# QS World University Rankings: Methodology

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The primary aim of the [QS World University Rankings®](#) is to help students make informed comparisons of leading universities around the world. Based on six performance indicators, the rankings are designed to assess universities in four areas: research, teaching, employability and internationalization.

Each of the six indicators carries a different weighting when calculating the overall scores (see below). Four of the indicators are based on 'hard' data, and the remaining two are based on major global surveys – one of academics and another of employers – each the largest of their kind.

## 1. Academic reputation (40%)

Academic reputation is measured using a global survey, in which academics are asked to identify the institutions where they believe the best work is currently taking place within their own field of expertise. The aim is to give prospective students a sense of the consensus of opinion within the international academic community.

For the 2015/16 edition, the rankings draw on just under 76,800 responses from academics worldwide, collated over a five year period. Only participants' most recent responses are used, and they cannot vote for their own institution. Regional weightings are applied to counter any discrepancies in response rates.

## 2. Employer reputation (10%)

The employer reputation indicator is also based on a global survey, taking in more than 44,200 responses for the 2015/16 edition. The survey asks employers to identify the universities they perceive to be producing the best graduates. This indicator is unique among international university rankings.

The purpose of the employer survey is to give students a better sense of how universities are viewed in the graduate jobs market. A higher weighting is given to votes for universities that come from outside of their own

country, so this indicator is especially useful for prospective students seeking to identify universities with a reputation that extends beyond their national borders.

## 3. Student-to-faculty ratio (20%)

This is a simple measure of the number of academic staff employed relative to the number of students enrolled. In the absence of an international standard by which to measure teaching quality, this indicator aims to identify the universities that are best equipped to provide small class sizes and a good level of individual supervision.

## 4. Citations per faculty (20%)

This indicator aims to assess universities' research impact. A 'citation' means a piece of research being cited (referred to) within another piece of research. Generally, the more often a piece of research is cited, the more influential it is. So the more highly cited research papers a university publishes, the stronger its research output is considered.

QS collects this information using Scopus, the world's largest database of research abstracts and citations. The latest five complete years of data are used, and the total citation count is assessed in relation to the number of academic faculty members at the university, so that larger institutions do not have an unfair advantage.

For the 2015/16 edition of the QS World University Rankings, several refinements have been introduced to the way this indicator is assessed, with the aim of providing a more balanced reflection of research impact across different faculty areas. You can find out more about these refinements here.

## 5 & 6. International faculty ratio (5%) & international student ratio (5%)

The last two indicators aim to assess how successful a university has been in attracting students and academics from other nations. This is based on the proportion of international students and faculty members at the institution. Each of these indicators contributes 5% to the overall ranking results.

Since the QS World University Rankings were first developed in 2004, they have expanded to rank more than 800 universities, with thousands more assessed each year. The top 400 universities are given individual ranking positions, and the rest are ranked in groups – starting from 401-410, up to 701+. The results are published in an interactive ranking table, which can be sorted by country/region and by each of the six performance indicators listed above.

Alongside the overall QS World University Rankings, the QS World University Rankings by Faculty are published on the same release date. These provide rankings of the world's top 400 universities in five faculty areas: arts & humanities, engineering & technology, life sciences & medicine, natural sciences, and social sciences & management. These rankings are compiled using the academic and employer surveys, as well as research citations data.

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