

# TEFCE CONSULTATION WITH CATALAN ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES (ACUP)

Barcelona, Spain, 28 February – 1 March 2019

## MEETING CONCLUSIONS

### Institutions consulted:

- Meetings were held with a team of five representatives from the **Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona** (including 1 vice-rector, and other staff working on RRI, societal and environmental projects and programmes) and team of two representatives from **Universitat Pompeu Fabra** (who work of social responsibility projects and programmes). The meetings consisted of presenting the project and Toolbox (20 minutes) followed by a discussion, as well as a brief ‘testing’ of 3-4 sub-dimensions.
- A presentation of the TEFCE project and Toolbox was held for 40 participants from **all of ACUP’s member institutions (public universities of Catalonia)**.

### Overall feedback:

- The participants of the meetings and conference considered the TEFCE project (its general alternative approach to performance measurement in higher education and the Toolbox in particular) to be **refreshing, interesting and innovative** – and of high quality.
- The meeting participants quickly recognised and acknowledged the **value** of the Toolbox for the university: allowing the institution to have valuable information on what good practices exist in terms of community engagement, reflecting on where they are and where they can go from here.
- Interestingly, the fact that the meetings were taking place was itself seen as a positive development: the initial sharing of practices and views at the meeting was seen as an illustration of how valuable the process could be as a **collaborative and participative learning process** on community engagement between different schools, units and staff at the university.

### General questions:

The meetings opened many **practical questions** about how the Toolbox would work in practice

- How to interpret different terminology (‘community’, ‘impact’, ‘university management’, ...)
- How to collect so many practices at a large university
- How to determine how many practices are sufficient to be representative
- How to carry out the scoring (what if 15 practices are level 1, and 2 practices are level 5)?

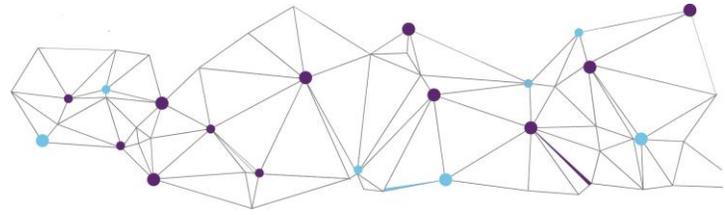
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#### PROJECT FUNDING



#### PROJECT CO-FINANCING





### Concerns and constructive criticism:

- At the ACUP conference, an interesting debate took place about the need for balance between **'bottom-up' vs 'top-down'** approaches to engagement. In the debate, it was noted that TEFCE advocated 'bottom-up' approaches and implicitly criticised 'top-down' approaches in the Toolbox – but that, in reality, having only bottom-up initiatives without top-down steering and support would be insufficient to achieve broad impact.
- Although the TEFCE project emphasises that the Toolbox uses a qualitative process, not a scoring process, it is still based on a 1-5 scale. Even if users would be careful not place the scores in the foreground and to focus on achieving a dialogue with stakeholders, the 1-5 scores would still be publicly available, meaning that there is a **risk** that members of the public or from other universities could still use them for **benchmarking and ranking purposes**, even if that is not their initial intention. How to avoid the misuse of quantitative data resulting from the Toolbox process?
- **'The devil is in the detail'**: a lot of the level descriptors presented from the Toolbox were considered as 'fuzzy', so there is a lot of work on interpretation of the levels, and of how they fit with the reality of the practices that take place at the university. In some cases, the sub-dimensions are not applicable.
- There is a need for **clearer instructions** on how to use the toolbox – perhaps with providing examples for each sub-dimension?

### Overall conclusions

- The TEFCE project was fully supported by the participants consulted during the meetings and presentations, meaning that the TEFCE project is certainly going in the right direction.
- But there is work to be done on the *details* of the Toolbox methodology and to clarify both the practical and interpretative dilemmas that will arise.
- Another conclusion, based on the meetings with universities, is that it appears unlikely that a university could use the Toolbox without external expert guidance from the very beginning: there are many conceptual and practical questions that arise early in the process.

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