

## HOW RESILIENT ARE YOU?

## Covid resilience ranking

H2	ACT	PLAN	TRACK	PARK	OPP	THR	NEU
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The Covid Resilience Ranking scores economies of more than \$200 billion (€169 billion) on 10 key metrics: from growth in virus cases to the overall mortality rate, testing capabilities and the vaccine supply agreements in place. The capacity of the local health-care system, the impact of virus-related restrictions like lockdowns on the economy, and citizens' freedom of movement are also taken into account. The result is an overall score that's a snapshot of how the pandemic is playing out in these economies - 53 - right now.

With growing speculation that the world will need to learn to live with coronavirus – and with the possibility of other kinds of significant disruptions - some academics are calling for a resilience ranking for higher education.

This could be a re-framing of university ranking metrics around resilience - the capacity to prepare for and respond to crises. Key criteria for resilience could centre on diversification, flexibility and innovation, risk, values, value maintenance, and community outreach. Existing rankings schemes touch on some of these, but not through the resilience lens.

Ranking could indicate key strategic measures that rate the university's ability to adapt to external circumstances and threats. These might be quantitative - the extent of shift from face-to-face learning to online teaching, for example – or qualitative – such as improved organisational practices and growth options that an institution has implemented.

## MERGERS...?

## Reshaping and consolidating for the future

H2	ACT	PLAN	TRACK	PARK	OPP	THR	NEU
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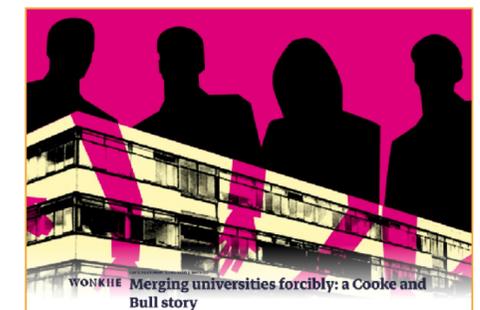
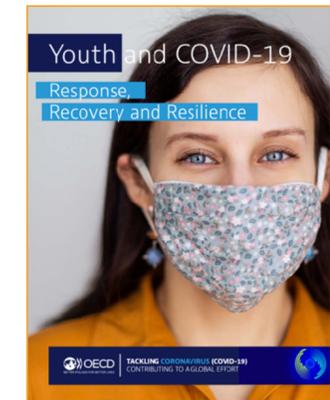
Mid 2020 saw increased interest in the potential – or imperative – for university mergers. In May, [Universities UK](#) set out proposals to government for a balanced package of measures to maximise universities' contribution to the economy, communities and post virus recovery – including 'A transformation fund to support universities over the next two to three years to reshape and consolidate...or potentially merge.'

UUK's proposal didn't come out of nowhere. The 2019 annual PA Consulting survey of heads of UK universities found that 59% of respondents judged "significant numbers of institutional mergers or takeovers" to be "highly likely" or "quite possible", while 74% thought them to be a possible/likely development in the sector. The report noted the view that the disappearance of struggling universities in economically vulnerable towns or regions would be politically and socially unconscionable and that vice-chancellors didn't believe government would shut the gates and send students elsewhere.

In May 2020, the government's [announcement](#) of a range of measures to protect students and the higher education sector from the impact of coronavirus was [read by some](#) as meaning future financial support would come with "attached conditions" and a "restructuring" assessment. Overall, UK universities face an estimated loss of between £3 billion and £5 billion income in 2021'; leading to an [estimated 30,000 job losses](#) - and weaker universities may only survive if they do merge. There may also need to be some consolidation of research. "That is a big chunk of money for universities to lose, and even those who are least exposed will feel the impact," said Professor Tickell, who added that a recent London Economics report was "probably right" in its forecasts of 30,000 overall job losses in universities and a £2.6 billion income hit.

Once again, then, talk of mergers - mostly between between higher education institutions - has increased. Nothing is clear, however. Some commentators believe that mergers may be limited to back office functions; others that they might be part of a strategic restructuring of further and higher education so that some (smaller) universities become teaching and vocationally focused, with little or no time devoted to research.

## FURTHER READING



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