

Omvärlds-  
analys för  
högskolan

Arbetsrapport nr 4

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# Rankning av universitet och högskolor

En internationell översikt

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**Rankning av universitet och högskolor – En internationell  
översikt**

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# Inledning

Den senaste tiden har rankning av universitet och högskolor varit en högaktuell diskussionsfråga i Sverige. Eftersom det rör sig om ett relativt nytt internationellt fenomen kan det vara av intresse att belysa vilka aktörer som i olika länder gett sig in på området, vilken metodik de tillämpar och hur hela rankningsförfarandet bedömts av dem som utsätts för processen: universitet och högskolor.

En fullständig genomgång av den alltmer vildvuxna floran av rankningar runt om i världen är inte möjlig. Denna rapport är därför koncentrerad till några av de mer uppmärksammade varianterna. Att tyngdpunkten kommit att läggas på USA beror naturligtvis på att det är där som fenomenet först uppstod. Det är också där som det utvecklats till en veritabel industri. Enligt uppskattningar av amerikanska forskare rör det sig om intäkter för tidskrifter och förlag om cirka 16 miljoner dollar (cirka 128 milj. kronor) per år.

Den sammanställning som gjorts i den här rapporten är inte tillkommen i polemiskt syfte. Självfallet kan dock urval och presentation ha styrts av författarens skepsis till vissa typer av jämförelser. Avsikten är ändå att ge underlag för den fortsatta debatten om hur man bäst kan ge studenter och allmänhet en begriplig och välgrundad bild av kvalitet och relevans i den mångfacetterade verksamhet som bedrivs vid universitet och högskolor.

# USA

## U.S. News & World Report

Sedan 1983 har U.S. News & World Report publicerat sina tabeller med rankningar av amerikanska universitet och högskolor. Det är den äldsta och mest väletablerade av de amerikanska rankningarna.

Under de år som gått har U.S. News hela tiden förändrat sin metodik, inte minst som en följd av den kritik och den livliga debatt som varje år följt på publiceringen av listorna. I samband med 1999 års rankning har tidskriften som vanligt gjort en utförlig kommentar. Där säger man inledningsvis att det aldrig kommer att bli någon enighet om hur man skall kunna ranka universitet och högskolor. Redaktionen har ändå valt att fortsätta år efter år eftersom man anser att man gör studenterna en tjänst genom sina bedömningar. Dock varnar tidskriften studenterna för att använda rankinglistorna som en ersättning för annan form av information.

När det gäller metodiken säger U.S. News att man arbetar i tre steg:

First, the colleges are categorized by their mission and region. Second, we gather data from each institution on up to 16 separate indicators of academic excellence. Each factor is assigned a weight in the ranking formula that reflects our judgments about which measures of quality matter most. Third, the colleges in each category are ranked against their peer group, based on their composite weighted score.

Huvuddelen av de data som tidskriften använder kommer från högskolorna själva. 1999 var det 92% av berörda institutioner som svarat på de utsända frågeformulären. För de högskolor som inte svarar samlas material så långt som möjligt in från officiella källor. När det sedan gäller klassificeringen av de olika grupperna av högskolor utgår man från de i USA allmänt accepterade definitioner som utarbetats av The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching:

The 228 "national universities," for example, offer a full range of undergraduate majors, plus master's and doctoral degrees. They emphasize faculty research. The 162 "national liberal arts colleges" focus almost exclusively on undergraduate education. They award at least 40 percent of their degrees in liberal arts disciplines.

The 504 "regional universities" offer a full range of undergraduate programs and master's degrees but few, if any, doctoral programs. The 429 "regional liberal arts colleges," like the national colleges, focus on undergraduate education. They are generally less selective, however, and grant fewer than 40 percent of their degrees in liberal arts disciplines. Both categories of regional schools are further subdivided into four geographic regions—North, South, Midwest, and West—and the schools in each region are ranked against each other.

The final group, the "specialty schools," includes the five U.S. uniformed service academies and institutions that dedicate themselves to the performing and fine arts, business, and engineering. We display data for these institutions in our guidebook and in the directory, but we do not rank these schools. Across categories, schools with enrollments of fewer than 250 students are excluded from the rankings.

När det gäller de indikatorer för olika former av "akademisk kvalitet" som tidskriften tillämpar i sin ranking faller de inom sju breda kategorier:

*Academic reputation; retention of students; faculty resources; student selectivity; financial resources; alumni giving; and, for national universities and liberal arts colleges only, "graduation rate performance,"* the difference between the proportion of students expected to graduate and the proportion that actually do. The indicators include both "input measures," which reflect the quality of students, faculty, and other resources used in education, and "outcome measures," which signal how well the institution educates its student body.

Det kriterium som U.S. News lägger störst vikt vid är "academic reputation" som tilldelas hela 25 procent vikt i den slutliga sammanställningen. Att man väljer just detta som en avgörande faktor beror naturligtvis på den speciella situationen i USA, där en examen från ett välrenommerat college har stor betydelse för den sökandes möjligheter på arbetsmarknaden. Underlaget för bedömningen inhämtas med hjälp av ett opinionsinstitut som vänder sig med enkäter till rektorer, utbildningschefer och antagningschefer vid universitet och högskolor.

