The conference focuses on the alleged characteristics and policy expressions of the discourse of the World Class University (WCU). The purpose is to provide a venue for the diffusion of research on WCUs and global rankings of higher education produced at the interface of a variety of approaches from several disciplines. The conference will provide not only a broad overview of the historical background and recent developments of the discourse of WCU; it also aims to broaden and deepen the theoretical discussion, and ultimately to point a way forward out of present impasses resulting from the pervasive use and abuse of both the notion of “world-class” and related terms in the discourse of quality assessment (rankings, league tables, excellence initiatives, etc.). The goal is to stimulate, integrate and consolidate HE-research at the highest level and contribute to theoretical, methodological development while also providing important empirical data that can be useful for educational policy and practice broadly.

### DAY 1 WEDNESDAY, MAY 15

**09:30-10:00** Registration

**10:00-10:15** SHARON RIDER, Uppsala University: Welcome and introduction, MIKAEL BÖRJESSON, Uppsala University: Presentation of HERO

**10:15-11:00** JON NIXON, The Education University of Hong Kong: ‘Orderly’ Identities—University Rankings and the Re-Ordering of the Academic Mind

**11:00-11:45** CRIS SHORE, University of Auckland, and SUSAN WRIGHT, Aarhus University: The Measure of Academic Excellence—Audit Culture, World Class Universities and the Reputational Arms Race

**11:45-13:00** Lunch Break

**13:00-13:45** MICHAEL PETERS and TINA BESLEY, Beijing Normal University: The Neoliberal Discourse of the World Class University—Digital Socialism, Openness and Academic Publishing

**13:45-14:30** SONIA GIEBEL, Stanford University: The Paradox of the Global University

**14:30-14:45** Coffee Break

**14:45-15:30** TERO ERKKILÄ, University of Helsinki: What counts as world class?

**15:30-16:15** Panel discussion. MIKAEL BÖRJESSON, THOMAS KARLSÖHN, and LINDA WEDLIN, Uppsala University: The Use and Abuse of Rankings for Higher Education: Historical and Contemporary Reflections. Moderator: SHARON RIDER.

### DAY 2 THURSDAY, MAY 16

**09:15-10:00** PAUL GIBBS, Middlesex University London: The Marketization of Higher Education

**10:00-10:45** JACK LEE and RAJANI NAIDOÖ, University of Bath: Complicit Reproductions—Global Rankings and their Impact on Higher Education in the Global South

**10:45-11:15** Coffee Break

**11:15-12:00** TIEN-HUI CHIANG, Zhengzhou University: The State Role in University Excellence Policies in the Era of Globalization—The Case of China

**12:00-13:00** Lunch Break

**13:00-13:45** Panel discussion on Conceptualizing the World Class University with SONJA ARNDT and CARL MIKA, Waikato University and RIKKE TOFT NORGÅRD, Aarhus University. Moderator: MICHAEL PETERS

**13:45-14:30** RONALD BARNETT, University College London Institute of Education: Realizing the World-Class University—An Ecological Approach

**14:30-14:45** Closing Remarks, SHARON RIDER.