

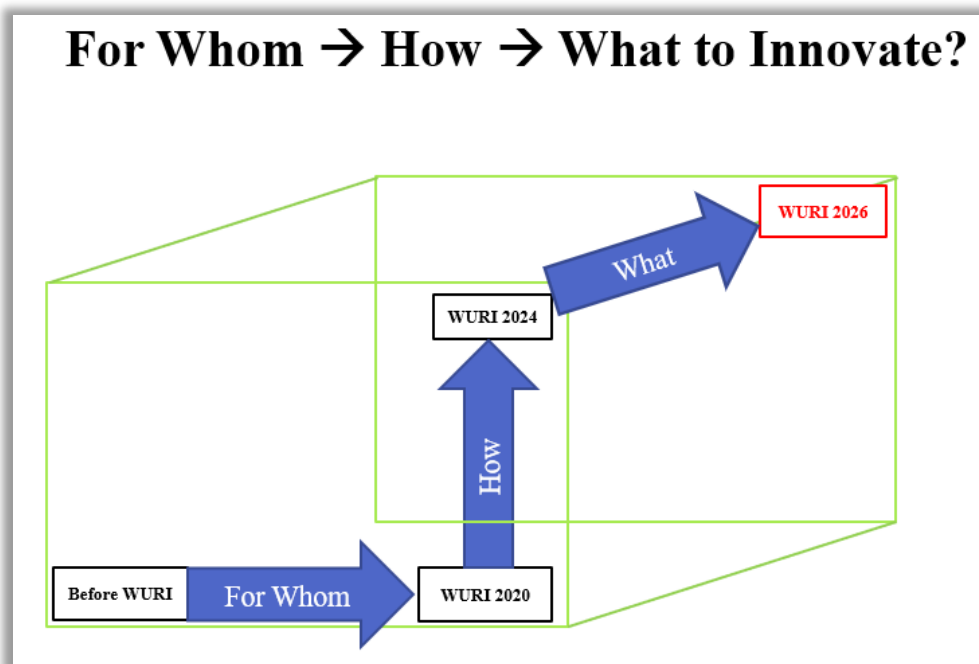
## 24 Categories for WURI Ranking 2026

### Addition

Until 2025, a balance has been established between the "For Whom to Innovate" category (A-category) and the "How to Innovate" category (B-category).

Starting in 2026, WURI adds a third axis, "What to Innovate" category (C-category), to complement the existing first axis and the second axis. This expanded three-dimensional framework allows a more precise evaluation of innovation activities. Under this new axis, WURI establishes eight new categories, grouped into four essential domains—Research, Education, Service, and Commercialization—with two categories under each domain.

The 3 axes allocated to three dimensions are shown below:



### Classification

Each submitted case will be classified according to the school, college, or headquarters within the university to which it belongs.

Although universities vary in size and structure, they are generally organized into three broad divisions: Professional and career-oriented schools; Science, technology, and applied fields; and Humanities, arts, and social sciences.

In addition, there are headquarters-level and institutional functions that cut across these divisions, as summarized in the following table.

<b>Cross-Cutting &amp; Institutional</b> <b>1.</b> UH – University Headquarters <b>2.</b> AI – Artificial Intelligence & Data Science <b>3.</b> IN – Interdisciplinary & Emerging Fields <b>Professional &amp; Career-Oriented Schools</b> <b>4.</b> BS – Business / Management <b>5.</b> LW – Law <b>6.</b> MD – Medicine <b>7.</b> DS – Dentistry <b>8.</b> NS – Nursing & Health Sciences <b>9.</b> PH – Pharmacy <b>10.</b> PB – Public Health	<b>Science, Technology &amp; Applied Fields</b> <b>11.</b> EN – Engineering <b>12.</b> CS – Computer Science & Information Technology <b>13.</b> AR – Architecture & Urban Planning <b>14.</b> AG – Agriculture & Life Sciences <b>15.</b> EV – Environmental & Sustainability Studies <b>Humanities, Arts &amp; Social Sciences</b> <b>16.</b> HU – Humanities <b>17.</b> SS – Social Sciences <b>18.</b> ED – Education <b>19.</b> AD – Art & Design <b>20.</b> MU – Music <b>21.</b> PF – Performing Arts (Theatre/Film/Dance) <b>22.</b> DV – Divinity / Theology / Religion
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This classification system enables WURI to develop discipline-specific innovation rankings.

