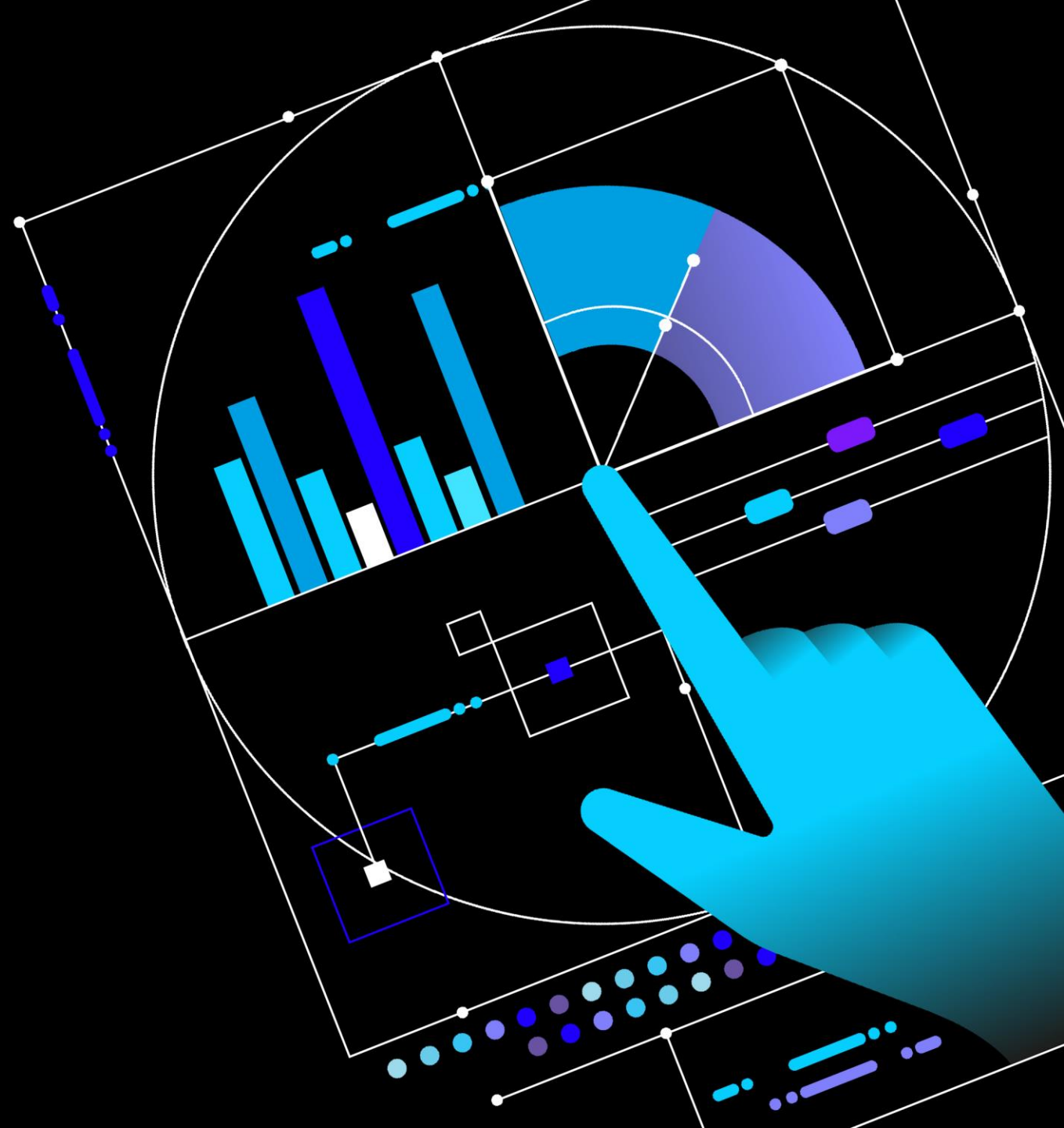**THE** World University Rankings 2025

Q&A
The 2025 World University Rankings Masterclass: UK

Duncan Ross
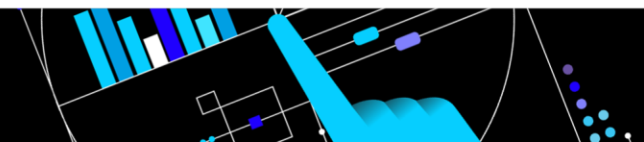Chief data officer
Times Higher Education

Q&A

Q: When you say 1,000 academic publications for participation, I presume this is judged by what is indexed in the database used (Scopus), and not based on an institutions repository?

