Times Higher Education Reputation 2023

The Times Higher Education Reputation Ranking for 2023 was released in February 2024, despite although it should be noted that it is the reputation ranking used to inform the previous year's rankings. Therefore, it should be considered relevant only to those results already published, not forthcoming ones.

The ranking only lists the top 200 institutions worldwide, therefore it has only ever featured USP and Unicamp in Brazil.

Brazilian institutions 2017-2023

University	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
USP	91-100	-	81-90	91-100	81-90	81-90	81-90
Unicamp	-	-	-	176-200	151-175	151-175	151-175

For all the occasional volatility in the Times Higher Education positions over the years, it is remarkable how little change there has actually been in position – since 2021 there has been no change in position for either institution. In part, this is because votes are aggregated year on year, and scaled by the year of response. That means that 100% weighting is accorded to current year votes, 80% to the previous year, 60% to two years previously, and so on.

Questionnaire format

Participants are asked to name up to 15 international institutions that they regard as the best in their area for teaching and research, and a further six from their own country. Respondents do not rank institutions, they just select from a drop down list.

Changes for 2023

For this year's version, the survey was conducted by Times Higher Education themselves, instead of Elsevier as had happened in previous years. This involved a new sampling methodology and a different spread of countries. The 2023 survey received 38,796 responses from 166 countries. It ran from October 2022 to January 2023.

Normalisation by country

The votes are normalised by the number of researchers per country identified by UNESCO (http://data.uis.unesco.org/), so that the survey represents the global spread of opinion.

Importance

Studies of global reputation reflect how well a university is recognised worldwide. In some cases, they are a good measure of how well regarded a university's graduates perform in other universities, in others, they might be a reflection of how effective and supportive university mobility and exchange programs work. For research, this tends to favour universities who conduct large projects in international collaboration, whose articles appear in high profile journals – especially multidisciplinary and general interest titles such as Science and Nature, as well as those with an active and effective communication in general media of their research results.

Because the results for each institution, and the motivation for voting are not published directly, it is challenging to identify what the main determinant is. However, we list below a series of related actions that universities could consider implementing or improving, which have an influence on the results of this indicator.

Policy limitations

Reputation rankings are not performance indicators, there is nothing inherent or intrinsic to a university's activities represented by a reputation ranking. Rather, they are measures of external esteem of an institution, something that is often disconnected with real performance. They tend to display strong halo effects – previous good performance tends to produce future good performance, because respondents look at past results when choosing. They are also increasingly influenced by the purchasing of advertising space on the Times Higher Education website itself – this is also cannot be considered a performance indicator. Newer institutions also often struggle to receive recognition in these rankings. Reputation rankings also tend to favour English speaking institutions, especially those in the United States and United Kingdom – 25 of the top 50 institutions in this year's ranking is in the United States, and a further nine in the United Kingdom.

Privileged knowledge issues

The ranking is defined on the assumption that respondents only vote on institutions in which they have real and deep experience of. However, this is left assumed rather than demonstrated. The ability to nominate 15 international institutions without an order of preference means that the largest and best-known institutions pick up many votes without any specific knowledge. There are very few researchers in the world with intimate knowledge of 15 different institutions.

What could universities do to strengthen their performance in global reputation rankings?

The real distribution of the location of participants is not revealed by Times Higher Education, nor are the number of votes cast for an institution, and from where they are cast. Therefore, making specific recommendations for improving position is difficult. Instead of concrete indicators to represent performance, the list below are a series of important factors that are known to have an influence of institutional reputation, that may be useful to an institution that if they wished to improve results in this ranking:

- **Monitor and engage with alumni in postgraduate studies** both in Brazil and around the world. This will involve, but will not be limited to, using the Lattes platform, alongside resources such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, LinkedIn and others. The role of graduates working abroad is essential for the international reputation of a university.

Key indicators:
- o Number of graduates continuing in higher education abroad (for example, on a post-graduate course or in a post-doctoral position)
- o Number of graduates working in academic positions abroad

- Increasing the rate of **inbound and outbound study abroad**, and improving the provision of services to inbound students, such as improving student reception, support and accommodation.

Key indicators
- o Number of outbound study abroad students
- o Number of inbound study abroad students
- o Student evaluation of study abroad support services

- Implementing an **active press office in English and Portuguese** for notable research breakthroughs and results that ensure that the university's research appears in international media.

Key indicators
- o Number of appearances in scientific, non-disciplinary media
- o Number of appearances in global non-scientific media
- o Views count of research, field weighted views impact

- Ensure that the university's **website is widely cited via backlinks** (direct links from an external website to the university's domain). This means that the university's communication is widely used by the media, blogs, social media and other websites. This indicator is quite closely correlated with institutional visibility, and therefore of reputation. The Webometrics ranking of world universities measures this indicator, which they call the "Impact Ranking" (not related to the Times Higher Impact Ranking) with a measure of backlinks, presented below:

Webometrics 2023 performance in the "Impact Rank"

Brazil Rank	University	Impact Rank
1	Universidade de São Paulo USP	120
4	Universidade Estadual de Campinas UNICAMP	289
10	Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho	544
14	Universidade Federal de São Paulo UNIFESP	727
21	Universidade Federal de São Carlos	906
47	Universidade Federal do ABC UFABC	1797

In particular, the indicator should demonstrate that increasing the online presence of the three federal universities should be a priority. This should include the production of more material for scientific communication as individual pages – something that UFSCar especially should consider. It should publish pages in languages other than Portuguese regularly – something that UFABC and UFSCar could benefit from. While this indicator is somewhat dependent on institutional size and linguistic origin, the universities should look to the performance and strategy of institutions such as Pompeu Fabra University in Spain (173rd position), or the Universidad de Alicante (398th) as examples of similar size, newer institutions, with the a similar linguistic background.