

Rankings Definitions

Faculty Staff:

Total number of academic faculty staff who are responsible for planning, directing and undertaking teaching only, research only or both teaching and research.

We include: vice-chancellors, deputy vice-chancellors, principals, professors, heads of school, associate professors, assistant professors, principal lecturers, tutors or postdoctoral researchers who contribute to teaching or research or both at the institution for a minimum period of at least three months.

We exclude: research assistants (*), PhD students who contribute to teaching, hospital residents and exchange scholars or visiting faculty staff who are members of an external institution and who spend less than three months at the university.

() The important distinction for us is that staff counted as ‘research only’ should be academically involved in that research and should be likely to publish research outputs. A research assistant, in our understanding, is any individual who is not conducting their own research and is therefore not likely to publish research outputs. Said individual is (only) involved in research in terms of operational execution, such as a lab technician or equipment operator.*

International Faculty Staff:

Number of academic faculty staff who contribute to teaching or research or both for a minimum period of at least three months and who are of foreign nationality.

The term ‘international’ is hereby determined by citizenship.

For EU countries, this includes all foreign nationals, even if from another EU state. In Hong Kong, this includes professors from Mainland China.

Inclusion and exclusion mirrors those for academic faculty staff.

It is important to note that visiting international faculty staff who are of foreign origin but members of an external institution and who spend less than three months at the university should NOT be counted under this category.

In case of dual citizenship, the ‘deciding’ criteria should be ‘citizenship obtained through birth’, basically first passport obtained.

Undergraduate Students:

Number of students pursuing a Bachelor’s level or equivalent degree. This excludes certificates/ diplomas and associate’s degrees.

International Undergraduate Students:

Number of undergraduate students who are foreign nationals and who spend at least three months at the university. The term ‘international’ is hereby determined by citizenship.

For EU countries, this includes all foreign nationals, even nationals of other EU states. In Hong Kong, this includes students from Mainland China.

In case of dual citizenship, the ‘deciding’ criteria should be ‘citizenship obtained through birth’, basically first passport obtained.

All exchange students are excluded.

As for summer school and/or language students, if they take up a particular (language) course that is outlined as ‘undergraduate degree program’ and the student can earn credits towards their final degree they should be included under ‘international undergraduate students’.

Summer school and/or language students who take part in a course not contributing to a degree qualification should be counted under ‘Total International Students’.

Foreign dual degree students can be included under ‘international undergraduate students’ if they fulfil above criteria, spend at least three months at the university, earn credits towards their final degree and have the university’s name written on their diploma.

Graduate / Postgraduate Students:

Students pursuing a higher-level degree (Master and Doctorate), including both taught and research postgraduates (e.g. PhD students)

For clarity, *graduate* and *postgraduate* are synonyms to embrace all students pursuing Masters, Doctoral or similar degrees such as ‘Specialist’, mainly referring to Eastern European and Central Asian countries. The term *graduate* is more broadly used in US institutions and *postgraduate* in British and European institutions.

International Graduate / Postgraduate Students:

Number of graduate / postgraduate students who are foreign nationals and who spend at least three months at the university. The term ‘international’ is hereby determined by citizenship.

For EU countries, this includes all foreign nationals, even nationals of other EU states. In Hong Kong, this includes students from Mainland China.

In case of dual citizenship, the ‘deciding’ criteria should be ‘citizenship obtained through birth’, basically first passport obtained.

All exchange students are excluded.

As for summer school and/or language students, if they take up a particular (language) course that is outlined as ‘postgraduate degree program’ and the student can earn credits towards their final degree, they should be included under ‘international postgraduate students’.

Summer school and/or language students who take part in a course not contributing to a degree qualification should be counted under 'Total International Students'.

Foreign dual degree students can be included under 'international postgraduate students' if they fulfil above criteria, spend at least three months at the university, earn credits towards their final degree and have the university's name written on their diploma.

International Faculty Index:

The International Faculty Index is simply based on the proportion of faculty members that are international.

Universities based in locations known for attracting high proportions of expatriates perform well here such as those in Hong Kong, Switzerland and UAE.

International Students Index:

Similar in nature to the International Faculty Index, the International Students Index is based on the proportion of students that are international.