A: Yes, that's correct. The count of 1,000 academic publications for participation in the World University Rankings is based on what is indexed in the Scopus database. The publications considered are specific types: journal articles, article reviews, conference proceedings, books, and book chapters. Publications from an institution's repository would only contribute to this count if they are also indexed in Scopus. It's important for institutions to ensure that their publications are accurately attributed in the Scopus database to be counted towards the eligibility criteria for the rankings.

Q: How do you select academics who participate in the academic survey?

A: Academics are selected to participate in the survey based on their active publication record and citation history. To be considered, they must have published work within the last few years and have at least one citation in an academic paper. The selection process does not include a nomination system where individuals or institutions can nominate others. Instead, participants are chosen from an in-house academic contact database that contains several million verified academic contacts. This database is regularly updated to ensure that invitations are sent only to those whose contact details have been verified within the last six months.
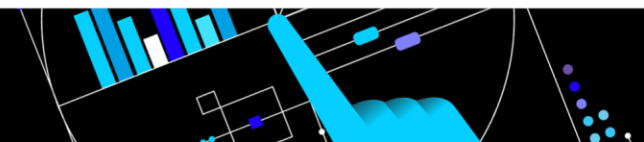
Q&A

Q: I have a questions regarding the period for which bibliometrics are taken for this edition.

A: For the World University Rankings 2025, the bibliometric data considered includes publications from institutions from the 1st of January 2019 to the 31st of December 2023. Citations to these publications are also taken into account from the 1st of January 2019 to the 1st of June 2024. The data snapshot used for the rankings is captured on the 1st of June 2024, which reflects the most up-to-date information available from Elsevier's Scopus database at that time. Keep in mind that Elsevier continuously indexes papers, so the data is not static and may change up until the snapshot date.

Q: PGR FTE is no longer mandatory/collected by HESA. How will this impact the SSR and DSR measures for UK institutes? Will you expect this information to be submitted by institutes instead?

A: We are currently in discussion with HESA to assess how the absence of the Postgraduate Research (PGR) Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collection will affect our data collection and the ranking production. It may be necessary for UK institutions to provide this information directly if it is not collected by HESA.

Q&A

Q: Please explain how the weighting figures were chosen
A: The process of determining these weights may involve consultation with experts, analysis of data, and consideration of the goals and values of the ranking system. The aim is to create a balanced and nuanced evaluation that accurately reflects the multifaceted nature of higher education institutions. We also were careful to assign equal weights to the three data sources underpinning the ranking: academic reputation, bibliometrics and institutional data.
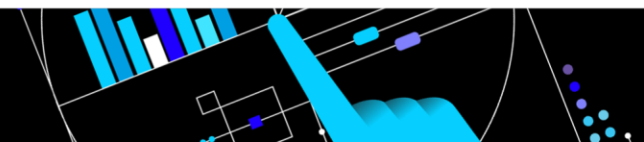
Q&A

Q: It is very difficult to comprehend your claim of India showing highest improvement in the change in the Average change in the quality of Research for Indian Publication. If one examines value of any quality parameters including FWCI/CNCI, Number of Citations per paper, % of papers published in top 1% 0r 10% journals, India's performance is very low compared to China or USA

A: It's important to note that improvements in research quality can be measured in various ways, and it's possible for a country to show significant improvement even if its absolute performance metrics, remain lower compared to countries like China or the USA.

Q: What plans (if any) do you have to amend the Methodology? For example, new metrics and/or a change of weightings.

A: There are no immediate plans to amend the methodology with new metrics or change the weightings. However, any updates or changes to the methodology will be communicated in due course. We may look at the introduction of the Studying abroad metric, for instance.
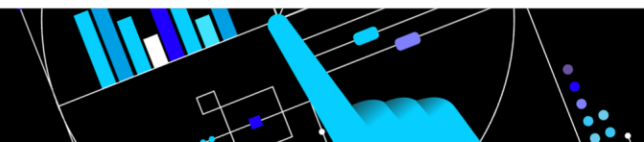
Q&A

