

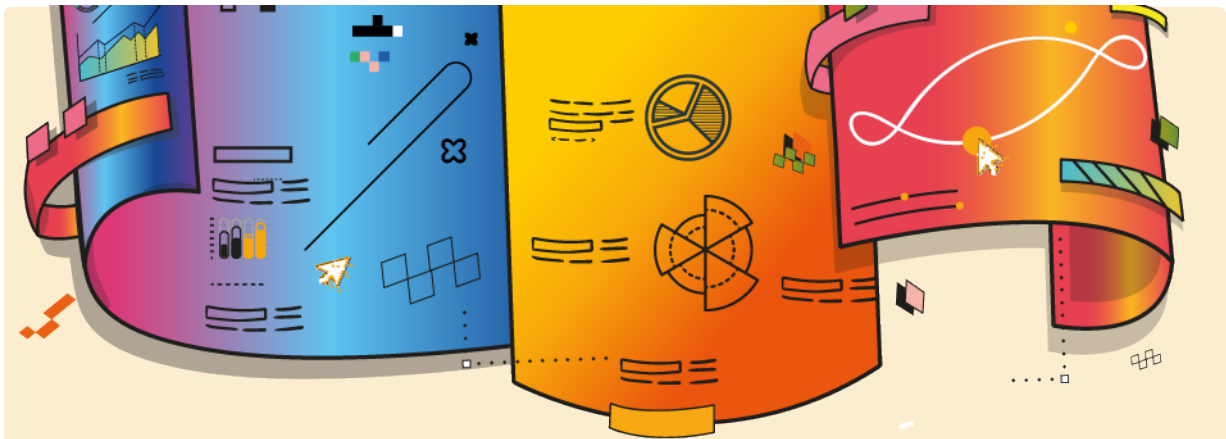
# RANKINGS 101: HOW TO USE RANKINGS TO CHOOSE WHAT TO STUDY



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# How to Use Rankings to Choose What to Study

**When the time comes to start researching universities and which degree you should study, university rankings often feel like the obvious place to start. After all - why waste time applying to a university if it isn't one of the best?**

The reality is that a university rankings isn't the only way to find the right university for you (if it was, we'd all be studying at Oxbridge or MIT!) It's just as important to consider the campus culture, course content and class profile, as well as more practical elements such as fees and available scholarships/bursaries.

These elements of a university aren't easily captured by a ranked list of institutions, so you need to use rankings as just one source

of information when researching where to study. This guide will talk you through how to do this and also how to get the most relevant information out of each university ranking.

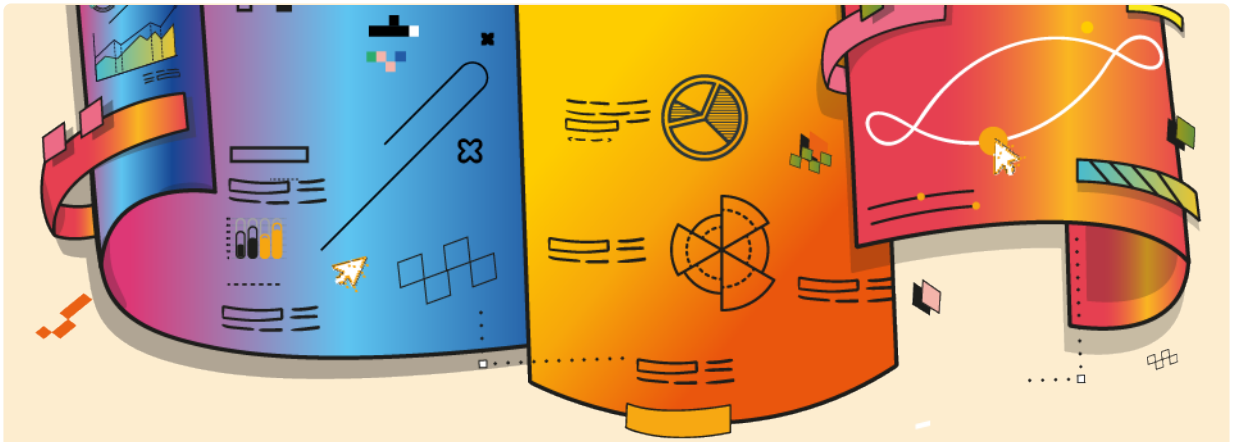
We'll also take a closer look at the various rankings published by QS, how they're put together and also how they differ from rankings released by other publications.

