

The Rankings of the University of Danang on the Regional and International University Rankings

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Abstract: *The University of Danang (UD) is one of three major regional universities of Vietnam with the mission “The mission of UD is to create opportunities and environment for high qualified, creative learning that promotes the sustainable socio-economic development of the Central - Highlands area and the whole country”. Along with other universities of Vietnam, UD has enhanced the activities for rankings in the regional and international university rankings over the past years. However, UD has not been ranked in THE, ARWU yet, except for Asia’s QS ranking 2019, UD was ranked in 493rd which is still modest. To improve the rankings of UD on the international university rankings, UD should apply synchronous, appropriate and feasible solutions. The article mentioned the ranking status of UD and proposed solutions to improve the ranks of UD on the world university rankings.*

Keywords: ranking, ranks, solution, the University of Danang, Viet Nam

1. Introduction

Appearing about 30 years ago, university ranking has become a factor affecting universities' performance because it is a convenient and quick criteria for students to use as a reference in choosing, deciding where to study. Therefore, the rank on the international university rankings is the concern of most universities, including UD. According to the Resolution of the 5th Party Congress of UD, the term 2015-2020, by 2020, UD must be ranked in the top 100 schools of Southeast Asia and the group of top 500 schools in Asia [3]. According to the Asia’s QS ranking, in 2019, UD is ranked among the 451-500 best universities in Asia, but the ranking is still modest (493rd) [7]. In order to achieve the above goal and improve the ranks of UD in the regional and international university rankings, it is necessary to apply synchronous and feasible solutions in accordance with the reality and human resources of UD.

2. Overview of the University of Danang

UD established under Decree 32/CP dated April 4, 1994 of the Government. UD has determined the mission: “The mission of UD is to create opportunities and environment for high qualified, creative learning that promotes the sustainable socio-economic development of the Central-Highlands area and the whole country” [11], and the vision: “UD aims to be one of the leading universities in Southeast Asia, offering a wide range of majors in the fields of engineering, economics, natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and medicine” [11]. UD aims to be a national and international center for collaborative research and development: “Quality-Community Service-Professional and Effective-Creative and Friendly”, UD is one of three major national universities with multi-disciplinary, multi-level and multi-disciplinary training in the Central Highlands region. UD currently has 10 members including five universities, one college, a branch, one institute and two schools: University of Science and Technology, University of Science

and Technology, University of Economics, University of Education, University of Foreign Language Studies, University of Technology and Education, College of Information Technology, UD’s Branch in Kon Tum, VN-UK Institute for Research and Executive Education, School of Medicine and Pharmacy, and School of International Education. UD currently has about 60,000 students and pupils, more than 2,300 cadres, civil servants, officials, lecturers and workers with many 5 specialized majors: 25 Ph.D. majors, 42 master majors, 128 bachelor majors, 31 college majors and 07 programs with foreign educational institutions. Engineering, technology, economics, pedagogy and foreign languages are training strengths of UD. Over the past 40 years, UD and its member universities have provided training for Vietnam with tens of thousands of technical and technological experts, economic managers, educational managers, educators and foreign language experts.

The motto of students’ quality is always a top concern of UD, especially the quality of graduation, the ability to use knowledge, professional skills and leadership qualities of students in practical activities aimed at helping the country, the locals and the learners. This is a measure of universities’ success. Training programs are designed to meet professional needs, technological needs, above all, to meet high-quality human resources for the country’s industrialization and modernization.

In addition, UD is interested in quality accreditation of training programs. By April 2019, UD had 12 training programs accredited by international quality accreditation organizations, including three accredited training programs according to CTI standards (Europe), nine training programs according to AUN-QA standards (Southeast Asia University network). In 2019, there are six training programs of UD which will be assessed according to AUN-QA standards. 4/5 universities of UD are recognized according to the university quality assessment standards issued by MOET [3].

