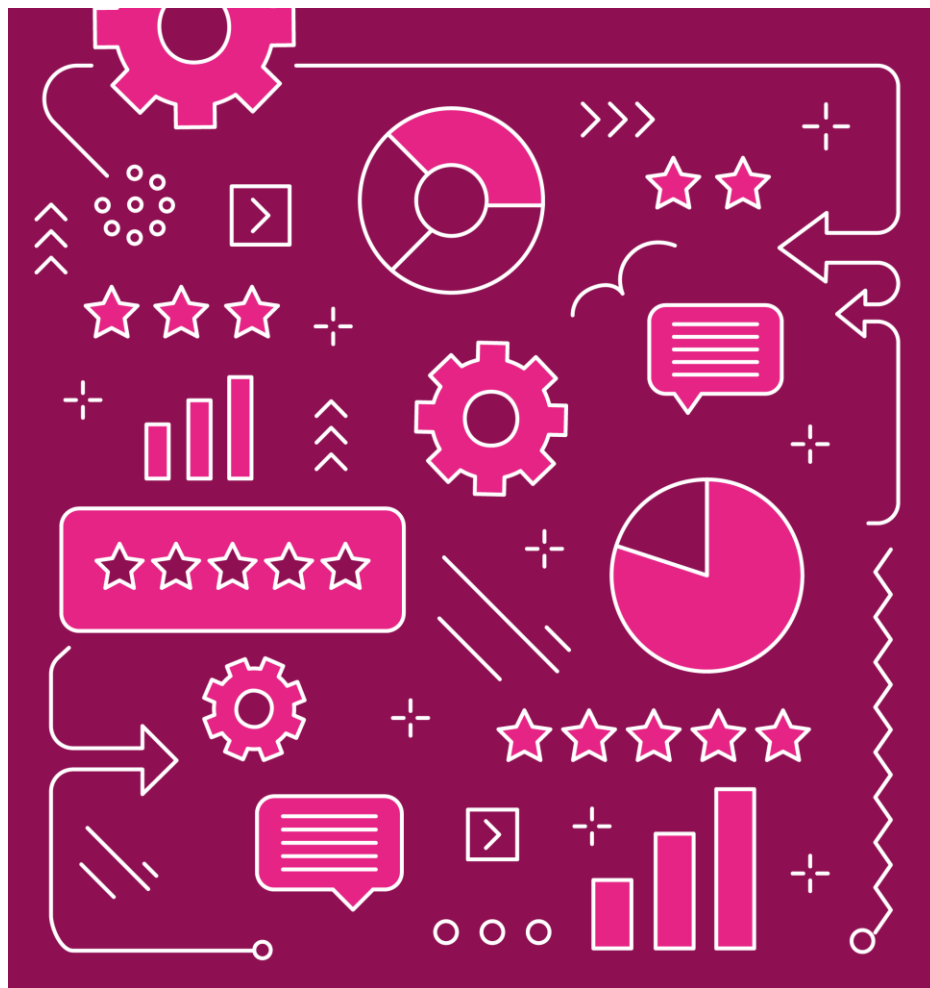




World Reputation Rankings

METHODOLOGY FOR THE *TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION* WORLD REPUTATION RANKINGS 2025

February 2025



Times Higher Education World Reputation Rankings

Times Higher Education is the data provider underpinning university excellence in every continent across the world. As the company behind the world's most influential university ranking, and with over five decades of experience as a source of analysis and insight on higher education, we have unparalleled expertise on the trends underpinning university performance globally. Our data and benchmarking tools are used by many of the world's most prestigious universities to help them achieve their strategic goals.

The newly relaunched *Times Higher Education (THE)* World Reputation Rankings (WRR) aims to provide the definitive list of the most prestigious universities according to academics around the world. Using data sourced from the *THE* Global Academic Reputation Survey, the newly reiterated methodology now evaluates institutions across three key areas. *Times Higher Education's* data is trusted by governments and universities and is a vital resource for students, academics, university leaders, policy makers and commercial institutions.

