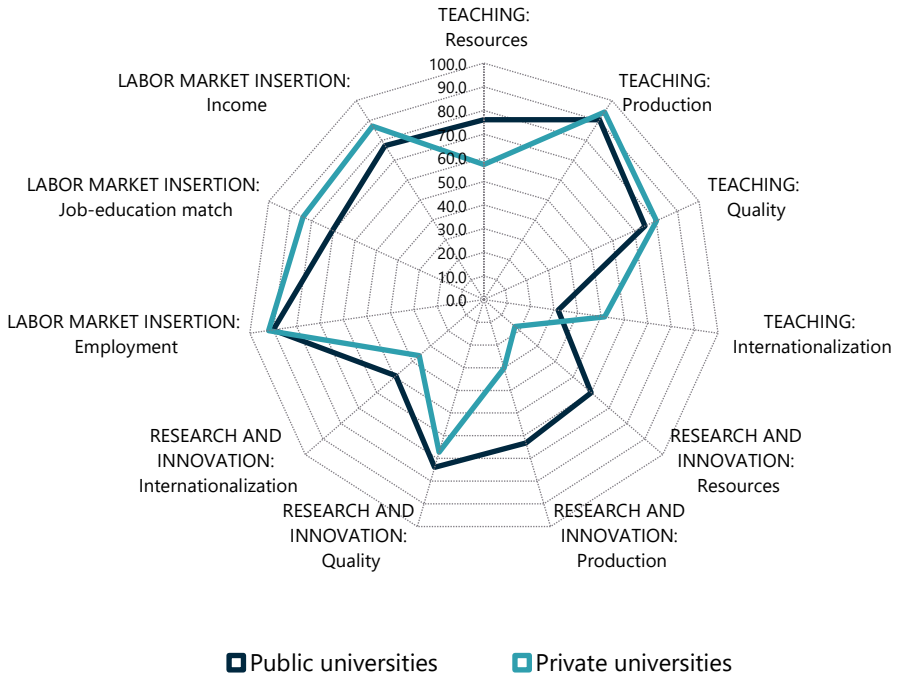


b) Private universities



Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

Figure 5.18. **Differences in outcomes between public and private universities in U-Ranking 2026**



Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

In the employability dimension, all areas show patterns similar to the overall average, with the private sector enjoying small advantages in income levels, job matching and social security affiliation rates. A similar pattern emerges in the research and innovation dimension, but in the opposite direction: public universities outperform private ones by a wide margin. The differences are especially notable in internationalization, output and resources and only slightly less pronounced in quality of research.

Box plots are without a doubt powerful tools for synthesizing information. However, because they contain so much information, it can sometimes be more difficult to identify the specialization profiles of public and private university systems. Thus, we conclude this comparative analysis of public and private universities with figure 5.18, which is probably much easier to interpret.

This figure shows the average index value for each component of every dimension, rescaled relative to the leading university in each component (set at 100). When the mean values for public and private universities are connected, it generates a profile line that allows to identify the areas in which their performance is similar and those in which positive or negative differences emerge between the two systems.

Following the chart clockwise, the results reinforce the patterns already highlighted by the box plots:

- Differences in teaching-related components are smaller between the two systems. However, the public sector benefits from greater resources, whereas the private sector stands out in internationalization. Differences in output and quality are more limited, though they favor the private system.
- The most significant differences between the two systems are found in research activity. Public universities enjoy substantial advantages in resources, output and internationalization, while the gap in quality, although still favorable to the public system, is less marked.

- Finally, in terms of labor market outcomes, employment rates are virtually identical for graduates of public and private universities, whereas indicators relating to skill-job matching and earnings are more favorable in the private system.

5.7. REGIONAL UNIVERSITY SYSTEMS

Universities undertake their teaching and research activities in a certain geographic context that influences them. On the one hand, if they are public, investment efforts as well as incentive policies, fees, quality assurance and plans to boost internationalization vary greatly from one region to another. On the other hand, the socio-economic environments of each region are different: there are differences in the levels of income, the population's educational levels, and type of industries—size of firms, specialization—labor market, urbanization, etc.