Hopefully, by the end of this guide, you'll be one step closer to building your shortlist of universities and deciding where you want to apply.

## Good luck!

**Our  
rankings  
have become  
the world's  
most popular  
source of  
data about  
university  
performance**

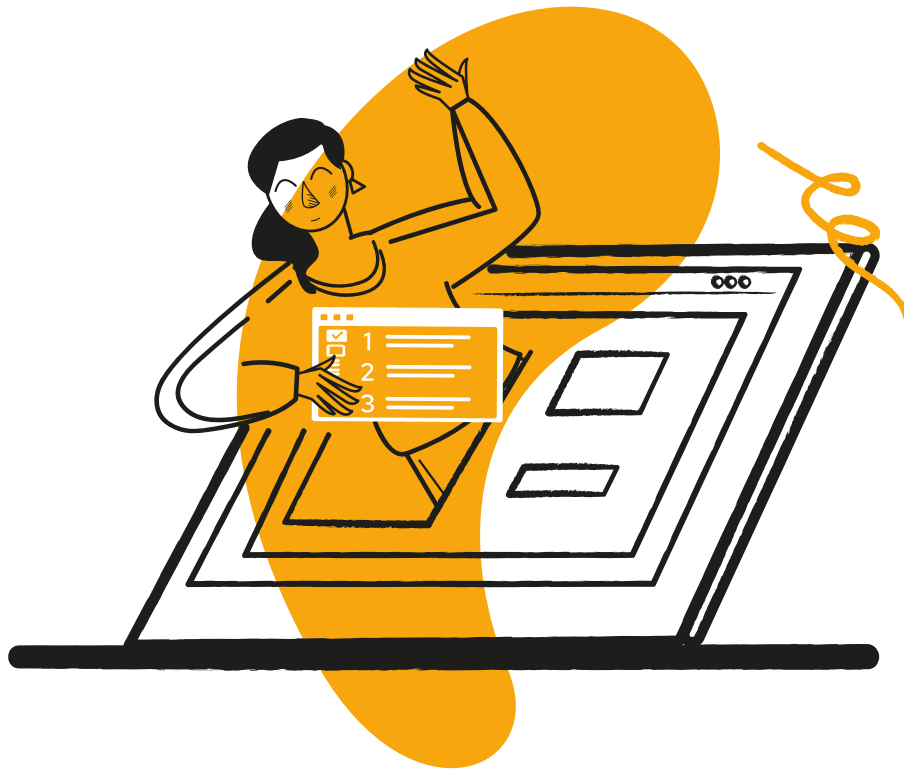




# QS Rankings: At A Glance

QS has been publishing university rankings since 2004, when the first QS World University Rankings was released. Since then, our rankings have become the world's most popular source of data about university performance, allowing millions of students to easily compare different institutions.





## QS World University Rankings

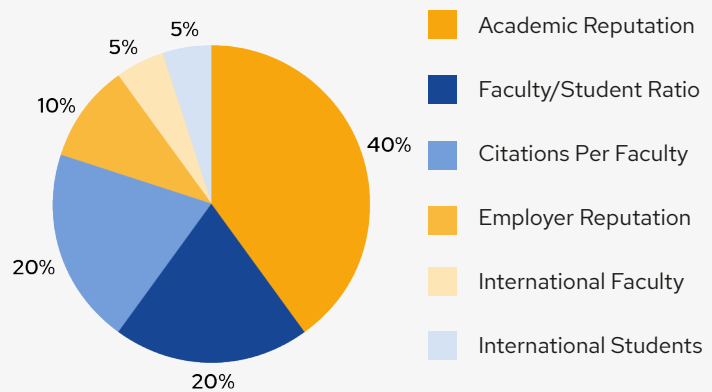
### What It Does

Ranks the top 1,000 universities around the world

### Why It's Useful

Provides an at-a-glance overview of top global universities. Specifically considers the international diversity of each uni