Q: In an ideal world (ignore cost or the challenge of data gathering), what metrics would you introduce? For example, an "Added Value" metric?
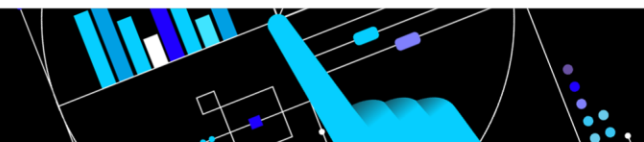
A: In an ideal world, an "Added Value" metric would be an excellent addition to university rankings. This metric would measure the improvement in skills, knowledge, and employability of students from entry to graduation. It would require tracking individual student progress through standardized testing and employment outcomes. However, this may prove difficult to implement on a global scale.
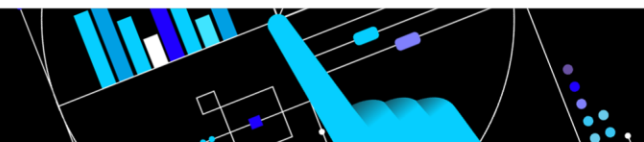
Q&A

Q: How does a new HE provider break into the reputation measure?! Seems like an unfair advantage for established universities.

A: Breaking into the reputation measure as a new higher education provider can indeed be challenging, as established universities often have the advantage of historical prestige and recognition. However, there are strategies that new institutions can adopt to build their reputation over time. Focusing on niche areas of excellence, investing in high-quality research, and fostering a strong teaching environment can gradually enhance an institution's profile. Engaging in international collaborations and producing research that gains citations can also contribute to improving reputation. Additionally, encouraging academic staff to participate in global surveys and share their expertise can help increase visibility. It's important to note that reputation is built over time through consistent performance and contributions to the academic community. While it may take longer for newer institutions to gain recognition, a dedicated approach to excellence in teaching, research, and internationalization can help bridge the gap.
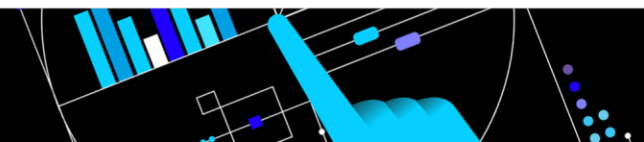
Q&A

Q: How do you decide on the sample of academics to include in the reputation survey - for example, I meet those criteria, so why am I not asked over others?
A: The selection of academics for the reputation survey is based on specific criteria to ensure that only active, cited academics are invited to participate. Academics are chosen from an in-house academic contact database that includes several million verified contacts. To be selected, an academic must have actively published in recent years and have at least one citation in an academic paper. The database is regularly updated, and contacts are verified every six months to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the information.

If you meet these criteria but have not been invited, it could be due to various reasons. It might be that your contact details are not up to date in the database, or perhaps you have been inadvertently overlooked in the selection process. However, the selection process is designed to be comprehensive and representative, and the database is continually being refined to include a wide range of qualified academics for future surveys.
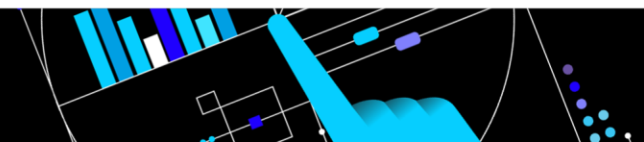
Q&A

Q: Can you publish your detailed data harmonization method for the survey?

A: More information on the Academic Reputation Survey methodology can be found at https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/world-reputation-rankings-2023-methodology.

Q: Which journals have been discontinued?
A: To see the list of journals that have been discontinued from Scopus, you can visit the Elsevier website at https://www.elsevier.com/en-gb/products/scopus/content. There, you should scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on the 'Download the Source title list'. This will allow you to download the list in Excel format. The list is updated annually, so it's important to check for the most recent version to get accurate information on which journals have been discontinued.

Q&A

Q: For 'discontinued journals', do you exclude all data and years from the ranking, or ONLY the years that Elsevier stopped/didn't index the journal? Journals can be discontinued for a year or two, but could then be reintroduced to the database if indexing criteria has been met again. Thanks

A: For 'discontinued journals', all publications from those journals are excluded from the ranking calculations, regardless of the year they were published. This means that even if a journal was indexed by Scopus during certain years, if it is later classified as a discontinued source, none of its publications, including those from the years when it was actively indexed, are considered for the World University Rankings.