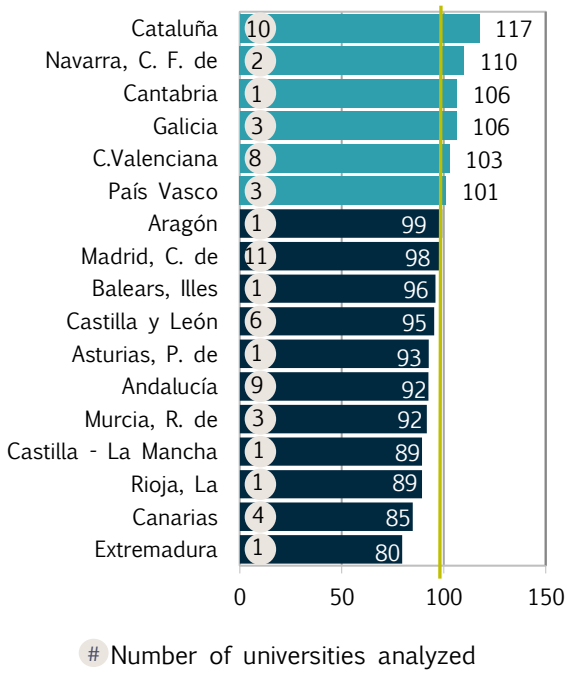
Many of these circumstances influence the location of private universities, mostly newly created ones, and which are clearly concentrated in the most prosperous regions of Spain, so that the number of regional public and private universities is uneven.

For all these reasons, it is interesting to analyze the different performance of the so-called *regional university systems*. To the extent that the variables used to calculate the rankings reflect the effects of these regional differences, the synthetic indicators will show that the performances of the university systems are not the same.

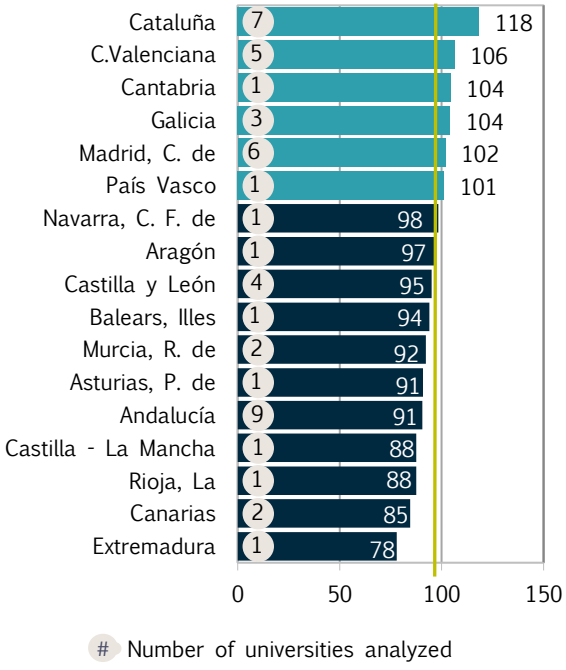
Panel a of **figure 5.19** shows the averages of the 20265 U-Ranking (performance) index of all universities, both public and private, of each autonomous community. The five distance-learning universities have been removed from this analysis because, given their teaching method, it would present difficulties to assign their scope of action to a particular region. Panel b shows the regional averages of the index if only on-site public universities are taken into account. Both graphs show the number of universities in each region, which shows that the size and complexity of the systems of the regions vary greatly.

Figure 5.19. **Performance of the regional university systems in U-Ranking. España=100**

a) On-site universities



b) On-site public universities



Source: BBVA Foundation-Ivie (U-Ranking 2026).

The results show, in fact, large differences regarding performance among the regional university systems: the autonomous community with the highest performance exceeds by 37 percentage points the region with the lowest performance and relatively lower results.

The best-performing university systems are those of Catalonia (10 of the universities analyzed in U-Ranking), and Navarra (with two universities), which have performance indices of 17% and 10% above the Spanish average, respectively. They are followed by Cantabria (+6%), Galicia (6%), the Valencian Community (+3%) and País Vasco (+1%), all of which are above average.

Among the regional university systems with performance levels below the average, we can distinguish several levels: some do not reach 5%—Aragón, Comunidad de Madrid, Balearic Islands and Castile and Leon—, others are less than 10% —Andalusia, Asturias and Murcia—. While other communities are over 10%: Castile-La Mancha, La Rioja, Canary Islands and Extremadura.