In 2018, scientists and lecturers of UD published more than

650 scientific research projects at international levels and articles, including 165 articles of the world prestigious list ISI, SCOPUS (up nearly 50% compared to 2017). MOET commended 01 Second Prize and 01 Third Prize for young teachers who had excellent scientific research projects. Da Nang City People's Committee rewarded one female lecturer (02 useful solutions granted by the National Office of Intellectual Property - Ministry of Science and Technology) and 51 lecturers and research teams of UD. Outstanding achievements in science and technology activities [3].

3. The ranking results of UD on the region and world university rankings at the present

3.1 The ranking results of UD in the ranking of THE (Times Higher Education - UK)

UD has no name on the ranking of THE.

3.2 The ranking results of UD in the ARWU rankings (Academic Ranking of World Universities)

UD has no name on the ranking of ARWU.

3.3 The ranking results of UD in QS rankings (Quacquarelli Symonds)

In 2019, for QS Asia's ranking of universities, UD is ranked 451st-500th. However, there are other six universities of Vietnam ranked in higher ranks including Vietnam National University, Hanoi (ranked 124th), Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City (144th), Hanoi University of Technology (from 261st to 270th), Ton Duc Thang University (291st-300th), Can Tho University (351st-400th and Hue University (451st-500th) [7]. Actually, UD was ranked in 493rd in this ranking and it was the first time of UD in the group of 500 leading Asian universities according to the Asian QS rankings. This poses a requirement for UD to apply appropriate and feasible measures to improve its ranking on the regional and international university rankings, including QS.

3.4 The rankings result of UD on Webometrics rankings

Webometrics is not a university ranking system; it only ranks universities' websites. However, thanks to its wide coverage (Webometrics offers a list of up to 12,000 locations), and the high correlation of the top positions between Webometrics and other ranking results, Webometrics attracts much attention of the world, including Vietnam.

Webometrics ranking has been done twice a year since 2004, with data collected in the first weeks of January and July each year and published at the end of the month. This ranking includes more than 27,000 higher education institutions in over the world. The goal of Webometrics is to promote the presence of scholarly websites and post information on the internet, support Open Access initiatives to promote the transfer of scientific and cultural knowledge

created by universities for society. The rankings in Webometrics' 1/2019 edition are based on the following four criteria: (1) Presence (Presence): The number of websites belonging to the main domain name of higher education institutions; including all subdomains that share the main domain and all file types (both .DOC, .PDF); determined by Google (5% weight); (2) Level of Visibility (Impact): The number of outside networks with backlinks to higher education institutions' websites; determined by Ahrefs and Majestic (50% weight); (3) Transparency or Openness: Number of citations from leading authors, determined by Google Scholar (10% weight); (4) Excellence or Academic: The number of articles in the top 10% cited most in 26 fields; data for 5 years (2012-2016); Scimago defined by weight (35% weight).

In an effort to increase academic content in rankings, Webometrics has increased the criteria of Excellence/Academics from 30% to 35% since the first phase, while reducing the weight of criteria Presence from 10% to 5%. In 2018, according to Webometrics rankings, UD rated six out of 132 Vietnamese universities ranked and increased 3 levels compared to 2017 [12].

3.5 The ranking results of UD in the ranking of uniRank

UniRank organizes accessing and ranking based on the information of measurable higher education institutions on the Internet. Exploiting the big data stored on the internet, this evaluation method allows the application of "quantitative" tools, ensuring a neutral level, minimizing the "set of indicators" calculation which is the weakness of many other rankings. More importantly, uniRank only exploits data independently from the internet instead of data provided by the higher education institution itself. UniRank-rated schools must meet the following conditions: Licensed and/or accredited by an organization related to Vietnam's legal higher education, granted a university degree of training at least four years (bachelor's degree) or postgraduate (master's or doctoral), implementing face to face learning. Up to now, uniRank has become one of the largest database rankings in the world.

In 2019, uniRank announced the publication of the ranking of 67 Vietnamese higher education institutions/universities that meet the selection criteria for the above rankings. UD is ranked three out of 67 Vietnamese universities ranked and increased two grades compared to 2018 [6].