Q: How do you weight the four citation metrics to calculate your research score? e.g. FWCI = 0.5, strength = 0.3, etc etc?
A: The weighting of the four citation metrics in the research score calculation under the WUR 3.0 methodology is as follows:

- C1 citation impact: 15%   - C2 research strength: 5%

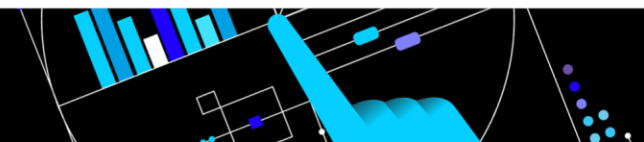- C3 research excellence: 5%   - C4 research influence: 5%
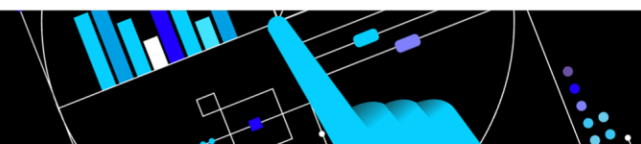
Q&A

Q: Good afternoon . Greetings from National University of Medical Sciences, Pakistan. Session. Can you share the list of "discontinued Journals"?

A: To see the list of journals that have been discontinued from Scopus, you can visit the Elsevier website at https://www.elsevier.com/en-gb/products/scopus/content. There, you should scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on the 'Download the Source title list'. This will allow you to download the list in Excel format. The list is updated annually, so it's important to check for the most recent version to get accurate information on which journals have been discontinued.

Q: The reason I ask is that there are objective methods for generating weights from the data, rather than subjective choices of people. e.g. The Automatic Democratic Method

A: The process of determining these weights may involve consultation with experts, analysis of data, and consideration of the goals and values of the ranking system. The aim is to create a balanced and nuanced evaluation that accurately reflects the multifaceted nature of higher education institutions. We also were careful to assign equal weights to the three data sources underpinning the ranking: academic reputation, bibliometrics and institutional data.

Q&A

Q: thank you for the session. For the academic reputation survey, do you ask universities to send an email to their contacts in November or do you email directly to university academics?

A: For the Academic Reputation Survey, the invitations are sent directly to university academics by THE (Times Higher Education). The staff at universities are encouraged to check their inboxes and spam folders for the invitation from surveys@timeshighereducationsurvey.com. Universities are also advised to inform their IT departments to whitelist this email address and the corresponding IP to ensure that the survey invitations are received. However, universities themselves do not send the emails to their contacts; the process is managed by THE to maintain the integrity and confidentiality of the survey process.

Q: Please provide a table of tariffs for your Consultancy.
A: Please contact consultancy@timeshighereducation.com for more information.
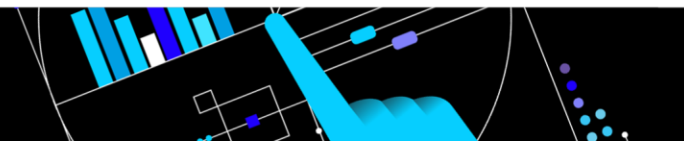
Q&A

Q: There is a growing concern that measurement of research outputs (i.e. academic papers) for the REF includes many examples of multiple counting. Does this in effect diminish the value of high-ranked universities in the UK specifically? the underlying question is - can such ranking(s) be taken seriously?

A: The concerns about multiple counting of research outputs, such as academic papers, in assessments like the Research Excellence Framework (REF) do raise important questions about the accuracy and fairness of university rankings. Multiple counting can potentially inflate the research output figures for certain institutions, which may not accurately reflect the true research performance or influence of a university. This could indeed affect the perceived value of high-ranked universities if their position is bolstered by such practices.

However, it's important to note that reputable ranking systems often employ methodologies designed to mitigate the impact of multiple counting. For example, some rankings use fractional counting for papers with a large number of authors or adjust the weight of citations based on the number of contributors. These measures aim to provide a more balanced and representative view of an institution's research impact.

While no ranking system is perfect, and all have their limitations, they can still be taken seriously if their methodologies are transparent, robust, and continuously refined to address concerns such as multiple counting. It is also crucial for users of these rankings to understand the methodologies employed and to consider multiple sources of information when evaluating the quality and reputation of universities.
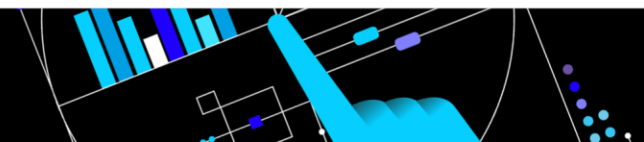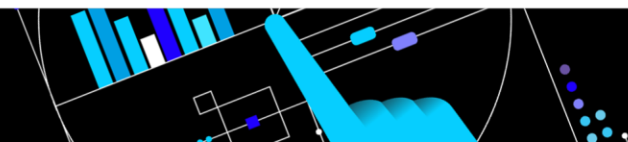
Q&A

Q: Will any World Ranking always be more weighted towards English speaking/ Anglophone countries due to research being published in English being more accessible / more likely to be cited. And English being more commonly studied so more international opportunities for study etc. Is there a 'Western' bias?

