How responsible are rankings

...and how responsible is the use we make of them?

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Definition

ranking

*Oxford Dictionaries*

1. (noun): A position in a hierarchy or scale.
1.1. (mass noun): The action or process of giving a specified rank to someone or something.

*Macmillan Dictionaries*

1. (noun): A position on a list that shows how good someone or something is compared to others, especially how good someone is at a sport.
Some of them...
No of papers in academic journals indexed by Scopus per scholar, **scaled for institutional size and normalised for subject**.

Citations to journal articles, reviews, conference proceedings and books and book chapters published over five years. **Data are normalised.**

Papers with **more than 1,000 authors** are included but under a **fractional counting approach**.
ARWU considers every university that has any Nobel Laureates, Fields Medalists, Highly Cited Researchers, or papers published in *Nature* or *Science*. Universities with significant amount of papers indexed by Science Citation Index-Expanded (SCIE) and Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) are also included.

Total number of papers indexed in Science Citation Index-Expanded and Social Science Citation Index in 2016.

Only publications of 'Article' type considered.

Special weight of two was introduced for papers indexed in Social Science Citation Index.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Education</td>
<td>Alumni of an institution winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals</td>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Faculty</td>
<td>Staff of an institution winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals</td>
<td>Award</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Highly cited researchers in 21 broad subject categories</td>
<td>HiCi</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Output</td>
<td>Papers published in <em>Nature</em> and <em>Science</em></td>
<td>N&amp;S</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Papers indexed in Science Citation Index-expanded and Social Science Citation Index</td>
<td>PUB</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Capita Performance</td>
<td>Per capita academic performance of an institution</td>
<td>PCP</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 100%

* For institutions specialized in humanities and social sciences such as London School of Economics, N&S is not considered, and the weight of N&S is relocated to other indicators.
• Academic Reputation (40%) – based on a QS Survey
• Employer Reputation (10%) – based on a QS Survey
• Faculty/Student Ratio (20%)
• Citations per faculty (20%) – All papers (Scopus excluding self citations) produced by an institution across a five-year period by the number of faculty members at that institution.
• International Faculty Ratio (5%)
• International Student Ratio (5%)

Led by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The top four universities are all based in the US, with Stanford, Harvard and the California Institute of Technology all following hot on MIT’s heels. Only 51 of 76 British universities falling at least one place.
903 universities from 54 different countries. These are all universities worldwide that have produced at least 1000 Web of Science indexed publications in the period 2012–2015. Only so-called core publications are counted.

- Written in English.
- The publication has appeared in a core journal.

From 70 with the word ‘literature’ in the title, only 4 are considered core journals.
**Multidimensional**
- Does not refer to a single table
- Detailed methodology

Not comprehensive, depends on the data provided by the institutions
Use and interpretation of University rankings

Interpretation of university rankings

5. Comparisons between universities should be made keeping in mind the differences between universities *(Consider if the disciplinary profile of a university has been corrected for or not).*

6. Uncertainty in university rankings should be acknowledged

7. An exclusive focus on the ranks of universities in a university ranking should be avoided; the values of the underlying indicators should be taken into account *(One university may seem to perform much better than another, while the performance difference may in fact be relatively small).*

Use of university rankings

8. Dimensions of university performance not covered by university rankings should not be overlooked *(the Leiden Ranking has a quite narrow scope, the U-Multirank is probably the most comprehensive)*

9. Performance criteria relevant at the university level should not automatically be assumed to have the same relevance at the department of research group level

10. University rankings should be handled cautiously, but they should not be dismissed as being completely useless
Any ideas for the debate?