Panel b of figure 5.19 analyzes regional performance based only on on-site public universities. When compared with panel a, the changes allow us to see how the exclusion of private universities affects the performance of the region. Thus, the Valencian Community lies well above the average (+6%) and Madrid significantly improves its position (+2%) when only public universities are taken into account. In turn, Navarra's performance worsens and is below the average (-2%), Catalonia maintains first place in both cases.

When comparing the regional university systems, we must take into account that private universities, which on average have a lower performance, tend to be concentrated, as we already have seen, in regions with high levels of income and large potential markets. However, this does not prevent several regional university systems with private universities—Valencia, Navarra, País Vasco and Catalonia—from occupying advanced positions in the combined assessment of public and private universities shown in panel a, since these communities have powerful and numerous public institutions and some private that stand out for their performance. However, Madrid, which is above the average when only public on-site universities are considered, falls below when private universities are included, which suggests that there are marked differences in performance among private universities in Madrid.



Conclusions

06

U-Ranking aims to produce classifications and perform analyzes of the performance of Spanish universities based on comprehensive data sets that reflect the main dimensions of university activity: teaching, research and innovation and graduate employability. The project generates two main rankings: U-Ranking, which measures university performance—that is, the outcomes achieved relative to the resources used to obtain them—and U-Ranking Volume, which reflects the total volume of results achieved by each institution.

Both approaches are valid, but one or the other may be more appropriate depending on the objective of the person evaluating university outcomes. By way of illustration, imagine two universities. One employs 100 lecturers and has produced one patent. Its productivity, or performance, is one patent per 100 lecturers. Another, much larger, employs 1,000 lecturers and has produced five patents. Its productivity is lower—one patent per 200 lecturers—but its total output (five patents) is higher and, therefore, its overall contribution to the productive system that might use those patents is also greater.

If the researcher, administrator, university service user, or public interested in institutional performance wishes to analyze university productivity, U-Ranking is the appropriate tool. But if their interest lies in assessing the universities' contribution to society—in terms of human capital supplied, total scientific output, knowledge transfer services (e.g. patents), or overall graduate employment—then U-Ranking Volume provides the measures they need.

The relationship between a university's total output and its performance or productivity is determined by its size. Size, in turn, depends on a range of factors, including the institution's age, its decisions regarding course offerings, the resources available to it and the dynamism of its surrounding socio-demographic and economic context. Age is particularly relevant, as many of the largest universities trace their origins to medieval general studies institutions, often offering a broad range of academic disciplines. A high proportion of these centuries-old institutions are large in size. By contrast, the newer universities—especially many private ones—tend to be smaller, basing their appeal on specialization in high-demand fields and their location in metropolitan areas in the more economically developed regions with greater demand for skilled human capital.

The two perspectives—performance and volume of output—and the role of size in deriving the latter from the former are taken into account when analyzing both the universities' overall scores and their scores across the three main dimensions: teaching, research and innovation, and employability. The methodology used by U-Ranking to construct the composite indices that underpin its rankings is aligned with international best practices in this field and has been thoroughly described in great detail both in this report and in other publication developed within the framework of the project. Bringing together the wealth of information provided by numerous variables on university performance across different areas poses considerable challenges. However, failing to address this complexity and simply presenting the

many available indicators separately is not a practical solution. Most people interested in comparing universities do not wish to navigate large, complex datasets, as they are not experts in handling such information. For this reason, students, academics, careers advisers, researchers, university managers, policymakers and the media all value having access to composite indicators. They also appreciate being able, if interested, to understand how these indicators have been constructed.

In short, rankings—provided they are developed using sound criteria and transparent metrics—are useful because they summarize university performance across a range of areas, reducing the effort required by users to gather and analyze information. Without such composite indicators, this task would entail a tremendous amount of work for them.

The 2026 U-Ranking indices allow for the analysis of teaching, research and innovation, and graduate employability outcomes for all Spanish public universities (48 in total) and 23 private universities that provide sufficient data for meaningful comparison. More private universities will be included in the future as information becomes available at a comparable level to that provided for the 71 universities currently included.

The set of rankings developed is based on 23 variables and takes into account: (i) universities' different missions (teaching, employability, and research and innovation); (ii) the fact that a university's performance may vary across fields of study; and (iii) the fact that users of university services may have different preferences. By considering all these perspectives, the project allows for multiple ways of engaging with the complex and diverse reality of today's Spanish university system:

- First, the project produces two overarching university rankings: one based on performance (U-Ranking) and the other on total output (U-Ranking Volume).
- Second, it provides six partial rankings (U-Ranking Dimensions): two for teaching, two for research and innovation and two for employability—each in both performance and volume terms.
- Third, this 14th edition includes breakdowns of U-Ranking, U-Ranking Volume and U-Ranking Dimensions for five fields of study (U-Ranking Fields of Study).