A: The issue of potential bias in world university rankings towards English-speaking or Anglophone countries is a complex one. It is true that research published in English tends to be more accessible and may be more likely to be cited, which can influence citation-based metrics in rankings. Additionally, English as a commonly studied language can indeed lead to more international opportunities for study and collaboration, potentially affecting metrics related to international outlook.

However, rankings organizations are aware of these potential biases and often take steps to mitigate them. For example, bibliometric databases like Scopus require journals to have English language abstracts and titles to be indexed, which allows for the inclusion of non-English publications while maintaining searchability. Moreover, rankings may use normalization techniques to account for differences in citation practices across disciplines and regions.

While efforts are made to create a more level playing field, it is important to recognize that no ranking system is perfect, and inherent biases may still exist. It is advisable for users of rankings to consider the methodologies used and to interpret the results with an understanding of these potential limitations.

Q&A

Q: Given the comprehensive nature of WUR (World University Rankings) performance analysis, particularly the importance of reputation votes and metric benchmarking, how do you recommend aligning strategic recommendations with real-time performance data to ensure continuous improvement in both research and teaching reputation?

A: To align strategic recommendations with real-time performance data for continuous improvement in research and teaching reputation, universities should focus on a multi-faceted approach. Firstly, they should actively engage with their academic community to encourage high-quality research outputs and collaborations that can lead to publications in top-tier journals, thus enhancing research reputation. This includes fostering an environment that supports innovative research and provides the necessary resources and infrastructure.

Secondly, institutions should prioritize teaching excellence by investing in faculty development, incorporating modern pedagogical techniques, and ensuring that the curriculum is current and aligned with industry needs. This will improve the learning experience and outcomes for students, which can positively influence teaching reputation.

Additionally, universities should regularly analyze performance metrics from rankings to identify areas of strength and weakness. By doing so, they can tailor their strategies to bolster their performance in specific indicators, such as citation impact or international collaboration.
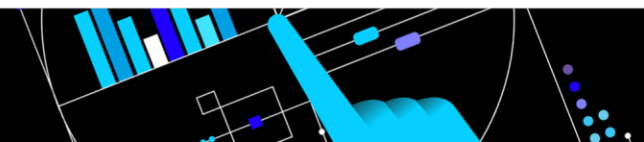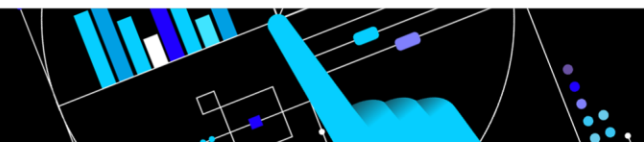
Q&A

Q: How can an academics from the US evaluate the teaching reputation of a less known UK institution? I presume you have a nice set of survey questions to address that. Can you share? Or, UK institutions are only evaluated by academics based in the UK?

A: Academics from the US, as well as from other parts of the world, can evaluate the teaching reputation of a less known UK institution through the Global Academic Reputation Survey. The survey is designed to capture the perceptions of experienced, published scholars regarding excellence in higher education globally. It is not limited to academics based in the UK; rather, it invites input from academics worldwide, ensuring a diverse and comprehensive assessment of institutions' reputations in both research and teaching.

The survey asks respondents to vote for institutions they believe are the best for research and teaching, regardless of their location. Academics are asked to identify their field of expertise and then select the institutions they consider the best in teaching or research within that field. This process allows for a broad range of institutions to be evaluated, including less known ones, by scholars who may recognize their strengths based on various factors such as interdisciplinary research, academic publications, or collaborative projects.
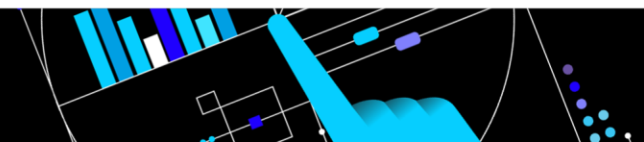
Q&A

Q: This all feels like it's feeding into developing universities into homogenous corporate entities. Is there anything in the ranking rubric about how it links into local disadvantaged communities, how it attracts and supports under-represented groups?

A: The World University Rankings methodology primarily focuses on indicators related to teaching, research, citations, international outlook, and industry income. While these indicators provide a broad assessment of a university's performance, they do not directly measure engagement with local disadvantaged communities or efforts to attract and support under-represented groups.