### How It's Calculated



## QS World University Rankings by Subject

### What It Does

Ranks the world's top universities in 48 different subjects

### Why It's Useful

Shows which universities are the best for your chosen field of study. Specifically considers research output, impact and productivity

### How It's Calculated

- Academic reputation
- Employer reputation
- Research citations per paper
- H-index

*Weightings differ depending on subject*



## QS Graduate Employability Rankings

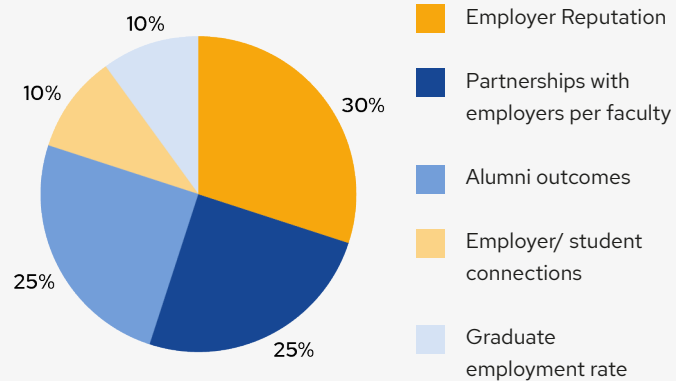
### What It Does

Assesses how well universities prepare students for employment

### Why It's Useful

Shows how well a university will prepare you for your ideal career, through both taught skills and networking/ internship opportunities

### How It's Calculated



## QS University Rankings by Region/ Location

### What It Does

Ranks the top universities in Asia, the Arab region, Latin America, BRICS & Emerging Europe and Central Asia

### How It's Calculated

Methodology differs from location to location, more information available at [TopUniversities.com](https://www.topuniversities.com)

### Why It's Useful

Showcases universities in parts of the world which are often overlooked by major rankings. Useful if you plan to study in these parts of the world



## QS Global MBA Rankings

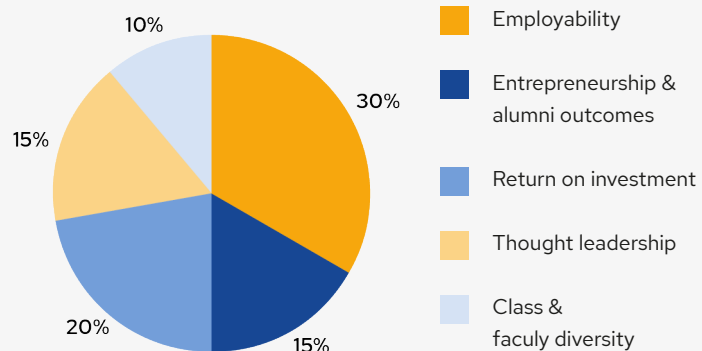
### What It Does

Ranks the top full-time MBA programmes at business schools around the world

### How It's Calculated

### Why It's Useful

Provides a global and regional breakdown of the top MBA programmes available to full-time students





## QS MBA by Specialisation Rankings

### What It Does

Ranks full-time MBA programmes by how well they prepare you for a career in different specialised fields

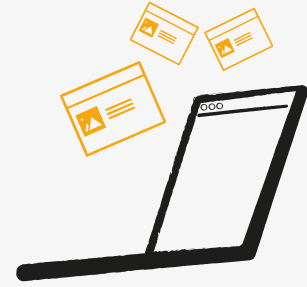
### Why It's Useful

Ideal if you know your preferred career specialisation and want to ensure your MBA will properly prepare you for it

