QS STARS™
RATING SYSTEM

www.qs.com

UNIVERSITY METHODOLOGY

Methodology v. 5.0

The University of Technology Sydney (UTS) has been awarded an overall 5 Star rating from QS Stars, which renders the university's rating as world-class in a broad range of areas, enjoys a high reputation and cutting edge facilities and internationally renowned research and teaching faculties. With a QS 5 Star rating, UTS is able to promote its world-class academic programs, research, industry engagement and graduate employability to prospective students, alumni, and key university partners.

Dr. Elvira Fonacier, Rankings Program Manager, University of Technology Sydney, Australia

The **QS Stars university rating system** was launched in 2009 as a way to assess institutions more broadly than is possible through rankings alone. With a Stars rating given in eight categories and for the institution's overall performance, QS Stars allows universities to publicly highlight their areas of strength, and recognize and improve upon areas of weakness. This evidence-based marketing tool provides badges for each rating that the institution may use in its own marketing to help attract students. Institutions should use the chart below to choose between alternate categories, with Teaching, Employability, and Internationalization required for all assessments.

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THRESHOLDS & PREREQUISITES

	OVERALL	Institutions must have at least:	1000
5+	QS STARS RATING SYSTEM ★★★★★+	• 5 Star ratings in all categories and meet all prerequisites needed for 5 Stars	900
5	QS STARS RATING SYSTEM ★★★★★	• 5% international faculty • 5% international students • 70 points in the Learning Environment category • 85 points in the Employability category • 150 academic referees OR 3 citations per faculty member* • 105 points in the Teaching category^	700
4	QS STARS RATING SYSTEM ★★★★	• 1% (OR 25% of the regional average) international students • 75 academic referees OR at least 2 citations per faculty member* • 85 points in the Teaching category^	550
3	QS STARS RATING SYSTEM ★★★		400
2	QS STARS RATING SYSTEM ★★		250
1	QS STARS RATING SYSTEM ★	• Must have the authority to grant valid degree-level programs in its own name	100

** If assessed in Research category*

^ If assessed in Academic Development category

CORE CRITERIA CATEGORIES	150
1 Star	15
2 Stars	35
3 Stars	60
4 Stars	85
5 Stars	105

SPECIALIST CRITERIA CATEGORIES	200
1 Star	20
2 Stars	50
3 Stars	80
4 Stars	110
5 Stars	140

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT CATEGORIES	100
1 Star	10
2 Stars	25
3 Stars	40
4 Stars	55
5 Stars	70

ADVANCED CRITERIA CATEGORIES	50
1 Star	5
2 Stars	15
3 Stars	20
4 Stars	30
5 Stars	35

CORE CRITERIA

The **Core Criteria** categories feature the key building blocks of a university, whether its focus is global, domestic, or local. All categories in this section are mandatory apart from Research and Academic Development, where one should be selected. Universities should use the QS classifications to help determine the appropriate choice.

TEACHING 150

Faculty-student ratio — 50

10% faculty-student ratio (1 faculty member per 10 students) scaled down to 2% (1 faculty member per 50 students)

Overall student satisfaction — 40

75% student satisfaction scaled down to 50%

OR

Completion

90% of students scaled down to 60% graduate within the expected time for their course

Satisfaction with teaching — 40

75% student satisfaction scaled down to 50%

OR

Faculty with PhD

80% scaled down to 60% of faculty with PhD (or equivalent terminal degree)

Further study — 20

30% of scaled down to 10% graduates pursuing further study within 12 months of graduation

A note about surveys

QS Stars surveys and public national surveys can be accepted, as well as an institution's own survey with the proper evidence. Results are based on a minimum 20% response rate OR 1000 respondents, with points being scaled down for lower response rates. Please speak with a QS representative to take part in the the QS Stars student satisfaction or alumni surveys.