This latest ranking, first introduced in the 2025 edition, is particularly important as it enhances the analytical options available to interested audiences, many of whom are interested primarily in particular academic disciplines—as when choosing a degree program. This is the case, for example, for prospective students, their families, and guidance counsellors when deciding which degree program to pursue.

The inclusion of the dimension on **graduate employability outcomes** into the calculation of the rankings was another major innovation of the 2025 edition and is also included in the 2026 edition. This dimension is essential given the ongoing debate regarding the responsibility of universities for supporting the employability of their graduates. Public debate in this area is often characterized by a considerable number of widely held assumptions about the shortcomings of university performance, rooted more in prejudice than in evidence. Given its social relevance, these beliefs warrant careful examination in light of the available empirical data[29].

In this regard, it is worth noting that the unemployment rate among university graduates aged 22 to 29 has been declining for several years and stood at 11.1% in 2025, according to data from Spain's Labor Force Survey (*Encuesta de Población Activa*, EPA). Graduate employment has been growing faster than overall employment and also faster than employment among young people aged 22 to 29 as a whole. Particularly noteworthy is the expansion of employment in highly skilled occupations, from which young university

[29] The idea that universities are "factories for the unemployed" is perhaps the most representative example of a belief unsupported by empirical evidence.

graduates have benefited most. Between 2015 and 2025, highly skilled employment, comprising managers, professionals, intellectual workers, and associate professionals, increased by 87% among graduates aged 22 to 29. As a result, graduate underemployment, defined as the proportion of young university graduates not working in highly skilled occupations, has been declining for years and currently stands at around 22%. Four years after graduation, university graduates enjoy a wage premium of 31% compared with the overall employed population aged 22 to 29.

Taken together, this body of evidence, based on observed data, points to substantial improvements in graduate labor-market outcomes in recent years. These improvements reflect both the contribution of the university system to graduates' employability and the growing demand for human capital from the productive sector. To monitor developments in this area, U-Ranking incorporated the graduate employment outcomes dimension into its ranking ecosystem in 2025 and has maintained it in the 2026 edition.

Each university's performance profiles, as analyzed using the comprehensive set of U-Ranking indicators, has eight rankings at aggregated level plus forty more by field of study. All or some of these may be of interest, depending on the perspective from which an institution is being evaluated, since each ranking offers a different picture of a university. It is up to the users of the information—university leaders, policymakers, researchers, students, careers advisers, analysts and others—to decide which of these representations are more relevant to their needs or interests.

The main findings from the 2026 edition of U-Ranking are as follows:

1. There is a group of eight universities that can be considered the spearhead of the Spanish university system on account of their strong performance in terms of productivity and/or high total output. In many cases, these universities stand out both for their large size and their high performance. The universities that rank simultaneously among the top 15 in both U-Ranking Performance and U-Ranking Volume are: Universitat de Barcelona, the autonomous universities of Madrid and Barcelona, Universitat de València, the polytechnic universities of Madrid, Catalunya and València, and Universidade de Santiago de Compostela.

2. Around this leading group is a second tier of universities with strong performance, made up of seven other highly productive universities that are smaller in size and, therefore, have a lower overall output: Pompeu Fabra (which tops the U-Ranking performance list), Carlos III de Madrid, Rovira i Virgili, Vigo, Cantabria and Girona. Also included in this group is Universidad de Navarra—the highest-ranked private institution—.

3. Adjacent to the aforementioned core group is another cluster of eight universities with strong output but somewhat lower performance: Complutense de Madrid (which leads U-Ranking Volume), Granada, Sevilla, País Vasco, Zaragoza, Málaga, Murcia and UNED.

4. The 23 universities of the three groups identified above that stand out in either performance or output or both make up 32% of the institutions analyzed in U-Ranking, yet they generate 61% of the total output of the Spanish university system. In terms of the three dimensions considered by U-Ranking, this standout group of universities accounts for 57% of teaching results, 65% of research output and 56% of employment outcomes.