However, universities' social engagement and diversity initiatives are increasingly recognized as important aspects of their overall contribution to society. While these factors may not be explicitly included in the ranking rubric, universities often report on their community engagement and diversity efforts through other channels, such as sustainability reports, social impact assessments, and diversity statistics.

Universities that actively work with local communities and support under-represented groups may also demonstrate strong performance in related ranking indicators, such as teaching quality and international outlook, by fostering an inclusive and diverse academic environment. Nonetheless, the specific assessment of community engagement and support for under-represented groups would require additional metrics that are not currently a part of the World University Rankings methodology.
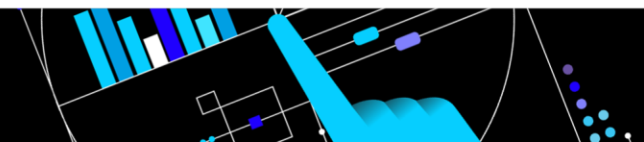
Q&A

Q: How is the internal separation managed within the Times Higher organisation so that you ensure that there are no incentives for you to influence the ranking results, - I worry about the consultancy services where you need to show that your work has had an impact.

A: The Times Higher Education (THE) takes the integrity of its World University Rankings very seriously and has established clear protocols to manage internal separation and prevent conflicts of interest. The data collection process is rigorous, with a named representative from each institution submitting and authorizing their data, ensuring that the institution itself is accountable for the accuracy of the information provided. Additionally, THE does not self-submit data without confirmation from the institution's representative.

THE also applies a self-voting cap in its Academic Reputation Survey to limit the impact of self-voting, ensuring that it accounts for no more than 10% of the total votes for any institution. This helps to mitigate any potential bias that could arise from excessive self-voting.

Overall, these measures are designed to maintain the credibility of the rankings and demonstrate that THE's consultancy services do not influence the ranking outcomes. The organization's commitment to transparency and methodological rigor helps to alleviate concerns about the potential for conflicts of interest.

Q&A

Q: Its not clear to me if you get data from HESA or not. Do we need to supply you data that you could get from HESA? Do you then check this against HESA - is that your approach?

A: UK universities do not need to take action for most of the data required for the World University Rankings, as this information is sourced directly from HESA. The data obtained from HESA will be uploaded into the THE Data Collection Portal, and UK universities will be contacted in early March to verify and amend the data if necessary. However, UK institutions are required to submit their own data regarding interdisciplinary research science for the rankings, as this specific data is not collected by HESA. It is important for UK universities to provide this additional information to ensure their participation in the rankings.
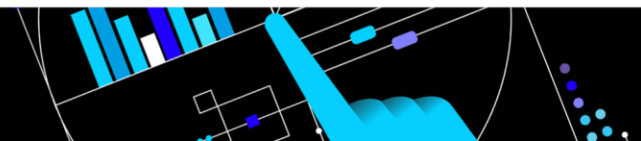
Q&A

Q: Elsevier is heavily biased towards STEM publications and Anglo-Saxon publications. How do you adjust for this bias?

A: The methodology for rankings such as the THE World University Rankings takes into account various factors to mitigate biases, including those related to field and language. For instance, the use of bibliometric indicators like the Field-Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI) allows for comparison across different subject areas by normalizing citation counts based on the average for the subject field, publication year, and document type. This helps to adjust for the fact that citation practices vary widely between disciplines.

Additionally, while Scopus does require English abstracts and titles for indexing, which could be seen as a bias towards English-language publications, this requirement is primarily to ensure that research is accessible to an international audience, which is a key aspect of academic communication. Scopus also indexes non-English publications, provided they have English abstracts and titles, which helps to include a broader range of research outputs.
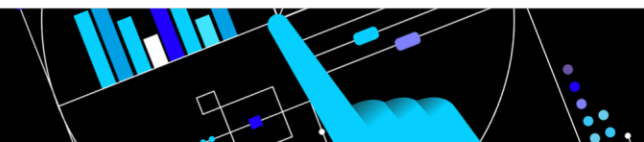
Q&A

Q: What do you suggest UK universities do to improve ranking in the industry income metric.

A: To improve their ranking in the industry income metric, UK universities should focus on strengthening their partnerships with businesses and industry. This can be achieved by actively engaging in collaborative research projects, offering consultancy services, and developing innovations that have commercial potential. Universities should also consider establishing dedicated technology transfer offices to facilitate the commercialization of research findings and manage intellectual property effectively.