EMPLOYABILITY 150

Employer reputation

50 employer nominations received from the most recent QS Global Employer Survey analysis

OR

Campus employer presence
(Maximum 30 points)

200 distinct companies, OR a number equivalent to 1% of the total FTE student body, attending employability events on campus in 12 months

50

Graduate employment rate

90% of scaled down to 50% graduates employed within 24 months of graduation

50

Career service support

10 points each with 2 bonus points for 3 or more *(Maximum 50 points)*:

1. 10 career advisors scaled down to 2 OR 1 career advisor per 1000 students
2. Career interview trainings or CV/cover letter writing support
3. At least one on-campus career fair in the last academic year organized by the academic institution
4. Career advising sessions available for students
5. Online career portal with access to job vacancies or career advisor appointment system

50

INTERNATIONALIZATION 150

International collaborations

50 joint-degree programs and university research collaborations yielding publications in Scopus™ in a recent 5-year period as per the latest QS World University Rankings analysis

50

International faculty

25% international faculty members

20

International students

20% international students

20

International exchange programs

Inbound & outbound exchange students *(Maximum 20 points each)*

2% inbound/outbound students against total number of students on an international exchange program lasting 3 months or longer

OR

Short-term exchange programs
(Maximum 10 points)

2% outbound students against total number of students on an organized international trip lasting at least 2 weeks and less than 3 months

40

International support center

1 support center dedicated to international students with at least 1 FTE staff member

10

International diversity

50 nationalities scaled down to 5 in student body

10

RESEARCH OR ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT 150

Papers per faculty — 40

7 papers per faculty member indexed on Scopus™ in a recent five-year period as per the latest QS World University Rankings analysis

Citations per paper — 40

8 citations per paper indexed on Scopus™ in a recent six-year period as per the latest QS World University Rankings analysis

Research funds — 40

30% scaled down to 10% of total income for total expenditure for past fiscal year, including all public and private funds

Academic reputation — 30

200 nominations received in the latest QS Global Academic Survey analysis

Teaching and research assistantships — 35

30% scaled down to 10% of total student body participating in teaching or research assistantships

Learning development center — 35

Learning development center staffed with 3 scaled down to 1 full time staff

Faculty office hours — 30

3:3 faculty office hours to classroom teaching hours per week scaled down to a ratio of 1:3

Faculty development programs — 25

70% scaled down to 30% of total faculty members participating in faculty development programs

Member of university networks — 25

25 points available through a combination of different types of networks:

1. 2 international university networks for full points
2. 4 regional university networks for full points
3. 6 national university networks for full points

QS Stars has [...] illuminated a plethora of activities that we need to review in order to retain our place in the top 100. We found that the exercise of going through the Stars [...] is very useful in helping us to identify gaps in the information we have, and find ways of obtaining it.

Pamela Moss, Director of Planning, The University of Auckland, New Zealand

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The **Learning Environment** categories look at the student's experience within their environment, whether that's a physical campus or an online learning environment. Institutions will be assessed in either Facilities or Online Learning.

FACILITIES

OR

Sports facilities

4 points for each on-campus facility, OR access to local facilities with an official agreement, with 2 bonus points for 3 or more *(Maximum 20 points)*:

1. Swimming pool
2. Indoor or outdoor fitness gym
3. Indoor sports court
4. Outdoor sports court
5. Outdoor sports field

20

Campus facilities

4 points for each on-campus facility, OR access to local facilities with an official agreement, with 3 bonus points for 3 or more *(Maximum 20 points)*:

1. Cafeteria
2. Bookstore
3. Social room
4. Support center for minority groups
5. Religious facilities

20

Student accommodation

Maximum points for the same number of rooms available in student residences as first-year students (agreements with local housing facilities can be considered)

20

Library expenditure

$250 USD scaled down to $10 invested per student towards total library operating expenditure in a 12-month period

20

Health support services

On-campus medical facility
1 on-campus student medical center

OR

Off-campus medical facility
(Maximum 5 points)
1 local medical center at which student may register

10

Student clubs and societies

50 scaled down to 10 student clubs and societies, including hobby clubs, educational and religious societies, and sports teams

10

ONLINE LEARNING 100

Student-faculty engagement

6 points each with 3 bonus points for 3 or more *(Maximum 30 points)*:

1. Scheduled one-to-one conversations OR face to face component such as an opportunity to meet faculty in person, including at regional centers
2. Live tutoring
3. Live streaming course video
4. Pre-recorded course video
5. Faculty assessment

30

Student interaction

10 points each:

1. Online forum OR discussion board
2. Alumni network

20

Student services and technology

5 points each:

1. Access to online library databases
2. Customised access for users with special needs
3. Online access to career center / dedicated online career advisor

15

Online outsourcing

5 organizations relying on programs and technologies by academic institution scaled down to 2

10

Application per enrolment

5 completed applications per enrolment scaled proportion of the points down to a ratio of 2:1