5. Alongside this group of 23 top performers, the U-Ranking 2026 data identifies two additional clusters: one with intermediate results, comprising 21 universities, and another with below-average results, made up of the remaining 27 institutions. These two groups contribute less to the university system's total output than their representation in the system would suggest, confirming that they are generally smaller and/or less productive. The universities with mid-level results make up 30% of the institutions analyzed but contribute just 20% of the total teaching, research and employability outcomes. And the group with the weakest performance and output indicators accounts for 38% of the institutions assessed by U-Ranking but produces only 19% of the system's total output.

6. The fourteenth edition of U-Ranking once again shows that the performance differences between universities are significant. In the overall ranking, the top-ranking university outperforms the lowest ranked one by a factor of nearly three. The gap is even wider—tenfold—in the research and innovation dimension. In teaching, however, and especially in employment outcomes, the disparities are much smaller. In teaching, the highest score is twice that of the lowest, and in employment outcomes, they are only around 40% higher. However, outcomes in research and innovation generate large disparities among universities and account for a significant share of the differences observed in the overall ranking.

7. Since the 2025 edition, alongside the ranked list of universities, each institution is also assigned a score on a scale in which the top-performing university is given a value of 100 and the rest are assigned scores between 99 and 0, depending on their distance from the maximum index. This scale is more intuitive for assessing how much room a university has for improvement, compared to the best observed practice in the Spanish university system. However, given the number of indicators considered and the complexity of their aggregation, differences of just a few percentage points have a limited meaning. For this reason, the universities are grouped by deciles of their scores, resulting, therefore, in a maximum of ten groups. Each group contains institutions with similar results and the differences between groups should be considered more significant than those within groups.

8. Focusing on U-Ranking Performance, the results show that public universities lead the Spanish university system. In the top group, with scores between 90 and 100, are Universitat Pompeu Fabra—ranked first overall—alongside the polytechnic universities of Catalonia and Valencia, the autonomous universities of Barcelona and Madrid, Universitat de Barcelona, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. The highest-ranked private university, Universidad de Navarra, has moved out of this top group this year and now leads Group 2, although with a score (88) very close to the lower bound of Group 1.

9. Public universities also top the ranking by volume of output, where university size plays a direct role, resulting in more marked differences between institutions than in the performance ranking. The top six positions, with scores above 70, are held by long-established institutions that cover virtually all fields of knowledge: Universidad Complutense de Madrid (which leads the ranking), the universities of Barcelona, València, Granada, Sevilla and País Vasco. When large universities also achieve above-average performance—as is the case with most of those mentioned—their contribution to total output is greater, because of both their size and their productivity.

10. The productivity leadership of some public universities is most pronounced in research and innovation activities, with a particularly strong presence of Catalan universities. The highest-performing group in this dimension is headed by Universitat Pompeu Fabra, followed by Autònoma de Barcelona and Universitat de Barcelona. The second group (with scores >80) includes two more Catalan universities (Politècnica de Catalunya and Rovira i Virgili), as well as Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, Autónoma de Madrid and Politècnica de València.

11. The ranking by volume in the dimension of scientific output and knowledge transfer—where size matters—is led by Universitat de Barcelona, followed by Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Universitat de València heads a third group, with a score above 70, alongside Universidad de Sevilla and Autònoma de Barcelona.

12. The differences in teaching performance are much smaller than those observed in research and innovation. As a result, more universities share the top groups in these two dimensions. Furthermore, private universities are more frequently found among the leaders in these dimensions, and in fact, Universidad de Navarra leads this ranking. The teaching productivity or performance ranking is led by

a group of nine universities—three public (Universitat Politècnica de València, Universidad Carlos III and Universitat Pompeu Fabra) and six private (Universidad de Navarra, Ramon Llull, IE University, Mondragón, Universitat Internacional de Catalunya and Universidad Pontificia Comillas).

13. The volume ranking for teaching output is headed by Universidad Complutense de Madrid, while Universidad de Granada leads the next group (score >80). The Universitat de València heads the third group that also includes the universities of País Vasco, Barcelona and Sevilla.

14. The analysis of employability performance—reveals a scenario in which differences between universities are also much smaller than in research. In fact, all institutions have a score above 70 and only three groups are formed. The first group includes 22 universities, made up largely of private (16) universities, led by Nebrija, while public universities are far less present among the top performers.