4. Solutions to improve the rankings of UD in the regional and international university rankings

4.1 Organize to raise awareness of cadres, lecturers and students on regional and international rankings

- Develop annual plans to implement activities to raise awareness of staff, lecturers and students on university rankings on regional and international rankings.
- Assign specific responsibilities to the units (UD level and

member university level) to participate in organizing activities to raise awareness of cadres, lecturers and students on regional and international university rankings.

- Diversify the forms, methods and activities to raise awareness of officials, lecturers and students on regional and international university rankings.
- Organize seminars to talk on university rankings with the participation and advice of experts on regional and international university rankings.
- Periodically, organize the conferences and seminars on the ranking of UD and its member universities so that they exchange ideas on the status of the university and at the same time raise proposals, recommendations to improve the rankings of UD and member universities on regional and international university rankings.

4.2 Develop appropriate and feasible plans for participating in the regional and international university rankings

- Assessing the situation of UD and member universities in comparison with the regional and international university rankings to have a basis to build ranking plans of UD and member universities.
- Develop and approve the plans of UD and member universities to participate in regional and international university rankings, which determine the content of tasks to be done with specific timelines and assigning responsibilities to implementing units/individuals.
- Announcing and disseminating plans of UD and member universities to participate in regional and international university rankings to know the staff, lecturers and students to implement and send dispatches to units outside the school to coordinate implementation.
- Disseminate, thoroughly grasp and assign units implementing plans of UD and member universities to participate in regional and international university rankings in order to fully implement the contents identified in the annual plan.
- Monitor and supervise the progress and results of the plan implementation of UD and member universities to participate in regional and international university rankings to adjust the plan to suit the reality.

4.3 Regulating specialized units and promoting coordination mechanism among units in regional and international university rankings

- Establishing the Steering Committee for University Rankings to participate in the regional and international rankings (UD level and member universities level), including the specific assignment of responsibilities for each member.
- Assigning responsibilities to specialized education quality assurance units as well as specialized units in charge of ranking of universities of UD and member universities.
- Prioritize staffing for experienced and knowledgeable students in university rankings for departments in charge

of ranking of universities of UD and member universities, and annually create conditions for officials to attend courses fostering on university rankings.

- Promulgate regulations on coordination between specialized units in ranking work of UD and member universities with affiliated units, focusing and promoting the coordination among functional units of UD with functional units of member universities aims to create consistency and uniformity in the implementation of ranking activities according to the regional and international university rankings.
- Widely disseminate regulations on coordination between specialized departments in ranking of UD and member universities with affiliated units to all functional units in UD to strictly implement.

4.4 Strengthening the application of policies to develop international lecturers and students, scientific publications in international journals and prestigious employers

- Promptly issuing policies to rank universities of UD and member universities on the basis of assessing the situation of UD and member universities in comparison with the criteria of the regional and international university rankings.
- In the current period, UD and its member universities should focus on promulgating, disseminating and applying policies widely to develop international faculty and students, scientific publications in international journals and reputable recruitment for university rankings.

4.5 Develop and implement the database management system focused on UD level and member school level effectively

- Develop centralized database management system based on information technology application base, which ensures full and accurately as well as easily and convenient data extraction of UD and member universities to effectively serve university rankings as well as management decisions.
- Issue documents on centralized database management, which clearly stipulate the rights to handle, update, use data as well as security regime, ensure the safety of data of the system manage centralized database of UD and member universities.
- Perform data storage and backup in a safe and modern way to quickly and accurately recover data in case of incidents to centralized database management system.
- Periodically carry out maintenance and upgrading of centralized database management system in order to effectively serve the management of schools in general and university rankings in particular.

4.6 Improve the website of UD and member universities, with a focus on strengthening information in English

- Implement the website improvement of UD and member universities towards professionalism, modernity, friendliness and ease of access as well as data search,

especially data for ranking.

- In terms of rankings of UD and member universities on the regional and international university rankings, still in a modest status, UD and member universities strengthen information in English about curriculum, policies to attract international faculty and students and reputable employers to increase the number of visits and the level of assessment for websites as well as the quality of UD and member universities.
- Strengthening English articles on the website of UD and member universities, in which articles, interviews about individuals with prestige and international influence to visit and work at UD and member universities are focusing on.