For example, based on the categorized cases, WURI can produce distinct rankings such as Innovative Business Schools, Innovative Engineering Schools, Innovative Humanities Colleges, Innovative University Headquarters, among others.

This approach allows more comparable comparisons of innovative actions and highlights excellence in innovation within each academic or professional field.

## Changes and revisions

### 1. Revision of “A4. Entrepreneurial Culture & Ecosystem”

With the addition of eight new categories under the Third Pillar, the content of A4. Entrepreneurial Culture & Ecosystem has been refined to avoid overlap with the newly introduced C7. University-Based Entrepreneurial Project category. The revised A4 now focuses on how universities provide services and support to industries, while C7 highlights how universities and their members cultivate and practice entrepreneurship themselves.

### 2. Revision of “A7. Future-Oriented Responses to Global Uncertainty and Geopolitical Risk”

The previous A7 (Technology Development and Application) will henceforth be addressed under the second axis, “How to Innovate.” In its place, A7 will now emphasize future-oriented responses to global uncertainty and geopolitical risk. In today’s world, trade disputes, geopolitical conflicts, and shifting global orders have increased both economic and humanitarian inequality. Universities are not immune to these challenges. From 2026 onward, A7 will highlight how universities anticipate, prepare for, and respond to global uncertainties and geopolitical risks.

### **3. Integration of A8 and B3 into a New “A8: SDG- and ESG-Based Responses to Past and Present Global Challenges”**

In the 2025 framework, A8 (SDG-Based Responses to Global Challenges) and B3 (ESG Trend) shared similar objectives and sometimes overlapped. Beginning in 2026, these two criteria are merged into a single A8 category. This integration unites the SDG and ESG perspectives into a holistic approach that addresses the university’s service to the global community.

Together, A7 and A8 now form a complementary pair: A7 looks toward the future, while A8 addresses the challenges of the past and present.

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### **4. Change of B3 as “Digital & AI Transformation” (Revised from A7 in 2025)**

The content of the 2025 A7 (Technology Development and Application) has been transferred to B3 under the “How to Innovate” axis. This shift reflects the understanding that technological development is better situated as a method of innovation rather than as a user target. The newly titled “B3. Digital & AI Transformation” captures how universities must restructure their operations, learning systems, and governance in response to the accelerating digital and AI-driven environment.

B3 complements B4, which focuses on the cultural and societal contexts that shape innovation.

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### **5. Expansion of the “User-Centric Ranking” Across All Eight Categories in the “For Whom to Innovate” Axis**

The “User-Centric Ranking,” introduced in 2025, will be expanded in 2026 to encompass a broader spectrum of stakeholders. It now covers perspectives from students (A1–A2), industries (A3–A4), society (A5–A6), and the global community (A7–A8). Universities are therefore encouraged to collect and submit innovation cases representing these diverse user groups, ensuring that the WURI Ranking continues to assess innovation through the eyes of its true beneficiaries.

## Guideline for selecting the right category

Each submitted case naturally involves the three axes of innovation — For Whom to Innovate, How to Innovate, and What to Innovate. Because of this, it may be challenging to decide which of the 24 categories best fits your project.

To assist you in making this decision, please follow these guidelines:

1. Each innovative project or program must be submitted under one primary dimension that best represents its core innovation focus.
2. The same case may not be submitted to multiple categories.
3. If a project includes distinct components or perspectives, it may be submitted as separate, independent cases, provided that the contents are sufficiently different and each highlights a clearly separate aspect of innovation.
4. Each submission should stand as an independent and self-contained case for evaluation.

This principle ensures fairness, clarity, and comparability in the WURI Ranking 2026, while also encouraging the sharing of practical and replicable innovations that can inspire others across the global higher education community.

## Helpful tips for preparing innovative cases

Over the past six years, the way universities participate in the WURI Ranking has evolved significantly. In collecting and analyzing thousands of innovation cases, we have discovered several effective strategies that university presidents have used to prepare their submissions. We are pleased to share six key ideas that may help your university strengthen its innovation efforts.