This measure has attracted some comment – that perhaps it is not a valid measure of quality – and if we were looking at a much larger catchment of universities that may be accurate, there are certainly institutions beyond the scope of this study for which their international student proportion may indicate a lack of quality. However, the International Students Index, although only carrying a weighting of 5% shows a stronger correlation (with a coefficient of 0.53) than the International Faculty Index.

International Students carries a weight of 5% in the QS World University Rankings®, 2.5% in the QS University Rankings: Asia and is also considered in the internationalization category of QS Stars. In both rankings contexts, international Students is capped at 50%.

Inbound / Outbound Exchange Students:

In many countries in Asia, the principal medium of instruction is not English and as a result many universities their focus their strategies on exchange over recruiting full-time students. In the QS University Rankings: Asia, these two additional indicators have been taken based on the number of students inbound and outbound as a proportion of the student body carrying a weight of 2.5% each and facilitating a picture of internationalization in Asia that embraces a larger number of institutions.

Citations per Faculty

Methodology

Citations, evaluated in some fashion to take into account the size of institution, are the best understood and most widely accepted measure of research strength.

Often calculated on a “per paper” basis, the QS World University Rankings™ has adopted a “per faculty member” approach since its inception in 2004. The Citations per Faculty score contributes 20% to the overall rankings score.

Datasets

For the calculation of this indicator, QS gathers two distinct datasets:

Citations count for the last five years

There are three major sources of publication and citation data worldwide, these are the Web of Science from Thomson Reuters; Scopus from Elsevier and Google Scholar. In the first three years of the QS World University Rankings™, results from the Essential Science Indicators (ESI), a subset of the Web of Science were used. In 2007, the switch was made to Scopus for a number of reasons, but principally due to broader journal coverage leading to results for a larger number of institutions.

A key development in 2011 has been the exclusion of self-citations.

Full Time Equivalent (FTE) faculty

Faculty numbers used are totals... whilst it would be ideal to separate the notions of teaching and research and use the former for calculating the Student Faculty Ratio and the latter for this indicator, it has not been possible to do so as data to that degree of distinction has so far proved unavailable for many countries in the study. The definition of exactly what data we request has evolved gradually over the years to minimize ambiguity.

Scopus

This indicator is calculated using data from [Scopus](#), the world’s largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature, which contains 47 million records and over 19,500 titles from 5,000 publishers worldwide.

Scopus is a rapidly evolving system and that’s why data included in the QS export may differ significantly from the current content of Scopus online.

Many commentators have suggested that, given the accepted validity of citations, this measure should carry a significantly higher weighting than it does. Ultimately, however, this places extremely strong emphasis both on medical and life sciences and on institutions from countries where the principal medium of instruction is English.

Whilst it has its critics, the Academic Reputation Survey places equal emphasis on Arts and Social Sciences as it does on Natural and Life Sciences. This is its great strength and, above all, the reason why it carries such a high weighting.

At time of writing, Scopus is working to add more books to its index, which ought to help in less scientific fields ad QS continue to seek alternative measures to evaluate outputs from lower citing disciplines.

Papers and Citations

Methodology

Papers and Citations, evaluated in some fashion to take into account the size of institution, are the best understood and most widely accepted measure of research strength.

Often calculated on a “per paper” basis, the QS World University Rankings® has adopted a “per faculty member” approach since its inception in 2004. The Citations per Faculty score contributes 20% to the overall rankings score.

World

- Citations per Faculty: 20%

Asia

- Citations per Paper: 15%
- Papers per Faculty: 15%

Latin America

- Citations per Paper: 10%
- Papers per Faculty: 10%

The Regional Approach

However, when devising new methodologies for the regional rankings the matter of language becomes a more important consideration. At a global level, the focus is on institutions that are contributing to knowledge and science at a global scale – publishing in English is an essential part of collaborative academic progress globally.

Part of the intention behind the deeper regional exercises is to evaluate a larger number of institutions – not only those contributing globally, but those who are important regionally, nationally and within their local communities – where publishing in English is not a pre-requisite in the same way.

These two indicators, each in their own way serve to be a little more rewarding to institutions that may publish a significant proportion of their research in other languages.

Papers per Faculty looks at publication volume within Scopus regardless of language (Scopus accepts non-English content as long as there are English language abstracts).

Citations per Paper focuses on the performance of the papers an institution produces that are actually indexed in Scopus – ignoring efforts undertaken resulting in publication in local language journals that may not be covered by Scopus. A publication threshold of 100 papers is applied to eliminate anomalous low numbers of papers from overly benefiting small institutions.