4.7 Promote monitoring and evaluation of annual ranking results of UD and member universities on regional and international university rankings

- Specialized rankings department of UD and member universities regularly monitor the progress and results of implementing solutions to improve the rankings of UD and member universities on the regional and international university rankings to promptly apply measures to ensure quality and effective implementation of ranking solutions.
- Annually, to compare the ranking results of UD and member universities according to the regional and international university rankings compared with the objectives and plans so that they can analyze, understand and determine the ways to develop an improvement plan to improve the position of UD and member universities on the regional and international university rankings.
- Organize annual conferences, workshops or briefings on the ranking work of UD and member universities, in which to analyze and evaluate ranking results, identify problems and causes, draw experience, identify improvement plans to improve the ranking position of UD and member universities on the regional and international university rankings in the coming year.
- Regularly monitor updated information of the regional and international university rankings to know and understand the changes, adjustments and additions to the ranking criteria, weight ratings, assessment methods,... of the regional and international university rankings.

4.8 Effectively implement quality improvement activities of UD and member universities to meet the ranking criteria

- Develop quality improvement plans of the activities of UD and member universities based on the results of analysing, assessing the status and causes of existence to meet the ranking criteria of the regional and international university rankings.
- Prioritize the resources of UD and member universities to implement quality improvement activities of the activities of UD and member universities to meet the criteria of the regional and international university rankings.
- In fact, through the implementation process, the university ranking organizations in the world often have additions, adjustments on criteria, weight ratings or evaluation

methods.

- In addition to focusing on implementing university rankings according to QS Asia, Webometrics rankings, UD must study the ranking criteria of THE and ARWU, on that basis to assess the status of UD. With the ranking criteria from which to propose the application of innovative solutions and plans, the roadmap for UD to participate in ranking on prestigious international university rankings such as THE and ARWU.

5. Relationship between solutions

Each solution has its own important role and significance, in which the solution “Organizing to raise awareness of cadres, lecturers and students on university rankings on regional and national rankings sacrifice” to create the right awareness for all members of the university so that they can voluntarily and actively participate in the ranking of universities on the regional and international university rankings of UD and member universities.

The solution “Developing suitable and feasible plans for participation in regional and international university rankings” creates an important basis for implementing rankings of UD and member universities on the regional and international university rankings aiming to improve the rankings.

The solutions “Regulating specialized units and promoting coordination mechanisms among units in regional and international university rankings”; “Strengthening the application of policies to develop international faculty and students, scientific publications in international journals and prestigious employers”; “Building and implementing effectively a centralized database management system at the university level and member schools”; “Improving the website of UD and member universities, focusing on strengthening information in English” are specific solutions to be implemented in the current period in order to improve the rankings of UD in regional and international university rankings.

In addition, the solution “Promote monitoring and evaluation of annual ranking results of UD and member universities on regional and international rankings” in order to enhance monitoring and evaluation activities aiming to provide UD leaders with necessary, complete and accurate information about the status so that there can be a basis to issue an improvement plan and apply improvement measures to improve the rankings of UD on the regional and international university rankings.

In addition, the solution “Effectively implementing quality improvement activities of UD and member universities meeting the ranking criteria” is the main solution for UD and member universities to improve their ranking on the regional and international university rankings in a practical and sustainable way.

6. Conclusion

In the 2016-2018 periods, the ranking of UD in Webometrics, uniRank rankings improved and in 2019, according to the ranking results of the QS Asia rankings, UD was the first in the group 451st – 500th best universities in Asia. The ranks of UD in Webometrics, uniRank, QS Asia rankings are improved thanking to applying specific solutions to implement university rankings of UD and member universities. Although the ranking of UD in the Asian QS rankings is 493rd, the roadmap for participating in prestigious international university rankings such as: THE, ARWU has not been planned yet.

In short, in order to improve the rankings of UD in the regional and international university rankings, it is necessary to apply these solutions mentioned above.

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