15. In contrast, the volume-based employability ranking—which accounts for size and thus the number of graduates from each university entering the labor market—is led by Universidad Complutense de Madrid, followed by the universities of Sevilla and País Vasco in the second group and those of Barcelona, Granada and València in the third. As noted previously, it is important to consider volume because, although some universities excel in employability performance, larger institutions play a decisive role on account of their capacity to place a large number of graduates from diverse fields into the workforce.

16. The analysis by fields of study yields two key conclusions. First, it shows that performance-based rankings can be complex to interpret because universities with a minimal presence in a given field—and therefore a low volume of output—tend to show high performance precisely for that reason. The second conclusion is that the volume-based ranking offers greater clarity when it comes to assessing a university's strength in a particular field, as it combines performance with size to highlight institutions with substantial output in that field. Thus, in the volume ranking, Universidad Complutense and Universitat de Barcelona lead in arts and humanities; València and Complutense in social sciences and law; Barcelona in science; the polytechnic universities of Catalonia and Madrid in engineering and architecture; and Complutense and Barcelona in health sciences. The second-tier group in each field includes: Universidad de Granada in arts and humanities; Barcelona and Granada in social sciences and law; Complutense and Autónoma de Madrid in science; Universidad Politécnica de València in engineering and architecture; and València in health sciences.

17. Private universities demonstrate a strong specialization of activity in teaching and perform notably well in this area: their average teaching performance exceeds that of public universities by five percentage points. It is important to note, however, that the private universities included in the ranking show better indicators than most of the private institutions which are excluded for lack of data—based on the values of the variables that *are* available for the latter universities. Therefore, the average teaching performance of private universities might be lower if all institutions of this type were included.

18. The strong focus on teaching among private universities is mirrored by a comparatively weaker position in research performance when set against the public university system. On average, private universities score 48 percentage points lower than public ones in research and innovation performance. At the same time, despite the stronger average research results of public universities, it is important not to overlook the considerable heterogeneity within the public sector itself. Public institutions can be found across all groups generated by the research and innovation ranking, including both the highest-performing and the lowest-performing categories.

19. Some well-known international initiatives—such as the Shanghai Ranking and the Times

Higher Education (THE) ranking—have increased the visibility of university rankings and heightened public demand for such classifications. However, these rankings focus primarily on research indicators and international prestige, often centered on postgraduate education, thereby overlooking much of the activity within the Spanish university system, which is dedicated mainly to undergraduate teaching and does not typically compete in the global postgraduate arena. A similar research-oriented bias is also present in some national rankings, which, though methodologically sound, include relatively few indicators relating to other university activities, particularly teaching. In contrast, our indicators seek to counterbalance this bias and highlight the importance of combining indicators of research performance with those of teaching performance. Using the first as a proxy for the second and third presents a highly skewed view, as the correlation between these dimensions are weak. The inclusion of private universities further dilutes any correlation among the three dimensions, as these institutions often combine strong teaching and employability outcomes with weak research performance, thus underscoring the need to recognize the diversity of the Spanish university system.

20. Differences in university performance are also evident at the regional level. There is a substantial gap in performance between regional university systems—a gap of up to 37 percentage points between the highest- and lowest-performing autonomous communities. Catalonia—whose system clearly leads the ranking—along with Navarra, Cantabria, Galicia, the Valencian Community and the Basque Country, all have the most productive university systems and achieve performance levels above the Spanish national average.

21. When analyzing regional performance levels based solely on public in-person universities, it becomes clear that in some regions the weight of private universities lowers overall system performance because public universities outperform private ones by a greater margin, as is the case in Madrid and the Valencian Community. However, in other regions private universities improve the regional average (e.g. in Navarra, Cantabria and Galicia), while in some, such as Catalonia and the Basque country, their presence has no impact—confirming a higher level of consistency in performance between public and private universities.

The fourteenth edition of U-Ranking once again updates the *Elige Universidad* tool, which enables families and prospective students to explore and compare 3,556 undergraduate degree programs based on their preferences. In addition to the ranking results, it provides information on tuition fees, admission cut-off marks for the 2025–26 academic year and the most recent data on employment outcomes for 2,977 degree programs, based on statistics from the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, developed in collaboration with the Social Security administration.