Faculty Student Ratio

Methodology

Student Faculty Ratio is, at present, the only globally comparable and available indicator that has been identified to address the stated objective of evaluating teaching quality. Clearly it is not a satisfactory as a qualitative classroom evaluation as might be considered for a domestic teaching assessment, but it does speak to the notion of “commitment to teaching”, which ought to correlate strongly, if not completely with the level of teaching quality.

World 20%

Asia 20%

Latin America 10%

Datasets

For the calculation of this indicator, QS gathers two distinct datasets:

Full Time Equivalent (FTE) students

QS requests an array of data pertaining to students, much of which supports university profiles on this website, much of which may be used in the future to enrich the rankings metrics, but at present the total student numbers are first drawn from the addition of separate undergraduate and postgraduate numbers supplied to us. Where this data is unavailable or incomplete, total student numbers are used.

Full Time Equivalent (FTE) faculty

Faculty numbers used are totals... whilst it would be ideal to separate the notions of teaching and research and use the former for calculating this indicator and the latter for the Citations per Faculty indicator, it has not been possible to do so as data to that degree of distinction has so far proved unavailable for many countries in the study. The definition of exactly what data we request has evolved gradually over the years to minimize ambiguity.

Data Sources

Student Faculty Ratio is a commonly used measure in many evaluations and rankings around the world. There are countless different ways to do it. In the UK, for example, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), compile the results of a very detailed Student Faculty Ratio, but the underlying data is more sophisticated than that available in many other countries.

QS sources data not only directly from institutions themselves but also from government ministries, agencies such as HESA, web sources and other third-parties. Where possible data are checked against multiple sources to verify their authenticity.

See [Links & Data Sources](#) for more information.

Academic Reputation

Methodology

The Academic Reputation Index is the centrepiece of the QS World University Rankings® carrying a weighting of 40%. It is an approach to international university evaluation that QS pioneered in 2004 and is the component that attracts the greatest interest and scrutiny. In concert with the Employer Reputation Index it is the aspect which sets this ranking most clearly apart from any other.

World 40%

Asia 30%

Latin America 30%

Background

QS World University Rankings® are based in part on hard data and part on factors drawn from two large global surveys – one of academics and another of employers. These are a key characteristic of the QS ranking approach and offer some key benefits.

QS has rejected many **proposed** criteria (e.g. financial metrics like research income) which cannot be independently validated, or are subject to exchange rate and business cycle fluctuations. Instead, our Advisory Board favour maintaining a strong emphasis on peer review, for important reasons:

Geographical/Cultural Diversity

Many evaluations seem based on a US model of what defines excellence in a university. Thus their results are often dominated by English-speaking, comprehensive, large universities with medical schools. A widely distributed pool of academic experts help identify excellence in areas unmapped by other metrics, resulting in institutions from 32 countries appearing in the top 200 in QS' ranking.

Unbiased approach to different subjects

Without peer review, institutions with key strengths in Arts and Social Sciences might be penalised in the rankings simply because they don't publish much research.

Contemporary Relevance

Founded as recently as 1991, HKUST came top in the QS Asian University Rankings in 2011. Nanyang Technological University was also formed in 1991, through merger, and is the top rated university in Asia within the classification of large, multidisciplinary, research intensive institutions without a medical school.

Reduced Language Bias

Respondents to our academic survey identify with research excellence both in English and their native languages, which avoids a bias towards internationally recognised journals published in English.

Statistical Validity

Over 62,000 academic respondents contributed to our 2013 academic results, four times more than in 2010. Independent academic reviews have confirmed these results to be more than 99% reliable.

Resistant to Data Manipulation

The peer review survey results are collected independently and in such numbers so as to become almost impossible to manipulate and very difficult for institutions to 'game'.

Source of Respondents

The results are based on the responses to a survey distributed worldwide academics from a number of different sources:

Previous Respondents

QS has been conducting this work since 2004 – all previous respondents to our survey are invited to respond again to provide us with an updated viewpoint on the quality of universities in their broad field. *In 2014, 1,724 previous respondents returned to revise their response.*

World Scientific

www.worldscientific.com

An academic publishing company headquartered in Singapore, World Scientific publishes about 500 titles a year as well as 120 journals in a variety of fields. World Scientific holds a subscription database well in excess of 300,000 worldwide from which, until 2010, QS drew 180,000 active records. The effectiveness of this channel had dropped off over the years and in 2011 QS chose to redirect and draw on more records from the Mardev lists. Responses from this channel will remain in the sample for at least two years and World Scientific may be drawn upon in the future to fill any specific shortfalls.