### How It's Calculated

- Career placements
- Employer reputation
- Research strengths

*Weightings differ depending on specialisation*



## QS Business Masters Rankings

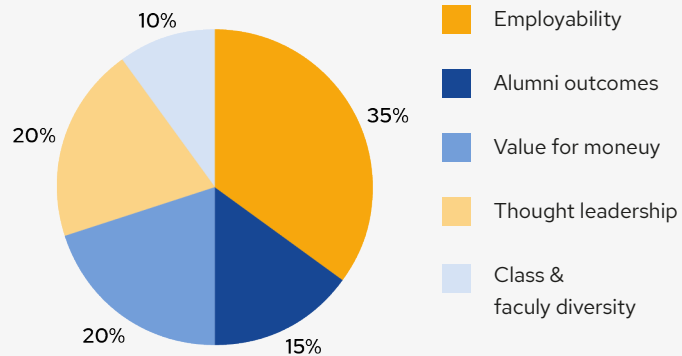
### What It Does

Ranks the top business school postgraduate degrees in business analytics, finance, management and marketing

### Why It's Useful

Particularly useful for business students seeking an alternative to the MBA, specifically a specialisation in one of the four subjects covered by the ranking

### How It's Calculated



## QS Executive MBA Rankings

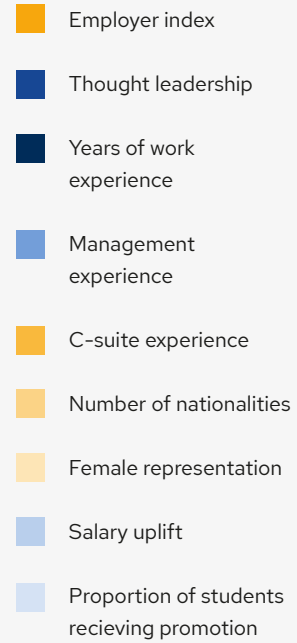
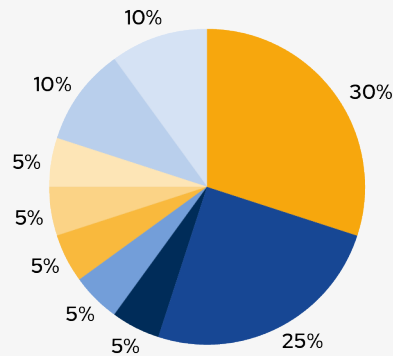
### What It Does

Ranks the top executive MBA programmes at business schools around the world

### Why It's Useful

Shows which executive MBA programmes are most likely to improve your career prospects and provide you with a return on your investment

### How It's Calculated



## QS Online MBA Rankings

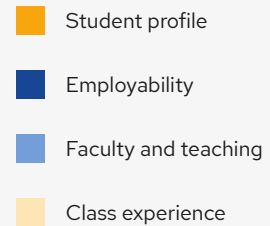
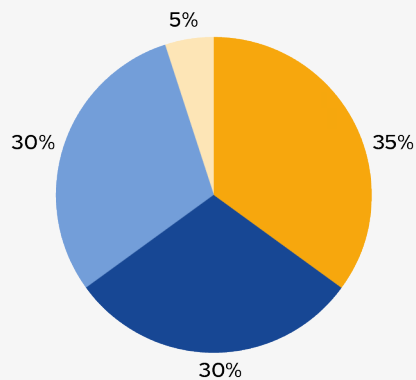
### What It Does

