



Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience

The Scottish HE Data Landscape

An overview of: International university league tables

Type and scope of the data

The international league tables provide a range of summary data and rankings of global institutions as a whole and by subject, mainly focused on research outputs/citations and some measure of academic reputation. The tables can also include measures relating to international staff/student numbers, research income from industry, patents, alumni employment, and number of Nobel/Fields Prize Winners. The results of the international league tables are often repackaged to give subset ranking tables, for example, by continent/region or age of institution. Four of the main international league tables are listed at the bottom of this page.

Time period of data renewal

The various league tables are published annually, generally between June and October (though the subject-level rankings may be published separately); each league table uses the latest data available.

Questions that the data can help to explore or answer

International league tables provide a quick way to find summary data for an institution or group of institutions, at the overall level and by subject. Helpful for answering questions such as: 'How does institution X perform for measure Y?'; 'How international is institution X?'; 'Who could be in a reasonable benchmarking/peer group for institution X?'

Important caveats, exclusions etc.

The international league tables tend to source the underlying data directly from institutions, which may make the data less robust. The measures shown may be composites of unpublished sub-measures/data types. Always closely read the league table's statements on methodology and sources of data (see links below), particularly the year to which the data relates.

Publications/analyses which use the data

The league table results are reported on the websites below and may also be picked up by other news outlets, such as the BBC and international/domestic newspapers.

Where to find the data and any further published analysis

- Times Higher World University Rankings: www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings
- QS World University Rankings: www.topuniversities.com/qs-world-university-rankings
- Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU): www.shanghairanking.com
- Center for World University Rankings (CWUR): <https://cwur.org>