Important links:

THE 2025 World Reputation Rankings: (Live from 18 February 2025)

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-reputation-rankings>

THE 2025 World Reputation Rankings Methodology: (Live from 4 February 2025)

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/world-reputation-rankings-2025-methodology>

Directors' Statement:

This document (the "Methodology") sets out our end-to-end process for generating the THE World Reputation Rankings 2025 (the "Ranking"). As directors and management of Times Higher Education, we state that we have followed our Methodology and correctly applied the specific procedures described in this document.

Signed: *D Watkins*

Print: David Watkins

Role: Managing Director, Data, *Times Higher Education*

Date: 4 February 2025

For and on behalf of *THE* World Universities Insights Limited

Summary of the Ranking methodology

The *Times Higher Education* World Reputation Rankings are constructed using data collected from the world's largest invitation-only academic opinion survey.

The methodology for this year's ranking has been updated to increase the number of methods used in assessing the reputation of academic institutions. Previously vote counts were used as the singular method for determining ranking position. Given that the subject of reputation is gaining a wider audience amongst the academic community, this year's ranking includes significant updates to previous iterations.

The performance indicators are now grouped into three areas.

Vote counts

This is the core method of determining performance that has been employed in the reputation ranking since its launch. Vote counts are continued this year but with a modification to the scoring function. Previously the score was derived as the proportion of votes that the top institution received. Due to the nature of the underlying distribution, this meant that scores attenuated rapidly such that most universities in the ranking had very low scores. This year we move to a cumulative scoring function. While this will not fully alleviate the sharp drop-off in vote scores, it does flatten the score curve and allow more meaningful comparisons both within this year and year-on-year for future iterations of the ranking. It will also mean that the scoring for reputation uses a method similar to that used for the *World University Ranking (WUR)*, ensuring consistency across different *THE* rankings.

Pairwise comparison

The vote count method above allows respondents to select any university through a text search box, such that invitees can freely vote for any university that comes to mind. Historically, however, this has meant that the super-brands (which are persistent in terms of strong reputational performance) dominate the results data. In pairwise comparison, universities are pre-selected and respondents place these in order from 1 to 5. This method can be used to encourage voters to consider those institutions that are not in the "super-brands" that dominate the top of the ranking. While this doesn't mean that suddenly voters will stop rating the top institutions so highly, it does ensure that each respondent is forced to consider certain institutions that are further down the ranking scale.

Voter diversity

For universities that have similar numbers of votes, which additional measures can we employ to assess reputational performance? In this metric we examine voter diversity. Here we work on the view that institutions that have wide respondent bases have a stronger reputation than those who don't. In this metric, an institution that has votes coming from a wide range of countries and territories (and subject areas) is deemed to have a more robust reputation than one where votes originate from a small number of countries and/or subjects. This measure provides an additional way for universities to differentiate themselves from others not just on how many votes they receive, but on the composition of their respondent base.

1) Data collection and sources

***THE* Global Academic Reputation Survey**

A survey was sent to a sample of academics selected by *THE*, in which we asked them to nominate the universities that they perceive to be the best for research and/or teaching in their field. For the 2024 survey, academics were asked to nominate up to 15 institutions for research and up to 15 institutions for teaching.

Questions are also asked about ordering 5 universities, the names of which are supplied to each respondent based on their research history. There are also questions about a respondent's demographics, such as their area of specialisation and country in which they are based.

The most recent Global Academic Reputation Survey (run annually by *THE*) was carried out between November 2023 and January 2024. We have run the survey to ensure a balanced spread of responses across disciplines and countries. Where disciplines or countries were over- or under-represented, *THE*'s data team weighted the responses to ensure the results fully reflect the global distribution of scholars. The 2024 survey received more than 55,000 responses.

Reference data

THE incorporates reference datasets into its ranking calculations. The research and teaching vote counts are both weighted to reflect the distribution of scholars across the world (using data from UNESCO).