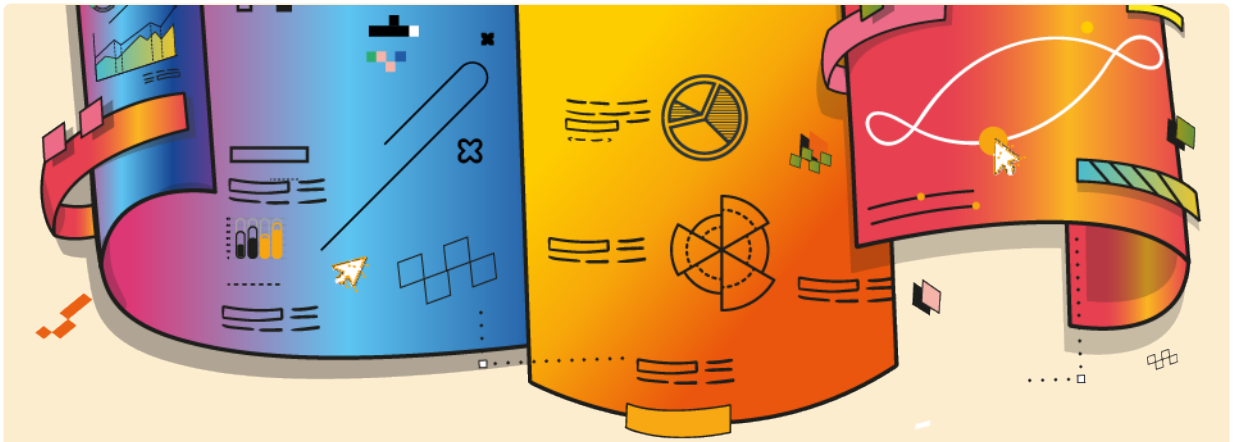
Ranks the top online MBA programmes offered by global business schools

### Why It's Useful

Aimed at students unable to study an MBA full-time and/or in-person

### How It's Calculated





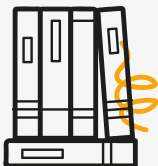
# What Rankings Should I Use?

A sensible approach to rankings involves using different sources depending on which information is most important to you.





## Do you know what you want to study?



If you've already made your mind up on studying a particular subject then the [QS World University Rankings by Subject](#) are the first place to start.

Features specialist institutions and is particularly useful for research focused degrees



The exception to this is if you know you specifically want to study an MBA or a business masters degree. If this is the case, consult either the [QS Global MBA Rankings](#) or the [QS Business Masters Rankings](#).

Unlike the subject rankings, these focus specifically on postgraduate degrees

The MBA rankings reward business school programmes with a high return on investment and career impact

Business masters rankings reveal the specific postgraduate programmes at each business school which are the best for your chosen subject

## Do you know where you want to study?



While you can filter any of the QS rankings by location, you may also want to learn more about universities in a particular region of the world. If this is the case, you should consider looking at the [QS World University Rankings by Region](#) or the [QS World University Rankings by Location](#)

Methodology is more tailored towards each region, allowing for geographical differences

Provides a more extensive look at universities in that part of the world

Useful if you are unwilling or unable to move abroad for university and live in one of these global regions