Finally, universities should ensure that their research aligns with the strategic priorities of potential industry partners, including addressing global challenges and emerging technological trends, which can increase the likelihood of securing industry funding.
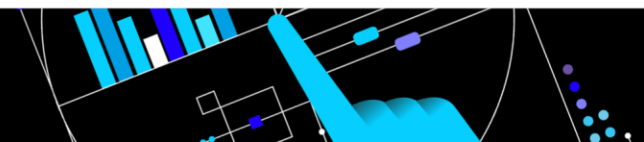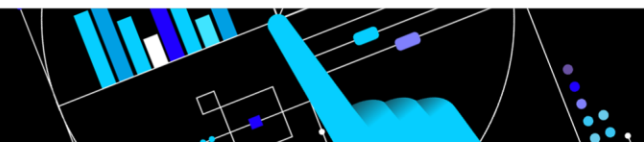
Q&A

Q: "How objective is the data analysed for ranking? Is there a 3rd party validation to eliminate element of biases?

A: The data analyzed for the rankings is collected from a variety of sources, including institutional data self-submitted by universities and bibliometric data supplied by Elsevier. The institutional data undergoes automatic validation checks for completeness and accuracy before submission, and the bibliometric data is based on citations to a vast number of publications. While efforts are made to ensure the data's accuracy and fairness, like any ranking system, there are inherent limitation.

One limitation is the reliance on self-reported data from institutions, which can vary in quality and may be influenced by the institutions' understanding and interpretation of the data collection guidelines. Additionally, the use of bibliometric data, while extensive, may not fully capture the impact and quality of research across all disciplines equally. The rankings also do not apply differential weightings based on the respondent's seniority or position in the reputation survey, which could affect the perceived objectivity of the results.
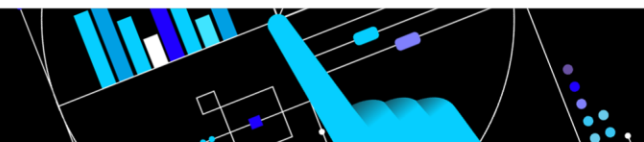
There is no explicit mention of third-party validation for the entire ranking process, which means that while there are internal checks and balances, external verification to eliminate biases is not specified. The methodology does include measures to address data gaps and inconsistencies, but as with any complex data-driven exercise, complete objectivity cannot be guaranteed, and there may be elements of bias that are difficult to fully eliminate.

Q&A

Q: Some global and domestic league tables now absorb sustainability league table performance into their main overall ranking. Will THE Impact feature as a metric in THE WUR in the near future?

A: There are no current plans to incorporate THE Impact Rankings as a metric in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE WUR). The THE Impact Rankings are a separate initiative that assesses universities against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While sustainability is an increasingly important topic in higher education, the methodology for THE WUR, which focuses on areas such as teaching, research, citations, international outlook, and industry income, remains distinct from the criteria used in the Impact Rankings.
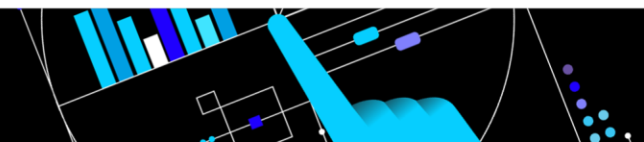
Q&A

Q: How are the criteria normalised before weights are applied? Different normalisations lead to different rankings.

A: The normalization of criteria before weights are applied in rankings is a crucial step to ensure comparability across diverse data points. For most metrics, a version of Z-scoring is used, which involves calculating a cumulative probability function for each indicator. This method assesses where an institution's indicator value falls within the overall distribution of that particular metric.

However, for certain metrics such as the Academic Reputation Survey, Research Excellence, Research Influence, and Patents, an exponential component is necessary due to the distribution of the data. This approach adjusts for the varying scales and distributions of the different indicators, allowing for a fair comparison between institutions.

For the Patents metric, the count of patents citing an entity's published research is subject-weighted and normalized by the sum of academic and research staff. This normalization process is designed to account for differences in research fields and the size of the institution's academic staff.

Overall, these normalization techniques are applied to ensure that the ranking process is equitable and that institutions are evaluated on a comparable basis before the application of weights to the different criteria. More information on the normalization and methodology can be found at https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/world-university-rankings-2025-methodology.

Q&A

Q: As an Asian University and the University in the developing country, we are strugling to pay for the publications. Therefore, It control the publications in the ScienceDirect indexed journals. But we already published more than 1000 research publication. Is there any way to account then to be considered into the rankings?