Mardev-DM2

The data division of Reed Business Information, Mardev-DM2 is one of the world's leading providers of business information and services. Mardev-DM2 controls access to IBIS (International Book Information Service), a database with over 1.2 million academic and library contacts. *This channel has grown increasingly effective over the years and in 2014 QS drew 200,000 records.*

Academic Signup

In 2010, QS initiated an Academic Signup process to enable the thousands of interested academics we meet each year to actively signal their interest in participation. Volunteers are screened to ensure institutions are not using the signup process to unduly influence the position of their own or rival institutions. *Over 25,000 academics have signed up since the process was launched in February 2010.*

Institution Supplied Lists

Since 2007, institutions have been invited to submit lists of employers for us to invite to participate in the Employer Survey. In 2010, that invitation was extended to lists of academics also. Since academics are not able to submit in favour of their own institution, the risk of bias is minimal, nonetheless submissions are screened and sampling applied where any institution submits more than 400 records. *In 2014, nearly 400 institutions supplied lists contributing over 190,000 additional academic contacts.*

Wherever sampling is required, respondents are selected randomly with a focus on delivering a balanced sample by discipline and geography. Naturally, all databases carry a certain amount of noise and email invitations do get passed on. Responses are screened to remove inappropriate responses prior to analysis.

The Survey

The survey has evolved since 2004 but largely follows the same general principles. Respondents are not asked to comment on the sciences if their expertise is in the arts. Respondents are not asked to comment on Europe if their knowledge is centred on Asia. The survey asks each respondent to specify their knowledge at the outset and then adapts based on their responses, the interactive list from which respondents are invited to select features only entries from their own region.

The survey is broken into the following sections:

Personal Details

Name, Institution, Job Title & Classification, Department, Years in Academia.

Knowledge Specification

Country – respondents are requested to indicate which country they have most familiarity with rather than the country where they are based. This enables new international faculty members to comment on their sphere of knowledge rather than speculate on an area they may yet know little about.

Region – regional knowledge responses are grouped into three supersets that define the list of institutions from which the respondent can select, these are Americas; Asia, Australia & New Zealand; and Europe, Middle East & Africa

Faculty Area – respondents are asked to select one or more faculty areas in which they consider their expertise to lie. These are Arts & Humanities; Engineering & Technology; Life Sciences & Medicine; Natural Sciences; and Social Sciences. Sections 3 and 4 below are repeated for each faculty area selected.

Field – respondents are asked to select up to two specific fields that best define their academic expertise

Top Domestic Institutions

Respondents are asked to identify up to ten domestic institutions they consider best for research in each of the faculty areas selected in Section 2. Their own institution, if it would otherwise be included, is excluded from the presented list.

Top International Institutions

Respondents are asked to identify up to thirty international institutions they consider best for research in each of the faculty areas selected in Section 2. Their own institution, if it would otherwise be included, is excluded from the presented list. The list consists solely of institutions from the region(s) with which they express familiarity in section 2.

Additional Information

We use this section to gather additional information from respondents, such as feedback on previous publications and the importance of various measures in evaluating universities.

Response Processing

The work is not done once the survey is designed and delivered. Once the responses are received a number of steps are taken to ensure the validity of the sample.

Three Year Aggregation

To boost the size and stability of the sample, QS combines responses from the last three years, where any respondent has responded more than once in the three year period, previous responses are discarded in favour of the latest numbers.

Junk Filtering

Any online survey will receive a volume of test or speculative responses. QS runs an extensive filtering process to identify and discard responses of this nature.

Anomaly Testing

It is well documented on the basis of other high-profile surveys in higher education that universities are not above attempting to get respondents to answer in a certain fashion. QS run a number of processes to screen for any manipulation of survey responses. If evidence is found to suggest any institution has attempted to overtly influence their performance, any responses acquired through sources 4 and 5 (above) are discarded.