## Do you want to know what life will be like outside of your studies?

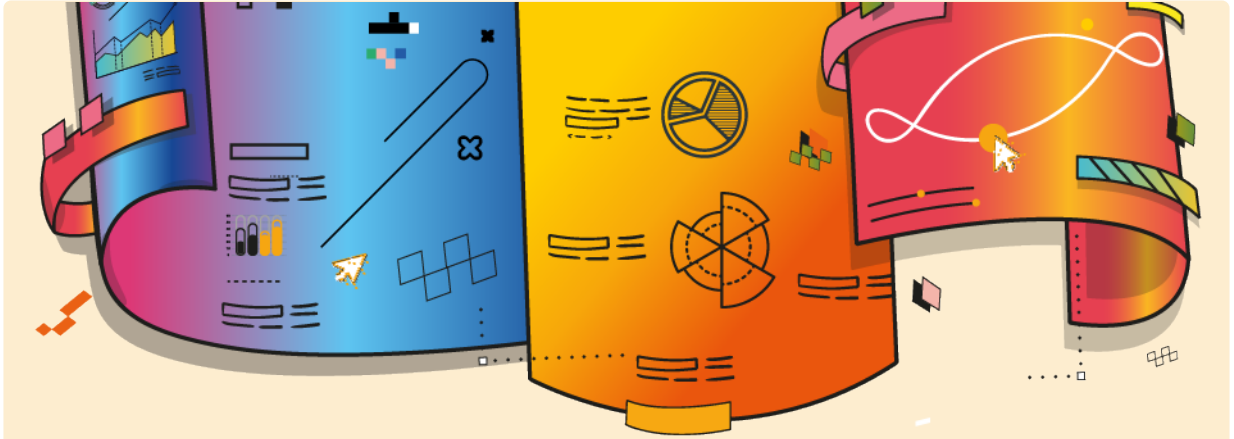


As well as ranking universities, QS also publishes a ranking of the [Best Student Cities](#) in the world. If you want to know more about the city you'll be calling home for the next few years, this is the place to start your research.

Covers the aspects of student life which aren't directly influenced by your choice of university

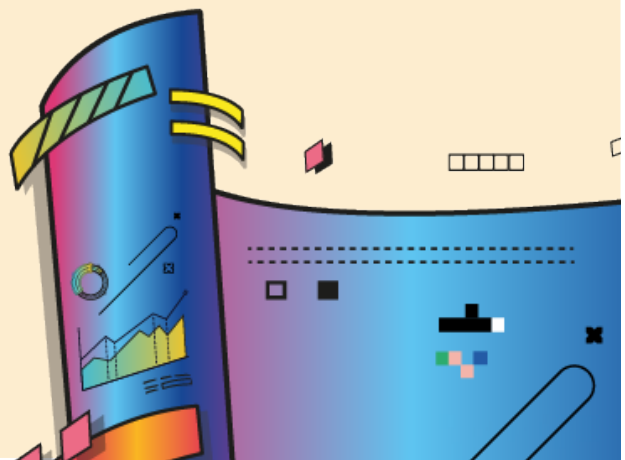
Factors include a city's affordability, desirability, reputation among current students and its diversity

Can be used alongside university rankings to help you narrow down your shortlist of universities to apply to



# What Else Should I Be Considering?

As we've said before, university rankings should only be one source of information you rely on when researching universities. Here are some of the other things to consider.





## Tuition fees



It's boring, but it's important - especially as you'll probably have to rely on a student loan to fund your studies. Tuition fees differ around the world (some universities are even free!) so it's worth considering the difference in cost before you start applying.

## Bursaries/scholarships



Those costs can be helped if a university is able to help with costs through a bursary or scholarship program. See what financial aid options are available at each university and consider carefully whether it makes more sense to focus on universities which will ultimately cost you less in the long run.

## Location



What a university ranking can't tell you is what it's actually like to live and study in a particular place. While our [Top 10 student cities guide](#) can help with this, you'll want to do your own research and also consider how near or far you want to be from home - particularly if you plan on travelling back to visit lots!

## Type of degree



This is particularly important at postgraduate level, where similar sounding degree programmes can actually be very different. Make sure you understand the difference between an MA and MSc (for example) and double-check the school or university's accreditation if necessary too.