UNESCO data is available at this link <http://data.uis.unesco.org> which provides the numbers of scholars across the world by country and subject. Due to a discontinuation of this dataset, this will be the last year this data is used for benchmarking. We are currently working on the provision of a new benchmark dataset for the next editions of the WUR and WRR.

2) Calculation, scoring and ranking

Calculation of metrics

There are 3 categories or “pillars”, formed from 6 underlying indicators.

The pre-weighted indicators are calculated for each university.

Vote counts

This metric is deduced from the total number of votes obtained from the 2024 Global Academic Reputation Survey. Vote counts are weighted at the country and subject level so that results are representative of the distribution of academics globally. Further adjustments may be applied (according to pre-defined criteria) to account for high levels of self-voting and/or respondent concentration. Vote counts are passed into an exponential scoring function to convert the number of votes to a score between 0 and 100.

Pairwise comparison

In the survey respondents are presented with a list of 5 institutions informed from their publication history. Invitees then order the list which creates a ‘mini ranking’ that acts as an input for a pairwise comparison hierarchy. As more data is gathered for this question, the algorithm used can further refine the values obtained for each university to assess relative performance. The resultant parameters obtained are passed into a normal scoring function which converts values to a score between 0 and 100.

Voter diversity

Country and subject data on respondents is obtained in the survey. This is used to evaluate the voter diversity for each institution, with universities that have greater diversity in their respondent mix scoring higher, and universities with narrower respondent bases receiving lower scores. A concept called entropy is used, which examines how heterogeneous a dataset is. When looking at an institution’s respondent mix, each country-subject combination is considered a unique category. The more of these that exist for a particular university, the higher the entropy. In addition, the more even the spread of relative weights, the greater the entropy. In other words, if the dataset is concentrated in one area that would reduce the score achieved. Entropy levels are passed into a normal scoring function which converts values to a score between 0 and 100.

Each of the above three metrics are evaluated in both research and teaching, resulting in six indicators.

Self-voting and voter concentration

In 2023 we introduced a self-voting cap. This reduces the self-vote share to 10% of the total votes for any given university. Self-votes are still allowed and are included, but are weighted down in much the same way as we apply country and subject weightings. The majority of ranked institutions are unaffected by this adjustment.

While employing a self-voting cap will address intra-university voting, it would not deal with arranged voting relationships between institutions. This year we have implemented an additional measure where we look at vote concentration to help deal with any potential cases of this issue.

When we look at the number of different institutions that vote for a particular university, we see that generally universities have a broad range of respondents. However, should any institutions be part of a closed ring, this would be reflected in a much narrower spread of voters. This is represented by a high number of votes-per-respondent-institution (VPRI) for a given university.

When this happens, we can set a maximum threshold value for VPRI and adjust vote weights accordingly, in much the same way we dilute votes for the self-voting adjustment above. This treatment is applied fairly across the entire survey dataset, and our analysis shows that this affects only a very small number of universities.

Weightings of indicators to final scores and rankings

The 6 performance indicators underlying the three pillars are weighted according to *THE*'s assessment of relative importance.

Once the final population of universities and indicators has been prepared, the scores for each university are generated by weighting the indicators and the final ranking is calculated according to the following percentage breakdowns.

Pillar	Indicator	% weighting
Vote count	Research vote count	30
	Teaching vote count	30
Pairwise comparison	Research pairwise comparison	10
	Teaching pairwise comparison	10
Voter diversity	Research voter diversity	10
	Teaching voter diversity	10

3) Publication and reporting

Final ranking preparation

All institutions that were ranked are published in the final rankings table on the *THE* website. On the website, the overall score and pillar scores are displayed.

Precise overall scores are shown for the institutions ranked in the top 100. Banded overall scores are presented for the institutions ranked in bands (e.g. from 101 to 150). Precise individual pillar scores are displayed for each ranked institution. For the institutions ranked 1 – 100 overall, an individual rank position is listed. The next institutions are assigned to the following bands: 101-150, 151-200 and 201-300.

The Rankings results are reviewed and signed off by THE's Managing Director of Data. The Rankings for the top 100 universities and banding allocation below the top 100 are accurately reported on the THE website.