Annexes

Annex 1: Glossary of Indicators and statistical sources

Dimension	Area	Indicator and definition	Source	Period	Level
Teaching	Resources	**Faculty member per 100 students:** Full-time equivalent faculty and research staff in centers belonging to the University per 100 full-time equivalent students in studies of 1st and 2nd cycle, bachelor's and master's degrees and students in doctoral degrees (all of these students registered in centers belonging to the University)	SIIU	2018-19 a 2023-24	Area of study
		Budget per student: Effective income of the University by number of full-time equivalent students in studies of 1st and 2nd cycle, bachelor's and master's degrees and of students in doctoral degrees (all of these students registered in centers belonging to the University)	SIIU SABI WEB	2018-19 a 2023-24	University
		Percentage of faculty members with PhD: Full-time equivalent faculty members with PhD in centers belonging to the University over total full-time equivalent faculty and research staff in centers belonging to the University	SIIU	2018-19 a 2023-24	Area of study
	Production	**Success rate in bachelor's degree studies:** Number of credits passed by grade students registered in an academic year over total credits evaluated within the same course (excluding transfer and recognized credits)	SIIU	2018-19 a 2023-24	Area of study
		Evaluation rate in bachelor's degree studies: Number of credits evaluated by grade students registered in an academic year over total credits registered within the same course (excluding transfer and recognized credits)	SIIU	2018-19 a 2023-24	Area of study
		Overall dropout rate in undergraduate studies: sum of the dropout rates in the first, second and third years of undergraduate studies	SIIU	2014-15 a 2019-20[1]	Area of study
	Quality	**Graduation efficiency rate:** percentage of undergraduate students who complete their degree withing the expected timeframe or earlier.	SIIU	2014-15 a 2019-20[1]	Area of study
		Retention rate: Students who, after completing a bachelor's degree, begin a master's program the following academic year at the same university, as a percentage of all students who, after completing a bachelor's degree at that university, begin a master's program the following year at any university within the Spanish University System (SUE)	SIIU	2017-18 a 2022-23[2]	Area of study
	internationalization	**Percentage of foreign students:** Non-Spanish students of 1st and 2nd cycle, bachelor's and master's degrees over the total number of students of 1st and 2nd cycle, bachelor's and master's degrees	SIIU	2018-19 a 2023-24	Area of study
		Percentage of students in international mobility programs: Number of bachelor's and master's degree students who study abroad through a mobility program over total number of bachelor's and master's degree students	SIIU	2018-19 a 2023-24	University

Note: [1] First-year program, [2] Final-year program.

Dimension	Area	Indicator and definition	Source	Period	Level
Research and innovation	Resources	**Competitive public funding secured for projects and research staff per PhD faculty member:** Competitive public resources obtained for non-targeted research projects, including both projects and complementary actions, ERDF funds, and contracts such as FPI, Juan de la Cierva, Ramón y Cajal, and Technical Support, relative to the total number of full-time equivalent PhD faculty	Agencia Estatal de Investigación SIIU	2019 a 2024	Area of study
		Percentage of doctoral students: Percentage of doctoral students over the total number of postgraduate students	Agencia Estatal de Investigación SIIU SABI WEB	2019 a 2024	Area of study
	Production	**Citable documents with ISI reference per faculty member with PhD:** Documents with ISI reference published per faculty member with full-time equivalent PhD	IUNE (Thomson Reuters) SIIU	2019 a 2024	Area of study
		Number of national patents per 100 faculty members with PhD: Number of national patents granted to each Spanish university by the Spanish Patents and Trademarks Office per 100 faculty members with full-time equivalent PhD	IUNE (Espacenet)	2019 a 2024	University
		Doctoral theses read per 100 faculty members with PhD: Doctoral theses read per 100 faculty members with full-time equivalent PhD	SIIU	2019 a 2024	Area of study
	Quality	**Mean impact factor:** Mean impact factor of the publications with at least one author affiliated to the University	IUNE (Thomson Reuters)	2019 a 2024	Area of study
		Percentage of publications in the first quartile: Publications corresponding to journals in the first quartile of relevance within the Thomson Reuters classification by areas, over the total number of publications belonging to that area	IUNE (Thomson Reuters)	2019 a 2024	Area of study
		Citations per document: Citations received per document from the date of publication to the date of data gathering	IUNE (Thomson Reuters)	2019 a 2024	Area of study
	internationalization	**European research funds per faculty member with PhD:** Funding received by the university from EU research funds per every 100 full-time equivalent faculty members with PhD	European Commission (Horizon Dashboard) SIIU	2019 a 2024	University
		Percentage of publications with international co-authorship: Publications with at least one co-author affiliated to a foreign institution over the total number of publications	IUNE (Thomson Reuters)	2019 a 2024	Area of study

