

General information

Rankings continue to capture the headlines, but many universities have become increasingly interested in a form of assessment that judges them solely on their own qualities, rather than in relation to other institutions.

More than 70 universities have applied for QS Stars, which provide an overall rating and also highlight areas of excellence in particular aspects of their performance. Successful universities are awarded between one and five Stars.

A typical one-star university will be providing a good standard of education while building a domestic reputation. Those awarded five stars must be world-class in a broad range of areas, enjoy an excellent reputation and have cutting-edge facilities and internationally renowned research and teaching faculty.

The QS Stars system is designed to allow institutions to shine, irrespective of their size, shape and mission. Stars are awarded based on an audit by the QS Intelligence Unit, with separate ratings published for each of the criteria. The system offers an international standard for comparison for any participating institution and is particularly useful for universities that are focused on raising their international profile.

Stars are proving attractive to universities that are yet to make a mark on the world rankings, as well as some that are already well-placed. They recognize strengths that may be overlooked in rankings.

Almost 30 criteria contribute towards the maximum 1,000 points awarded in the assessment of QS Stars. They are grouped into eight categories: research, employability, teaching, infrastructure, internationalisation, innovation, engagement and the institution's standing in specialist subjects. This can be demonstrated either through QS ranking positions or through internationally recognized accreditation.

Ben Sowter, who heads the QS Intelligence Unit, which is responsible for the Stars system, said: "A star rating assesses institutional performance in greater detail than can feasibly be accommodated in ranking results."

"It can encourage users and readers to understand that ranking results ought to be analyzed and contextualized rather than simply taken at face value. It can also provide additional important information that may be used during the earliest stages of the university decision-making process."

Advantages for university:

- Shines a light on the university's excellence;
- Improves international recognition and allows the university to reach out to more students;
- Increased web presence;
- The QS Stars badge will appear on the institutions profile pages on topuniversities.com which receives over 14 million visits a year;
- Increased media awareness;
- Selected participating institutions can take part in the numerous QS Stars PR campaigns;
- May be used as an auditing tool to help improve institution's performance.

References:

<http://www.topuniversities.com/qs-stars/qs-stars-new-university-rating>
<http://www.iu.qs.com/services/qs-stars/>