### 1. Inspiring a Spirit of Competition Within the University

The more cases your university submits, the greater your chances of climbing the WURI ranking ladder. For example, universities that submitted over 100 cases in 2023—or more than 150 in 2024—consistently achieved high positions. When asked how this was possible, one university president explained:

*"I gathered 100 leaders—50 department heads, 30 center directors, and 20 administrative managers—and asked each to prepare at least one innovative case. I then created a \$10,000 prize pool, awarding \$1,000 to each case that ranked in the global top 100. In the end, three of our cases made it, and no one questioned the fairness of the process since the evaluation was done by hundreds of university presidents worldwide. For a modest \$3,000, our university transformed into a leading innovation-driven institution."*

With the 2026 introduction of case classification by academic field, we encourage each college or school within your university to actively submit innovative cases. Rankings will now be announced by classification—such as WURI-BS (Business Schools), WURI-EN (Engineering Schools), WURI-ED (Education Schools), WURI-MD (Medical Schools), WURI-DS (Dental Schools), WURI-UH (University Headquarters), and more—starting in May 2026.

## 2. The Smaller the Scope, the Better the Ranking

Concise, well-focused, and clearly defined cases—with a specific scope and tangible outcomes—tend to perform better in the rankings. Such cases are easier for reviewers and readers to grasp and serve as practical models for other universities seeking to learn from your innovation. As we often say: “Small is beautiful.”

## 3. Tell the Story Behind the Innovation

Facts and data matter—but stories make the difference. Behind every successful case lies a journey of challenge, creativity, and impact. Instead of simply listing activities or outputs, describe:

- Why the innovation began—what problem or opportunity inspired it,
- Who led or participated—highlighting the people behind the change, and
- How it made a real difference—with measurable outcomes or qualitative impact.

A well-told story makes your case memorable and helps others learn from your experience. Reviewers connect more with meaning than with metrics alone.

## 4. Upgrade and Improve on Last Year’s Cases

Innovation is a continuous process, not a one-time event. Many of the strongest WURI cases are refinements of earlier submissions, showing how an idea has matured, expanded, or generated new impacts. If your university has previously submitted a case, consider updating it by:

- Adding new achievements or data that demonstrate measurable progress,
- Describing lessons learned and how feedback led to better implementation, and
- Showing broader influence—how your innovation has grown beyond the original scope.

Reviewers appreciate universities that demonstrate learning from their own innovation. Improving on previous cases reflects a commitment not just to creativity, but to growth and excellence.

## 5. Diversifying Cases Across All 24 Categories

When preparing multiple cases, aim to distribute them across all categories rather than concentrating on a few. Note that competition levels vary—generally, more cases are submitted in the A-categories than in the B-categories.

In 2026, WURI will launch a new initiative, tentatively titled the World Innovative University Accreditation (WIUA). One of the three key criteria for WIUA is the breadth of innovation,

measured by a university's submission of cases in at least five of the eight categories within each of the three axes, and in at least 18 of the 24 categories overall.

## 6. Focus on Sustainability and Transferability

An innovation's true strength lies in its ability to endure and inspire replication. When writing your case, emphasize how your initiative:

- Can sustain itself beyond its initial funding or leadership,
- Can be adapted or scaled by other universities or organizations, and
- Continues to create value over time, not just in its first year.

Reviewers particularly value cases that become “living models”—innovations that evolve, spread, and keep contributing to the global community of learning.

In summary, the six-point tips in case writing may be put in sequence as “(1) From motivation → (2) to focused creation → (3) to meaningful storytelling → (4) to continuous improvement → (5) to strategic expansion → (6) to sustainable global impact.”

This progression captures the spirit of WURI: universities that don't merely innovate once, but continuously learn, evolve, and lead the way for others.

## **Axis 1: Innovation Targets: For Whom to Innovate?**

### **For Student**

A1. Student Support and Engagement (from the students' point of view)  
(The same as A1 in 2025)

This innovative project/program focuses on supporting students' academic and career success, as well as welfare, diversity, inclusion and participation. Additionally, it aims to enhance student welfare by offering various scholarship programs to reduce financial burdens and help students focus on their studies. (We encourage students to prepare the cases in their real names.)