10

Commitment to online

50% scaled down to 15% of degrees available at the university that can be taken entirely through online learning

10

Track record

10 years operating successful online programs since the first graduating class

5

The United Arab Emirates University applied for the QS Stars system in 2018, and it was an honour to be the first University in UAE to receive the prestigious 5 Stars rating. The overall experience with the QS Stars audit was an eye opening and interesting at the same time. The rating system provided a detailed look at the University from various angles and provided a wide picture of the university's all-round qualities. It evaluated everything from the teaching and research to employability of graduates, to infrastructure and campus facilities and community engagement. The audit report identified the strength and weaknesses, and can help in reshaping the roadmap for the university's future.

Dr. Sulaiman Al Zuhair, Chair, Chemical & Engineering Department, United Arab Emirates University, United Arab Emirates

SPECIALIST CRITERIA

The **Specialist Criteria** categories take a closer look at an institution's specialist areas, using subject rankings or program-specific data to highlight outstanding programs. Institutions are assessed in one of the two categories.

SUBJECT RANKING

OR

150

Broad subject area ranking

Highest-scoring out of 5 broad specialist areas based on the most recent QS World University Rankings by Subject

(Maximum points for ranked position 1-50, scaled down to 10 points at position 300)

1. Engineering & Technology
2. Natural Sciences
3. Life Sciences & Medicine
4. Arts & Humanities
5. Social Sciences & Management

OR

Subject ranking

Highest-scoring discipline based on the most recent QS World University Rankings by Subject or respected alternate global subject rankings

(Maximum points for ranked position 1-20, scaled down to 10 points at position 200)

For a full list of subjects please visit

https://www.topuniversities.com/subject-rankings

Internationally recognized accreditations AND/OR **Nationally recognized accreditations**

50

25 points for each international and 10 points for each national, non-governmental accreditations for a specific, named degree program withing the specialist subject or broad subject area *(Maximum 50 points)*

PROGRAM STRENGTH

200

All indicators in this category relate specifically to the institution's chosen specialist program

Graduate employment rate — 30

95% scaled down to 70% of graduates employed or started a business within 24 months

Completion — 20

95% of students scheduled to graduate succeed in doing so on time, scaled down to 65%

Student satisfaction — 40

90% student satisfaction with the specialist program, scaled down to 65%

Faculty-student ratio — 20

20% faculty-student ratio (1 faculty member per 5 students) scaled down to 5% (1 faculty member per 20 students)

Applications per place — 20

10:1 ratio scaled down to 2:1 of number of completed applications against available places

International students — 20

30% scaled down to 10% international students

Internationally recognized accreditations AND/OR **Nationally recognized accreditations** — 50

25 points for each international and 10 points for each national, non-governmental accreditations specifically for the selected degree program *(Maximum 50 points)*

ADVANCED CRITERIA

The **Advanced Criteria** categories look at important factors that a university with a solid foundation in the core criteria might target to advance to a higher level of performance and recognition. Since institutions vary in specialization, this section gives universities the option to select two of the four categories which best showcase their strengths.

ARTS & CULTURE 50

Arts and culture facilities

2 points each, with 3 additional points for 6 or more from the list, to a maximum 15 points; all facilities must be open to students and faculty but do not have to be open to the public

1. Purpose-built museum
2. Purpose-built theater*
3. Concert hall*
4. Dedicated art studio
5. Campus art exhibition program
6. Dedicated recording studio OR music practice rooms
7. Campus radio station, TV studio, OR TV channel
8. Cinema*
9. Outdoor art space (e.g. sculpture garden)

**Must feature at least 10 performances in 12 months to be considered*

15

Concerts, events, and exhibitions

150 scaled down to 50, OR events numbering 1% to 5% of the student population (i.e. for 600 students, thresholds are 6 to 30 events), on- or off-campus concerts, events, or exhibitions organized by the academic institution over a 12-month period

15

Artistic and cultural accolades

25 scaled down to 5 awards or accolades given in a 12-month period to students, faculty, departments, or the institution as a whole, for publicly accessible works relating to the arts or local/national culture

10

Community art and cultural investment

Contributing 0.5% of turnover OR $1 million USD to public art projects and to cultural preservation, on or off campus but within the university's own country, over a 12-month period

10

INNOVATION 50

Patents

50 scaled down to 0 unique, active patents registered with national or international patent offices (no limitation of time) — 20