Results Analysis

Once the responses have all been processed, the fun really begins and it works as follows for each of our five subject areas:

1. Devise weightings based on the regions with which respondents consider themselves familiar – weightings are (now) based only on completed responses for the given question. This is slightly complicated by the fact that respondents are able to relate to more than one region.
2. Derive a weighted count of international respondents in favour of each institution ensuring any self-references are excluded.
3. Derive a count of domestic respondents in favour of each institution adjusted against the number of institutions available for selection in that country and the total response from that country ensuring any self-references are excluded.
4. Apply a straight scaling to each of these to achieve a score out of 100.
5. Combine the two scores with a weighting 85% international, 15% domestic – these numbers were based on analysis of responses received before we separated the domestic and international responses three years ago, but a low weighting for domestic also reflects the fact that this is a **world** university ranking. We use 70:30 for the employer review.
6. Square root the result – we do this to draw in the outliers but to a lesser degree than other methods might achieve – our intention is that excellence in one of our five areas should have an influence, but not too much of influence.
7. Scale the rooted score to present a score out of 100 for the given faculty area.
8. Combine the five totals with equal weighting to result in a final score which will then be standardized relative to the sample of institutions being used in any given context.

Employer Reputation

Methodology

The Employer Reputation component is unique amongst current international evaluations in taking into consideration the important component of employability. The majority of undergraduate students leave university in search of employment after their first degree, making the reputation of their university amongst employers a crucial consideration.

World 10%

Asia 10%

Latin America 20%

Background

A common approach to the evaluation of employability in domestic rankings is graduate employment rate, there are two reasons why this indicator does not work at an international level – the first is that this evaluation looks at the top universities in the world – all of whom have very high employment rates – so it doesn't provide very much discernment. The second is that, since we are looking at different countries, the results would react to local economic conditions and not necessarily just the quality of the institution. So, instead, we survey employers to ask their opinion on the quality of graduates.

Source of Respondents

The results are based on the responses to a survey distributed worldwide academics from a number of different sources:

Previous Respondents

QS has been conducting this work since 2004 – all previous respondents to our survey are invited to respond again to provide us with an updated viewpoint on the quality of universities in their broad field.

QS Databases

In twenty years of operation QS has developed an extensive database of employers in key markets worldwide

QS Partners

QS has an extensive network of partners including international media organisations and job portals, number of whom support our employer research by distributing survey invitations

Institution Supplied Lists

Since 2007, institutions have been invited to submit lists of employers for us to invite to participate in the Employer Survey. In 2010, that invitation was extended to lists of academics also. Since employers are encouraged to list a number of institutions, the risk of bias towards the submitting institution is minimal, nonetheless submissions are screened and sampling applied where any institution submits more than 400 records.

The Survey

The QS Employer Survey has been running since 1990 and contributes to a number of key research initiatives operated by the QS Intelligence Unit including the QS TopMBA Salary & Recruitment Trends Report and the TopMBA Global 200 Business Schools. Like the academic survey the

questionnaire is adaptive responding to the early questions to take respondents through the MBA, Masters or First Degree tracks as appropriate.

The key sections for the Rankings work as follows:

Personal Details

Name, Company, Job Title, Industry, Department, Extent of recruitment responsibilities.

Knowledge Specification

Country – respondents are requested to indicate which country they have most familiarity with rather than the country where they are based. This enables new international faculty members to comment on their sphere of knowledge rather than speculate on an area they may yet know little about.

Region – regional knowledge responses are grouped into three supersets that define the list of institutions from which the respondent can select, these are Americas; Asia, Australia & New Zealand; and Europe, Middle East & Africa

Faculty Area – respondents are asked to select one or more faculty areas in which they consider their expertise to lie. These are Arts & Humanities; Engineering & Technology; Life Sciences & Medicine; Natural Sciences; and Social Sciences. Sections 3 and 4 below are repeated for each faculty area selected.

Field – respondents are asked to select up to two specific fields that best define their academic expertise

Top Domestic Institutions

Respondents are asked to identify up to ten domestic institutions they consider best for recruiting graduates.

Top International Institutions

Respondents are asked to identify up to thirty international institutions they consider best for recruiting graduates. The list consists solely of institutions from the region(s) with which they express familiarity in section 2.

Additional Information

We use this section to gather additional information from respondents, such as feedback on previous publications and the importance of various measures in evaluating universities.

Response Processing

The work is not done once the survey is designed and delivered. Once the responses are received a number of steps are taken to ensure the validity of the sample.