A2, Student Mobility and Openness (from the students' point of view)  
(The same as A2 in 2025)

This innovative project/program focuses on promoting exchange and collaboration between schools, both domestically and internationally. The goal is to encourage openness, sharing of knowledge, and resource integration, moving away from isolated and closed system. (We encourage students to prepare the cases in their real names.)

### **For Industry**

A3. Industrial Application  
(Revised from A3 in 2025)

This innovative project/program emphasizes the application of industry-related education and research to generate tangible, real-world impacts, moving away from the conventional focus on academia-driven research and education. (We encourage industry partners to prepare the cases in their real names.)

A4. Entrepreneurial Culture & Eco System  
(Revised from A4 in 2025)

This innovative project/program highlights how the university nurtures an entrepreneurial spirit among students, faculty, and administrators, thereby fostering a mindset, cultural foundation, and innovation-friendly environment that positively influences the industries engaged with the university. (We encourage industry partners to prepare the cases in their real names.)

## For Society

### A5. Crisis Management (Revised from A5 in 2025)

This innovative project/program focuses on managing environmental and economic crises that the university encounters, such as climate change, pandemics like COVID-19, and other global and local crises. (We encourage societal stakeholders to prepare the cases in their real names.)

### A6. Ethics and Integrity (Revised from A6 in 2025)

This innovative project/program emphasizes the importance of researching and promoting ethics and integrity in education. It encourages the university to go beyond a narrow focus on academic knowledge and skills, by fostering moral values, ethical decision-making, and integrity among students and faculty, shaping responsible global citizens and leaders. (We encourage societal stakeholders to prepare the cases in their real names.)

## For Global Community

### A7. Future-Oriented Responses to Global Uncertainty and Geopolitical Risk (Completely changed from A7 in 2025)

This innovative project/program highlights how the university can help the global community prevent tomorrow's crises by responding to emerging uncertainties and geopolitical risks—including potential conflicts, trade disruptions, and the weakening of international cooperation. It focuses on how the university fosters strategic foresight, peace education, and resilience-building through innovative education, research, and dialogue. By nurturing future leaders who can anticipate and manage crises, the university contributes to sustaining peace and stability in an unpredictable world. (We encourage the global community to prepare the cases in their real names.)

### A8. SDG- and ESG-Based Responses to Past and Present Global Challenges (Revised from A8 in 2025)

This innovative project/program showcases how the university can help the global community solve the past and present challenges through the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into their education, research, and community engagement to advance sustainability, inclusion, and ethical responsibility. By promoting climate action, social equity, and transparent governance, the university plays a vital role in creating a more sustainable and just world. (We encourage the global community to prepare the cases in their real names.)



## **Axis 2: Innovation Means: How to Innovate?**

### **Leadership**

#### **B1. Visionary Leadership** (The same as B1 in 2025)

This innovative project/program exemplifies leadership in developing and communicating a clear, inspiring vision for the university. It emphasizes understanding the evolving landscape of higher education, anticipating future challenges, and fostering innovation to maintain the university's relevance and ensure its success

#### **B2. Empowerment-Based Management** (The same as B2 in 2025)

This innovative project/program shows the leader's willingness to relinquish traditional privileges and continuously adept to remain effective and influential in the ever-evolving landscape of higher education. It highlights the leader's strong interpersonal skills in building relationships and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, and external partners. These skills enable effective communication, conflict resolution, and the ability to inspire and motivate others toward shared goals.

### **Environment**

#### **B3. Digital and AI Transformation in Strategy and Management** (Completely changed from B3 in 2025)

This innovative project/program highlights how the university transforms its strategies, operations, and decision-making through digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI). It focuses on how the university redesigns its internal systems to enhance the effectiveness, agility, and intelligence of education, research, and administration. Projects may include AI-supported learning platforms, digital governance frameworks, data-driven decision systems, automation of campus services, or digital twins of university operations. By integrating digital and AI technologies into their organizational structure and leadership practices, the university strengthens its capacity to innovate continuously and to respond rapidly to changes in society, industry, and knowledge.

