

In his election manifesto, Emmanuel Macron, presidential candidate, pledges to “liberate the energy of our universities by giving them real and concrete autonomy” in terms of curricula and recruitment of staff, so they can “adapt to the diverse needs of students”. Evaluation procedures will be simplified and sources of funding diversified. At the same time, Macron will “support the formation of world-class universities on the basis of voluntary groupings of universities and grandes écoles with the support of research institutions”. Furthermore, in order to make France “a global leader in research on global warming and environmental transition”, Macron’s administration would speed up the provision of visas to “foreign specialists in these fields”, as part of “a general policy of openness to all researchers and talents”. He has posted a YouTube message in English urging “American researchers, entrepreneurs and engineers working on climate change” to come to a country whose head of state has “no doubt about climate change”. “We think we are halfway in terms of autonomy,” says PSL’s Coulhon, who is also an adviser to the Macron campaign. “But there is a difference between what is in the regulations and what really takes place.” One example is student evaluation of courses, which is supposed to be carried out every semester – albeit only for universities’ internal use, with no funding riding on it. “It doesn’t happen!” Coulhon says. “Macron would want to push that forward.” The overall aim is “a system that is regulated but diverse, to reach the goal of social inclusion”. Macron believes in “acceptable differentiation”, Coulhon says. “Not every university has the same mission, strengths and characteristics. It sounds obvious, but in France, [although] nothing is uniform, we pretend it is. That makes life difficult in terms of international competition and so on. We have to support different kinds of excellence. We need a new contract between the state and the institutions rather than a priori regulation. It should not be one size fits all.” Coulhon adds that universities should publish statistics such as dropout rates, graduate employment figures and course-specific graduate salary data “so students make a choice with proper information – and funding should also follow results in research and innovation”. (Fonte: M. Reisz, www.timeshighereducation.com

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