A: If your university has published over 1,000 research publications, it is important to ensure that these publications are indexed in Elsevier's Scopus database, as this is the source from which THE (Times Higher Education) retrieves publication and citation data for their rankings. You do not need to submit data about your publications directly to THE, but you should verify that your publications are correctly attributed to your institution's Scopus profile.

To improve the visibility and accuracy of your publications in Scopus, you can check your institution's profile for completeness and correctness. If you have access to Scopus or the Scopus Institution Profile Wizard, you can provide feedback to Elsevier to ensure your profile is accurate. It is also crucial to make sure that your publications are not in Scopus suspended journals, as these are not considered in the rankings.
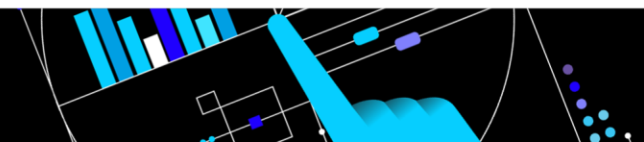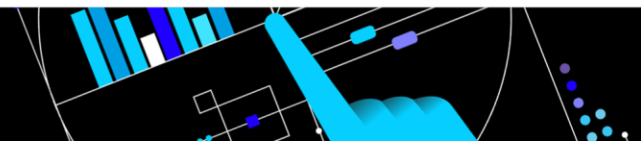
Q&A

Q: As this is our first time exploring this endeavor, could you please provide a typical price range for THE Consultancy service?

A: Please contact consultancy@timeshighereducation.com for more information.

Q: Open access journals are becoming increasingly important, are data included in the calculation process?

A: Open access journals are indeed an important part of the scholarly communication landscape. In the context of bibliometric analyses and rankings, data from open access journals are typically included in the calculation process if the journals are indexed in the relevant databases used for the analysis. For instance, if open access journals are indexed in Scopus, their data would be considered in the metrics that rely on Scopus data, such as those used in certain university rankings or bibliometric evaluations. It is important for institutions to ensure that their publications in open access journals are accurately indexed and attributed in these databases to be reflected in the analysis.

Q&A

Q: How can THE be certain that invites to academic surveys are getting through to invitees, due to whitelisting and strict IT email policies?

A: THE takes several measures to ensure that survey invitations reach the intended academic invitees. Firstly, they spread the distribution of invitations across a three-month period, which allows for staggered sending and reduces the chances of emails being flagged as spam due to high volume sending. They also provide a specific email address, surveys@timeshighereducationsurveys.com, and an IP address, 129.41.76.108, which they recommend universities whitelist. This means that IT departments at universities can configure their email systems to recognize and allow emails from these sources, thereby reducing the likelihood of the invitations being caught in spam filters.

Additionally, THE sends out reminders in January for those who may not have seen or acted upon the initial invitation. They also encourage universities to remind their staff to check their inboxes and spam folders for the invitation. These steps, combined with the regular verification of contact details in their academic contact database, help to ensure that the survey invitations are delivered successfully to the academics' inboxes.
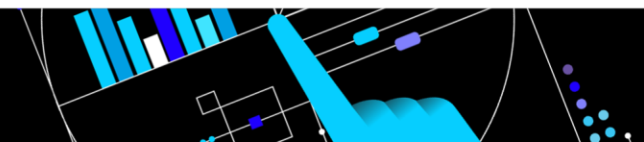
Q&A

Q: Once the university is ranked, if it has belor 150 articles in the last 5 years, can it be included in the next ranking?
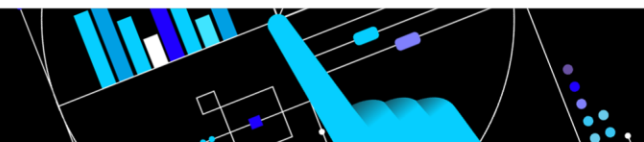**A:** No, if a university has fewer than 100 relevant publications in any single year over the past five years, it would not meet the inclusion criteria for the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. It is worth noting the criterion here has recently changed. It used to be 150 publications per year minimum, it is now 100.

Q: Please why African Universities are not widely ranked?
A: African universities may not be as widely ranked for several reasons. For instance, the research output from African institutions may not meet the publication threshold required, which can affect their ability to be ranked.

To improve the rankings of African universities, several steps could be taken:

1. Encouraging participation: African universities should be encouraged to participate in global academic surveys and rankings to increase their visibility.

2. Data submission: Institutions should be supported in meeting the data submission requirements for rankings, which may involve training and resources to accurately report their data. Please email us at profilerankings@timeshighereducation.com to get started.

Thank you

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