#### **B4. Culture/Values** (The same as B4 in 2025)

This innovative project/program promotes a shift towards industry- and student-centered thinking, moving away from traditional university/professor-centric approaches. It encourages the pursuit of social values alongside academic values, contributing positively to society. Additionally, it focuses on establishing an innovative culture that supports creativity and continuous improvement

## Resource

B5. Funding for Sustainability  
(The same as B5 in 2025)

This innovative project/program reveals the innovative strategies the university employs to secure financial resources by diversifying funding streams and adopting new methods. It also highlights efforts to ensure stable funding to support its long-term goals and initiatives.

B6. Infrastructure/Technology  
(The same as B6 in 2025)

This innovative project/program examines how effectively the university adopts new technologies and infrastructure to support research, education, service, and commercialization activities internally and externally.

## Mechanism

B7. Cost-Effectiveness Management  
(The same as B7 in 2025)

This innovative project/program emphasizes launching innovative projects that either boost revenues or reduce costs to improve profitability. This strategy evaluates initiatives based on their financial return, prioritizing those with the highest economic efficiency. The aim is to ensure resources are allocated to areas that most effectively enhance the university's financial health and support its educational goals.

B8. University Brand and Reputation  
(The same as B8 in 2025)

This innovative project/program focuses on the use of creative and innovative strategies to effectively enhance the university's brand and reputation. It encourages the university to adopt unique approaches that appeal to diverse audiences, ultimately strengthening its visibility, influence, and competitive position in the higher education landscape.

## Axis 3: Innovation Targets: **What to Innovate?**

### Research

#### C1. Representative Research Project (New in 2026)

This innovative project/program recognizes a university's flagship research agenda that demonstrates a concentrated and sustained effort to address future societal and global challenges. Its focus is placed on the project's historical continuity, relevance, transformative potential, and social impact—for example, how MIT established its institutional identity through the Manhattan Project, and how Stanford fostered numerous start-ups in Silicon Valley through its Design Thinking initiative.

#### C2. Interdisciplinary, Convergent, and Integrated Research (New in 2026)

This innovative project/program assesses the university's efforts to transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries to create breakthrough interdisciplinary, convergent, and integrated research. It include the fusion of fields such as technology + humanities, medicine + data science, or AI + ethics, emphasizing creativity from convergence.

### Education

#### C3. Curricular Innovation for Future-Readiness (New in 2026)

This innovative project/program examines innovative curriculum transformations designed to foster future-proof skills (e.g., creativity, AI literacy, ESG competencies). It includes restructured degree programs, micro-credentials, industry-embedded courses, and practice-based learning models.

#### C4. AI-based Teaching and Learning Transformation (New in 2026)

This innovative project/program evaluates how the university leverages AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, personal AI tutors) in teaching and learning, integrates AI applications into curricula across disciplines, and approaches the AI-driven transformation of society. It focuses on personalized learning, automation, improved access, and the redefinition of educational roles. Compared to B6, which covers the university-wide “Infrastructure/Technology”, C4 focuses on AI application to teaching and learning.

## **Social Engagement**

### **C5. Social Impact through Knowledge Transfer (New in 2026)**

This innovative project/program recognizes organized programs that apply the university's knowledge and expertise to address real problems in local, national, or global communities. It emphasizes tangible influence on policy, systems, or industries—beyond charity or volunteer work.

### **C6. Inclusive Social Innovation for the Underserved (New in 2026)**

This innovative project/program highlights innovation projects that target underserved populations such as the disabled, marginalized groups, or those in developing countries. It combines technological or educational innovation with meaningful inclusivity and empowerment outcomes.

## **Commercialization**

### **C7. University-Based Entrepreneurial Projects (New in 2026)**

This innovative project/program assesses entrepreneurial ventures led or initiated by the university that translates ideas into business impact. It includes start-up incubation, licensing, investment initiatives, and entrepreneurship education programs.

### **C8. Financial Impact-Driven Tech Transfer (New in 2026)**

This innovative project/program evaluates technology transfer efforts in terms of profitability, while continuing to recognize their broader social and environmental value. It prioritizes “Tech for Good” cases in which technologies grounded in public value also pursue strong and sustainable commercial returns.