On the robustness of our earlier research rankings in business economics: Despite the robustness checks in Fabel et al. (2009), Albers (2009) still claims that our results lack ‘face validity’. First, he notes that journals have different page layouts and suggests that weighting by the number of pages counteracts the weighting by journal quality. However, Fabel et al. (2009) already show that the effect of page-weighting is negligible. Second, Albers’ (2009) complaint that ‘85% of the total score comes from the worst category’ simply mirrors that most of the current research efforts are directed at publishing in such journals. In fact, we attach positive weights to such publications for the sole reason of acknowledging that these outlets are characteristic for the current state of business research in the German-speaking area. Again, Fabel et al. (2009) already agree with Diamantopoulos and Wagner (2009) that applying a convex journal-weighting scheme could improve incentives for researchers.

Third, Albers (2009) laments about the ‘remarkably incomplete data’. Incomplete data would indeed constitute a significant shortcoming if we attempted to construct rankings of individual researchers. That, however, was explicitly never our objective. Further, it is well known that such data problems ‘wash out’ if comparing larger groups. For exactly this reason, Fabel et al. (2008) only include units comprising at least four full professorships when constructing faculty rankings. Admittedly, journal tracking by the institutions compiling electronic publication datasets and contents reporting by journal publishers may be somewhat biased. Nevertheless, data accuracy does not vary unduly across subdisciplines. Thus, incomplete data are unlikely to distort within-field rankings at all.

Moreover, we are now able to verify this last assertion. Since our original 2008 publication, the ‘Committee for Research Monitoring’ (CRM) of the German Economic Association has established an Internet gateway¹ that

allows researchers to verify their publication data and, if necessary, update their records via self-reporting. Applying our original weighting scheme, self-reports of researchers by February 2009 indicate that we missed 12.7% of score points in total (17.7% if considering only researchers who actually logged into the gateway as a base). Interestingly, for some 4.2% of all researchers (respectively, 5% of those who logged into the gateway), our score was actually too high. Hence, we recalculate the ‘Marketing and Sales’ ranking including the self-reported publications. Since our original data have been collected in the first quarter of 2008, we only include self-reported articles published in 2007 or before. We then add those (few) 2008 publications that are included in our original data. Thus, all differences can be fully attributed to differences in data quality. In Figure 1, ranks based on our original data are plotted against ranks based on the dataset that includes the self-reported publications. It is easily verified that the newly computed set of top-five departments is identical to the one in our original article. We also recalculate all rankings using the different weighting schemes tested by Fabel et al. (2009) to respond to Diamantopoulos and Wagner (2009). The result is the same: there is not a single case where the additional publication data entered through self-reporting would require to withdraw or to qualify any of the conclusions drawn in Fabel et al. (2008, 2009).

In a footnote, Albers insinuates that we did not use the HWWA publication data. This is not so: the HWWA data were part of the WISO dataset that we

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Figure 1  Plot of original rank number against recalculated rank number.
used. Albers (2009) then goes on to express his hope that the ZBW will succeed in creating a database (the new ECONIS) that will serve as an alternative to the CRM. The ZBW has actually initiated contacts with the CRM in order to explore modes of cooperation. These contacts have, however, not been followed up. If the ZBW attempted to develop such a database without drawing on the previous work and the expertise of the CRM, such an effort would certainly constitute a glaring waste of taxpayers’ money.

On the alleged monopolization of data: Albers’ (2009) allegation that CRM monopolizes information is simply not true. The CRM ranking is a joint venture of Verein für Sozialpolitik and Handelsblatt and is partially funded by the latter. Therefore, CRM’s data are not otherwise directly available for commercial purposes. Thus, a respective request by Albers was turned down in November 2008. The German Academic Association for Business Research (VHB) was invited to participate in early 2007 already and consecutively thereafter. However, the VHB rejected all these offers.

Yet, the data are not proprietary; it is available for academic research that aims at publishing analyses in international-quality journals. The costs, in particular the costs associated with any customized programming and data preparation, will, of course, be invoiced. Finally, CRM charges for reports used in professional evaluations (e.g. for search commissions or institutional evaluations). All revenue exclusively serves to refund the project. Hence, allegations that CRM monopolizes its data or knowledge are clearly unsubstantiated.

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REFERENCES


3. The senior author (Fabel) claims full and sole responsibility for the account presented in this second section.