Dimension	Area	Indicator and definition	Source	Period	Level
Labor Market Insertion	Employment	**Employment rate:** Percentage of university graduates residing in Spain who are affiliated with the Spanish Social Security System and employed four years after graduation relative to the total number of graduates	SIIU	2022 a 2024	Area of study
	Job-education match	**Employed as graduates:** Percentage of university graduates employed in positions that match their level of education. University level is considered: Social Security contribution groups for professionals with higher education (engineers, graduates, senior management, and technical engineers)	SIIU	2022 a 2024	Area of study
	Income	**Average contribution base:** Average annual contribution base of graduates working as employees with a full-time contract	SIIU	2022 a 2024	Area of study

Annex 2: List of university abbreviations

Abbreviation	University	Type of ownership
COMILLAS	Universidad Pontificia Comillas	Private
EHU	Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea	Pública
IE	IE Universidad	Private
UA	Universidad de Alicante	Public
UAB	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona	Public
UAH	Universidad de Alcalá	Public
UAL	Universidad de Almería	Public
UAM	Universidad Autónoma de Madrid	Public
UANE	Universidad Nebrija	Private
UB	Universitat de Barcelona	Public
UBU	Universidad de Burgos	Public
UC3M	Universidad Carlos III de Madrid	Public
UCA	Universidad de Cádiz	Public
UCAM	Universidad Católica San Antonio	Private
UCEU	Universidad San Pablo-CEU	Private
UCH	Universidad Cardenal Herrera-CEU	Private
UCJC	Universidad Camilo José Cela	Private
UCLM	Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha	Public
UCM	Universidad Complutense de Madrid	Public
UCO	Universidad de Córdoba	Public
UCV	Universidad Católica de Valencia San Vicente Mártir	Private
UDC	Universidade da Coruña	Public
UDE	Universidad de Deusto	Private
UDG	Universitat de Girona	Public
UDIMA	Universidad A Distancia de Madrid	Private
UDL	Universitat de Lleida	Public
UEC	Universidad Europea de Canarias	Private
UEM	Universidad Europea de Madrid	Private
UEV	Universidad Europea de Valencia	Private
UFPC	Universidad Fernando Pessoa-Canarias	Private
UGR	Universidad de Granada	Public
UHU	Universidad de Huelva	Public
UIB	Universitat de les Illes Balears	Public
UIC	Universitat Internacional de Catalunya	Private
UJAEN	Universidad de Jaén	Public
UJI	Universitat Jaume I de Castellón	Public
ULL	Universidad de La Laguna	Public
ULPGC	Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	Public
UM	Universidad de Murcia	Public
UMA	Universidad de Málaga	Public
UMH	Universidad Miguel Hernández de Elche	Public
UMON	Mondragon Unibertsitatea	Private
UN	Universidad de Navarra	Private
UNED	Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia	Public
UNEX	Universidad de Extremadura	Public
UNICAN	Universidad de Cantabria	Public
UNILEON	Universidad de León	Public
UNIOVI	Universidad de Oviedo	Public
UNIRIOJA	Universidad de La Rioja	Public
UNIR	Universidad Internacional de La Rioja	Private
UNIZAR	Universidad de Zaragoza	Public
UOC	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya	Private
UPC	Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya	Public
UPCT	Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena	Public
UPF	Universitat Pompeu Fabra	Public
UPM	Universidad Politécnica de Madrid	Public
UPNA	Universidad Pública de Navarra	Public
UPO	Universidad Pablo de Olavide	Public
UPSA	Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca	Private
UPV	Universitat Politècnica de València	Public
UPV-EHU	Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea	Public
URJC	Universidad Rey Juan Carlos	Public
URLL	Universitat Ramon Llull	Private
URV	Universitat Rovira i Virgili	Public
US	Universidad de Sevilla	Public
USAL	Universidad de Salamanca	Public
USC	Universidade de Santiago de Compostela	Public
UV	Universitat de València	Public
UVA	Universidad de Valladolid	Public
UVIC-UCC	Vic-Universitat Central de Catalunya	Private
UVIGO	Universidade de Vigo	Public



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