## Societies/sports teams



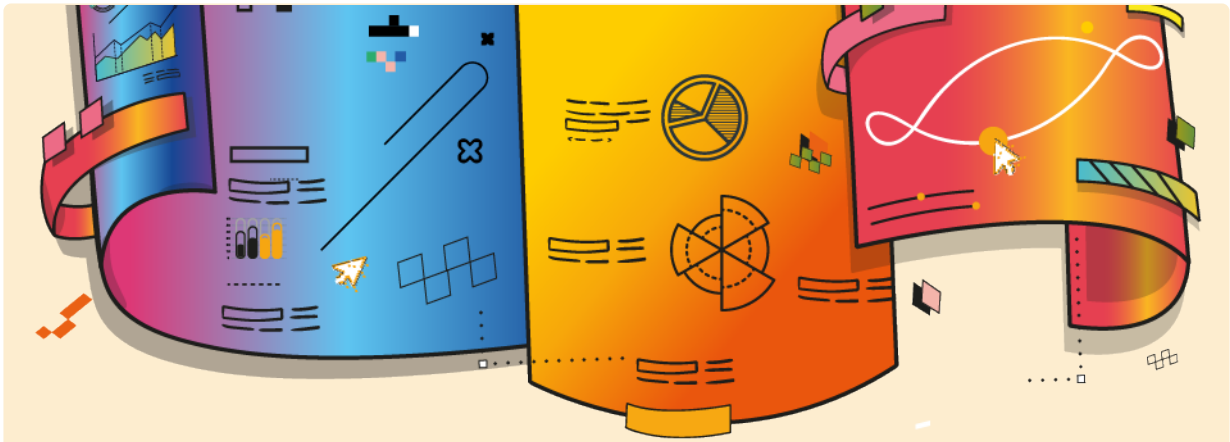
University isn't only about studying - you'll want to make sure there are plenty of like-minded people on campus too! It's worth researching the student groups, societies and sports teams you'll be able to join, particularly if you have a passionate interest in one area in particular.

## Course content



It's entirely possible that two identically titled courses at two different universities will consist of entirely different classes and assignments. It's worth checking what's currently on the syllabus at each of your preferred universities, just in case one course offers a range of modules you find more exciting.





# Comparing QS Rankings with Our Competitors

Every university ranking is different, as the table on the previous pages demonstrates. This is also true for comparing QS rankings with rankings published elsewhere. Each publication has their own priorities or things they wish to focus on, and this is reflected in the methodology used to compare universities.



## Key facts about the QS rankings

**QS rankings are the most used, most-consulted, and most-reported-on rankings in the world\***

*\*Verified by the media monitoring platform Meltwater*



QS also conducts the world's largest **survey** of the **sentiments, motivations** and **preferences** of prospective international students

## Key factors in the QS rankings methodology

The only major ranking focusing on:

### **Employability**

We get direct input from more than **42,000** employers from all around the world, to understand which universities have the best graduate recruitment opportunities

### **Diversity**

The only major ranking featuring the highest number of countries being represented

### **Percentage of international students**

The only major rankings that weigh the percentage of international students at each university



# How are other rankings different?

The table below highlights some of the key differences between the QS World University Rankings and some of the most popular university rankings.



Times Higher Education  
World University Rankings

- ✓ Considers ratio of doctorates awarded to faculty
- ✓ Measures institutional income to give a sense of facilities and infrastructure available
- ✓ Measures research income (i.e. grants) and productivity
- ✓ Measures how much research income the university earns from industry
- ✗ Doesn't consider reputation among employers



US News  
Best Global Universities Rankings

- ✓ Considers number of publications, books and conferences produced by a university
- ✓ Focuses heavily on research citations
- ✗ Doesn't consider international diversity
- ✗ Doesn't consider reputation among employers
- ✗ Doesn't consider faculty/student ratio

# Additional resources



If you're looking for additional information on topics such as scholarships, rankings, online learning and more, then take a look at our other free guides and tools:

- [Top 10 students cities - Everything you need to know](#)
- [Your student visa guide: Top 10 study destinations](#)
- [Your complete guide to applying for an MBA](#)
- [A comparative guide: business masters vs MBA](#)
- [MBA salary trends: What employers want](#)
- [MBA skills trends: What employers want](#)
- [Your complete guide to applying for a masters degree](#)
- [Our favourite global scholarships and how to apply for them](#)
- [Your ultimate guide to choosing a university](#)
- [Your guide to online learning](#)
- [GMAT or GRE: which test should I take?](#)
- [MBA ROI calculator](#)

Find and apply to our QS World Merit [Scholarships](#).

If you're looking to attend a virtual or in-person event in your city, head over to our university and business school events pages and see what events we have coming up.

 **TOPUNIVERSITIES**

[Events](#)

 **TOPMBA**

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