Three Year Aggregation

To boost the size and stability of the sample, QS combines responses from the last three years, where any respondent has responded more than once in the three year period, previous responses are discarded in favour of the latest numbers.

Junk Filtering

Any online survey will receive a volume of test or speculative responses. QS runs an extensive filtering process to identify and discard responses of this nature.

Anomaly Testing

It is well documented on the basis of other high-profile surveys in higher education that universities are not above attempting to get respondents to answer in a certain fashion. QS run a number of processes to screen for any manipulation of survey responses. If evidence is found to suggest any institution has attempted to overtly influence their performance, any responses acquired through sources 4 and 5 (above) are discarded.

Results Analysis

Once the responses have all been processed, the fun really begins and it works as follows for each of our five subject areas:

- 1.** Devise weightings based on the regions with which respondents consider themselves familiar – weightings are (now) based only on completed responses for the given question. This is slightly complicated by the fact that respondents are able to relate to more than one region.
- 2.** Derive a weighted count of international respondents in favour of each institution ensuring any self-references are excluded.
- 3.** Derive a count of domestic respondents in favour of each institution adjusted against the number of institutions available for selection in that country and the total response from that country ensuring any self-references are excluded.
- 4.** Apply a straight scaling to each of these to achieve a score out of 100.
- 5.** Combine the two scores with a weighting 70% international, 30% domestic – these numbers were based on analysis of responses received before we separated the domestic and international responses three years ago, but a low weighting for domestic also reflects the fact that this is a **world** university ranking. We use 85:15 for the academic review.
- 6.** Square root the result – we do this to draw in the outliers but to a lesser degree than other methods might achieve – our intention is that excellence in one of our five areas should have an influence, but not too much of influence.
- 7.** Scale the rooted score to present a score out of 100 for the given faculty area.

Links and Data Sources

Worldwide Sources of Data on Higher Education

The QS Intelligence Unit draws on a wide variety of data sources to gather and verify all the information needed to compile university rankings and other evaluations. If there are additional sources worth looking at please let us know.

Data Source

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Ministry of Education www.en.moe.go.th

Commission on Higher Education www.inter.mua.go.th/main2/index.php

National Statistical Office of Thailand web.nso.go.th

Domestic Rankings

National Rankings & Evaluations

Whilst the methodologies of different rankings vary greatly, the QS Intelligence Unit frequently refers to domestic rankings of universities to assess whether certain institutions merit inclusion in the international tables and, in some cases to evaluate the effectiveness of the international methodologies to reflect the domestic understanding of the relative performance of institutions.

Ministry of Higher Education Ranking (Thailand)

International Rankings

International Rankings & Evaluations

The QS Intelligence Unit frequently and routinely benchmarks and runs correlation analysis between its rankings and the results of other international evaluations.

- [QS World University Rankings](#)
- [QS University Rankings: Asia](#)
- [QS University Rankings: Latin America](#)
- [QS World University Rankings by Subject](#)
- [QS Best Student Cities](#)

Other rankings

- [Academic Ranking of World Universities](#) (Shanghai Ranking Consultancy; ARWU)
- Asia's Best Universities (Asia Week) – discontinued in 2000
- [CHE-Excellence Ranking](#) (CHE)
- [Global University City Index](#) – discontinued in 2010
- [Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for World Universities](#) (Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan)
- [The Financial Times Business School Rankings](#)

- [International Professional Ranking of Higher Education Institutions](#)(Mines ParisTech)
- [Ranking Web of World Universities](#) (Webometrics)
- [University Ranking of Academic Performance](#)
- [Scimago Institutions Ranking](#)
- [Leiden Ranking](#)
- High Impact Universities (In affiliation with the University of Western Australia) – discontinued in 2011
- [Times Higher Education World University Rankings](#)
- [U-Multirank](#) (CHERPA alliance supported by European Commission)

Policy and Conditions

Inclusion in Rankings

QS World University Rankings® first began in 2004 and one of the first challenges was to identify an initial list of institutions to study further. For simple practical reasons, it would have been impossible to execute a methodology such as that set forth in these pages for every university in the world. At a UNESCO event in 2011 it was estimated that there are around 20,000 universities in the world. Beginning with the world's top 500 universities based on citations per paper, the list has evolved since 2004 in response to a number of stimuli:

- **Domestic Ranking Performance** – the QS Intelligence Unit tracks a growing number of domestic rankings in an attempt to ensure prestigious universities are not excluded
- **Survey Performance** – respondents to the Academic and Employer Reputation Surveys are invited to suggest any institutions they feel may have been omitted
- **Geographical Balancing** – acknowledging that universities have different priorities and characteristics in different parts of the world, the balance of institutions from given countries and regions is periodically reviewed
- **Direct Case Submission** – from time to time institutions approach QS directly to request inclusion, QSIU evaluates each case on its merits drawing comparison against institutions already included in the ranking and, subject to certain pre-requisites and performance indicators being met is open to including additional institutions

In 2012 the surveys featured over 3,000 institutions, with over 700 being evaluated at either an indicator or overall level in the QS World University Rankings®.

We recognise that higher education institutions can be very different from one another, but maintain that there is validity in comparing one against another as they usually have a certain number of common objectives – for most these include the pursuit of cutting-edge research and the education of first-rate students. There are certain kinds of institution that may appear in other evaluations but are excluded either entirely or partly from our study. These are:

Research Institutes

Whilst this study does look at research metrics it was considered inappropriate to include research institutes that do not have students. Notable exclusions on this basis include CERN in Switzerland, CNRS in France, the Max Planck Institute in Germany and the Russian Academy of Sciences. It is worth noting that, in countries where much of the research takes place in such separate facilities, the research measures for the universities themselves sometimes underestimate the research strength of the faculty members.

Single Faculty Institutions

Institutions that focus on only one of our five broad faculty areas tend to be smaller and more intensive and also feel the full influence of any factors that affect their area of strength. These institutions are able to appear in faculty area and indicator tables but are excluded from our overall list. Notable cases, include the Karolinska Institute in Sweden, HEC Paris, and Bocconi in Italy.

Single Level Institutions

Institutions that operate at either undergraduate only, or more commonly postgraduate only level have certain natural advantages in areas such as student faculty ratio or citations per faculty that would lead to anomalous placing in our overall table. Again these are permitted to appear in faculty

area or indicator tables, but are excluded from the aggregate list. Notable exclusions include Cranfield University in the UK, GIST (Gwangju Institute of Science & Technology) in South Korea and Jawaharlal Nehru University in India.

Institutions traditionally operating at one level, but recently introducing degree-level programs at the other, can be considered for inclusion a minimum of three years after the first class graduate from programs defined as within at least two of our five broad faculty areas.

Survey Solicitation or Promotion

It is not permitted to independently promote participation in QS surveys, nor to solicit or coach specific responses from expected respondents to any survey contributing to any QS ranking. Should the QS Intelligence Unit receive evidence of such activity occurring, institutions will receive one written warning, after which responses to that survey on behalf of the subject institution may be excluded altogether for the year in question.

QS aims to provide an inclusive and accurate ranking, but in cases of recurrent activity of this nature will first apply a score penalty to the survey index in question and may consider disqualifying an institution from the ranking altogether. QS runs sophisticated screening analysis to detect anomalous patterns in response and routinely discards invalid responses, any attempt to manipulate the results or to solicit responses, may result in the disqualification of all responses for that survey for that year, invalid or otherwise, where the source cannot be verified as entirely independent.

The above policy takes effect from April 2013, before which time the stated policy was as follows:

It is not permitted, to solicit or coach specific responses from expected respondents to any survey contributing to any QS ranking. Should the QS Intelligence Unit receive evidence of such activity occurring, institutions will receive one written warning, after which responses to that survey on behalf of the subject institution may be excluded altogether for the year in question.

It is acceptable and even encouraged for institutions to communicate with employers and academics worldwide to showcase their achievements. Institutions are welcome to invite contacts to sign up for possible selection for our survey using our [Academic](#) or [Employer](#) Sign Up Facilities, but any message soliciting a specific response in our surveys, represents unfair manipulation of the results and will not be tolerated.

False Responses

In an attempt to build the largest and most representative sample for its surveys, QSIU casts the net as wide as possible, but extensive checking and validating of response data takes place to check for the possibility of institutions attempting to influence their position through submitting additional responses on their own behalf.

As policy, not only are responses found to be invalid discounted from consideration but any institution found to be engaging in such activity will attract a further penalty in the compilation of results for the given indicator.