

"A RESPONSIBLE APPROACH TO LEAGUE TABLES" THE VIEW OF MEMBERS OF EQUAL, THE EUROPEAN QUALITY LINK FOR BUSINESS SCHOOLS AND MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

EQUAL comprises seven national and three regional associations in Europe, representing over 750 business schools which in turn provide business and management education to over 1 million students.

ALL members of **EQUAL** are fully committed to the continuous improvement of the quality of this provision and this is achieved in a variety of ways including the development of national quality standards, quality audits and for example **EQUIS**, the international accreditation scheme.

The full membership of **EQUAL** is set out in **Appendix One**.

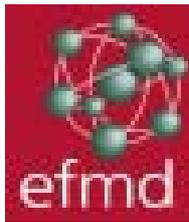


- 1** Many newspapers and specialist journals conduct ranking exercises and produce league tables for Universities, Business Schools and for popular programmes like the MBA.
- 2** According to the media, such league tables have been developed in response to the need to provide authoritative and independent advice about the quality of this provision to readers, including potential students (and parents), managers and employers. League tables are in effect designed to be "signposts to the best provision".
- 3** In some cases the media take a highly responsible and professional approach to this type of research in terms of data collection, analysis and the presentation of results. In these cases business schools are willing to co-operate with the media requests for appropriate information, data and access to students or alumni.





- 4** Unfortunately, there have been several examples, where in the view of the business schools and EQUAL, the media have fallen short of an acceptable standard in terms of research, analysis and presentation of rankings and league tables. Not surprisingly, in these situations, business schools are unwilling to co-operate or participate. There have been cases where this rendered the whole process untenable and the particular media concerned were unable to proceed.
- 5** It is also important for the media to bear in mind the legal situation. Either inclusion or exclusion of particular schools or programmes in a league table, could lead to a libel action for defamation. Individual, corporate, multiple and class actions are all feasible. While, the onus may be on the complainant to prove defamation; the methodology, criteria used, and the independence of the publication concerned would all be open to legal scrutiny. In cases of defamation, damages are unlimited.
- 6** Therefore, in the light of all the above points, EQUAL believes that it is reasonable to expect that all published league tables should be conducted in a fully responsible and highly professional manner.
- 7** Whilst EQUAL will not approve or in any other way endorse any particular league table, it is prepared to set out certain criteria which should be met by existing league table producers and those planning to produce them in future.
- 8** The criteria are as follows:
 - The research methodology should be scientifically reliable, valid and appropriate to the criteria being measured.
 - The range of criteria, which are selected as the basis for



comparison should be wide, representative and appropriate for the outcomes being sought. These criteria should be capable of being measured accurately and independently.

- The assessment process should be credible, impartial and transparent.
- Any individual involved in making judgements about schools or programmes should be expert in all areas covered by the league table and have high personal credibility. They should be independent, unbiased and have no connection (financial or otherwise) with any of the schools or programmes either included or excluded from the league table.



- Pre-selection of schools or programmes should be avoided on the grounds of in-built discrimination and subjectivity. If it is used, then its justification and effects should be described in detail.

- If for example, an accreditation scheme is used as the basis for pre-selection, then prior discussion and agreement with that accreditation agency is essential.
- The application of differential weightings to particular criteria should be avoided. If they are used they should be made explicit and the effect of the weighting should be described in detail.

- Reference to other organisations, which might imply endorsement (explicitly or implicitly), where no such endorsement exists is misleading and should be avoided.



- A ranking or league table, based upon a simple compilation of other rankings or league tables is unacceptable.



APPENDIX ONE - CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF EQUAL

Association of Business Schools (ABS) – UK

Asociación Española de Representantes de Escuelas de Dirección de Empresa (AEEDE) – Spain

Associazione per la Formazione alla Direzione Aziendale (ASFOR) – Italy

Central and Eastern European Management Association (CEEMAN)

Chapitre des Ecoles de Management (CHAPITRE) – France

European Foundation for Management Development (efmd)

Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA) – Germany, Austria and Switzerland

Association of Management Education (FORUM) – Poland

Russian Association of Business Education (RABE) – Russia

Vereniging van Samenwerkende Nederlandse Universiteiten (VSNU) – Netherlands



For more information, please contact the EQUAL Secretariat (Nicola Hijlkema) at efmd:
rue Gachard 88, B-1050 Brussels, tel. +32-2-6290810, fax +32-2-6290811
e-mail: hijlkema@efmd.be