

A new method developed by ANVUR for evaluating universities' third mission activities in Italy

The case study provides an insider perspective on the Italian agency ANVUR, which conducts evaluations of research performance and third mission activities of Italian universities and research institutes.

Topics covered

Third mission, dedicated agency, evaluations, societal impact, university survey, performance indicators

Authors/ discussant:
Brigida Blasi^a, Sandra Romagnosi^b, Alessio Ancaiani^c, Marco Malgarini^d, and Sandro Momigliano^e

^a Head Officer, Third Mission Unit, Italian Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes, Italy
^b Officer, Third Mission Unit, Italian Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes, Italy
^c Senior Manager for University Evaluation, Italian Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes, Italy
^d Senior Manager for Research Evaluation, Italian Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes, Italy
^e Director, Italian Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes, Italy

What is ANVUR?

- Established in 2011, **ANVUR** is the Italian Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes
- Evaluates universities' **teaching, research performance, & third mission** activities
- Manual for the Evaluation of Third Mission** – defines criteria, indicators and survey questions for evaluations
- Third mission evaluations do not affect **allocation** of university budgets

Rationale

Reforms increased **university autonomy** in the 1990s

ANVUR was established to make more autonomous universities **accountable**

- Follows **best practice** in other countries
- Engagement and Impact Assessment (Australia)
 - Standard Evaluation Protocol (Netherlands)
 - Research Excellence Framework (UK)

Which knowledge transfer activities does ANVUR evaluate?

ANVUR evaluate?

Valorization of research

Production of public goods

Indicators Method

- No unique** ranking
- Evaluations** conducted by type of activities
- Universities & research institutes do not need to report activities in all areas
- For each of 8 areas, the Manual proposes **different methodologies, criteria, indicators & evaluating questions**
- The evaluation is carried out by informed **peer review**, i.e. the analysis of quantitative indicators through expert judgement
- The **experts** in each area adopt the most appropriate metrics

Main evaluation programs conducted by ANVUR

- 1st round of the research evaluation exercise** (Evaluation of Research Quality, 2004-2010)
- 2nd round of the research evaluation exercise** (Evaluation of Research Quality, VQR 2011-2014)
- National system of quality assurance of the universities** (Self-Assessment, Periodic Evaluation and Accreditation, AVA)

Challenges

- Reward researchers' third mission** activities without reducing their research and teaching incentives
- New survey** in 2019 (SUA-TM)
- Develop **new indicators and survey questions** for institutional strategy and management
- Evaluate **socio-economic impacts** of third mission activities
- Integration of **new existing databases** held by other agencies and institutions to improve data quality, as already done with EPO database on patents and Chamber of Commerce database on spin-off companies

Implications for other countries

Adopt broad definition of third mission, i.e. not only limited to conventional technology transfer

Include new topics such as health, cultural activities and heritage and lifelong learning

Invest in creation and maintenance of big information systems and a robust set of indicators

Develop evaluation model with quantitative & qualitative data (expert opinions based on informed peer review)

Define broad targets for impacts, for example the valorization of health research entails:

- Economic valorization
- Clinical aspects
- Social impact
- Educational impact