Spin-off companies

5 spin-off companies established in the last 5 years, still operating and less than 50% owned by the academic institution — 10

Industrial research

10 distinct corporations (non-university) yielding publications in Scopus™ in the last 5 years — 10

Incubator

Existence of a university-run incubator as evidenced by the incubator's website — 10

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY 50

Funds for community investment and charity work

1% of turnover OR $2 million USD contribution to community projects or charities; this includes funds donated by the institution, as well as money donated and raised by students and faculty — 15

Volunteer hours for community investment and charity work

130 scaled down to 78 volunteer hours (i.e. 2.5 scaled down to 1.5 hours per week over 12 months) for each faculty and student (total FTE) in a 12-month period — 15

Regional human capital development

Students from university region

50% scaled down to 30% of students hailing from the university's region

OR

Graduates employed in region

50% scaled down to 30% of graduates employed in the university's region

— 10

Environmental impact

2 points each:

1. Sustainability website
2. Energy conservation program
3. Water conservation program
4. Recycling program
5. Transportation policy website

— 10

INCLUSIVENESS 50

Scholarships and bursaries

Scholarship funds
2% of turnover spent by institution on funds for scholarships, grants, and bursaries

OR

Students on 50% scholarship
1% of students on scholarships covering at least 50% of fees

15

Disabled access

3 points each:

1. Support services for mental health conditions
2. Built-in accessibility computer systems for visually impaired
3. Sign language interpreter or note-takers for hearing impaired
4. Map identifying wheelchair ramps, disabled toilets and parking access
5. Dedicated academic support for students with learning disabilities

15

Student cohort diversity

Gender balance
50:50 ratio scaled down to 60:40 for either gender

OR

Ethnic diversity
40% scaled down to 10% of study body made up of ethnic minority groups

10

Low-income outreach

Low-income students
15% scaled down to 5% of students identified as low-income

OR

Low-income funds
1% of turnover or $2 million USD investment to recruit or support low-income students

10

CLASSIFYING ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Institutions taking part in QS Stars will either be assessed in the **Research** or **Academic Development** category. The classifications below were inspired by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education in the US. QS uses the following classifications strictly as guidelines and not restrictive measures to classify institutions.

QS research intensive classification guidelines

- Large class size ratio of approximately 1 to 50 FTE faculty to FTE student body or higher
- High ratio of post-graduate and professional courses to undergraduate courses
- High financial support for faculty research
- Faculty spend majority of working hours per week on research rather than teaching
- Faculty spend less time in preparation for formal classroom teaching
- Research and publication productivity are weighed heavily for tenure decisions; teaching functions are not ignored but they receive considerably less weight in tenure decisions
- The career success of the institution is heavily based on faculty research outputs

QS teaching-intensive classification guidelines

- Small class size ratio of approximately 1 to 8 FTE faculty to FTE student body
- High ratio of undergraduate courses to post-graduate and professional courses
- Low financial support for faculty research
- Faculty spend most of their hours per week in formal classroom instructions for undergraduate courses
- Faculty spend fewer working hours per week on research rather than teaching
- Faculty assessed on the student interaction within the classroom and during faculty office hours more than research outputs
- The career success of the institution is heavily based on scholarly creativity in the classroom

The QS classifications take into account three key aspects of each university in order to assign them to the research or teaching intensive track under the QS Stars methodology.

1. Research Intensity

The level of research activity is evaluated based on the number of retrievable documents from Scopus during a recent five-year period.

	RESEARCH INTENSITY	CLASSIFICATION
VH	Very High	Research Intensive
H	High	
M	Medium	Teaching Intensive
L	Low	

2. Student Body Size

Based on the (full time equivalent) size of the degree-seeking student body.

	SIZE	STUDENTS	CLASSIFICATION
XL	Extra Large	More than 30,000	Research Intensive
L	Large	>= 12,000	
M	Medium	>= 5,000	Teaching Intensive
S	Small	Fewer than 5,000	

3. Subject Range

This category is based on the institution's provision of programs in the five broad faculty areas used when ranking universities.

	FOCUS	FACULTY AREA	CLASSIFICATION
FC	Full Comprehensive	More than 5 faculty areas	Research Intensive
CO	Comprehensive	5 faculty areas	
FO	Focused	More than 2 faculty areas	Teaching Intensive
SP	Specialist	2 or 1 faculty areas	

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