Kriteriet "retention" handlar om hur stor del av studenterna som fullföljer sina studier fram till slutexamen:

This measure has two components: a school's six-year graduation rate (80 percent of the retention score) and its freshman retention rate (20 percent of the score). The graduation rate reflects the average proportion of a graduating class that earns a degree in six years or less; U.S. News considered the classes that started between 1988 and

1991. Freshman retention indicates the average proportion of freshmen entering between 1993 and 1996 who returned the following fall. The higher the proportion, the better a school's record at satisfying students and at offering what they need to graduate in a reasonable time.

När det gäller "faculty resources" handlar det om hur studiesituationen ter sig vid de olika högskolorna, inte minst om kvantitet och kvalitet när det gäller lärarstaben:

The commitment a school has made to superb instruction and to student interaction with faculty is judged by examining five factors during the 1997-98 academic year. Class size, which accounts for 40 percent of the faculty-resources score, represents the proportion of classes with fewer than 20 students and the proportion of classes with 50 or more. Faculty salary (35 percent) is the average full-time faculty pay, plus benefits, during the 1996-97 and 1997-98 academic years, adjusted for regional differences in the cost of living ... We also weigh the proportion of professors with the highest degree in their field (15 percent); student-faculty ratio (5 percent); and proportion of the faculty that is full time (5 percent).

Variabeln "class-size" är relativt komplicerad och det förefaller för en utomstående som om det här kan vara svårt att få fram jämförbara uppgifter från de olika högskolorna:

The class-size variable is based only on the information that U.S. News receives about the number of class sections with fewer than 20 and with 50 or more students. To collect data on class size, U.S. News asks colleges to distinguish between class sections and subsections. Undergraduate class sections are courses in which degree-seeking undergraduates enroll for credit. Subsections include laboratory, recitation, and discussion subsections that supplement (and meet separately from) the lecture portion of a course. Both class sections and subsections exclude individual instruction such as thesis research or music instruction.

När det gäller "student selectivity" är kriterierna de antagna studenternas resultat på något av de vanligaste amerikanska högskoleproven och deras betyg från high school samt söktrycket, dvs. förhållandet mellan antalet sökande och antagna. Här har U.S. News uppenbarligen en del svårigheter med det underliggande materialet eftersom vissa högskolor inte antar alla studenter efter betygs- eller provkriterier medan andra inte vill lämna ut sina antagningsdata. Tidskriften får därför i vissa fall uppskatta värden för denna variabel.



Kriteriet "financial resources" är ett genomsnittsvärde av de utgifter per student som varje universitet och högskola har inom följande områden: "instruction, research, public service, academic support, student services, institutional support, and operations and maintenance".

För amerikanska universitet och colleges är som bekant "alumni" ett centralt begrepp. Det är de f.d. eleverna som spelar en stor roll för en högskolas samhällskontakter och gåvointäkter och det är därför naturligt i ett amerikanskt sammanhang att "alumni giving" blir ett särskilt kriterium. Ju mer de f.d. studenterna donerar till en skola, desto nöjdare har de, enligt tidskriftens resonemang, varit med dess undervisning.

Det sista kriteriet, "graduation rate performance" definieras på följande sätt:

This indicator, developed by U.S. News (and previously known as value added), is designed to capture the effect of the college's programs and policies on the graduation rate of students after controlling for spending and student aptitude, which also affect graduation rates. We arrive at a score by measuring the difference between a school's six-year graduation rate for the class that entered in 1991 and the predicted rate for the class. The predicted rate is calculated using a statistical model known as regression, which accounts for the standardized test scores of these students as incoming freshmen and the school's expenditures on them over the years. If the actual graduation rate is higher than the predicted rate, the college is enhancing the students' achievement.

När data för alla dessa variabler föreligger gör U.S. News en beräkning av varje högskolas placering på rankinglistan enligt en ganska komplicerad procedur:

To arrive at a school's rank, we first calculated a score for each indicator. The school with the highest value for each measure was assigned a grade of 100 percent, and every other school's grade for the indicator was calculated as a percentage of the highest value. The resulting scores were weighted and then totaled to determine the scores for each category of indicators—reputation, retention, faculty resources, and so on. The category scores, in turn, were weighted and totaled to arrive at a final score. For the national universities, the method differs slightly because the expenditures at institutions with large research programs and medical schools are substantially higher than those at the rest of the schools in the category. Therefore, instead of weighting the category scores, we weighted the ranks corresponding to those scores. Final scores for each ranked school were rounded to the nearest whole number, in recognition of the fact that small statistical differences among institutions cannot truly distinguish one school from another.

I den sist citerade meningen ligger naturligtvis ett indirekt erkännande från tidskriftens sida att det finns ett slags bedräglig exakthet i hela rankningsproceduren som inte har riktigt stöd i verkligheten. Det är inte minst detta som kritikerna i den akademiska världen skjuter in sig på (mer om detta nedan).

U.S. News and World Reports rankningar finns på internet under adressen:  
<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/cohome.htm>

## **Business Week**

Om U.S. News & World Report främst försöker hitta något slags objektiva kriterier i sin granskning har Business Week valt en helt annan metodologi. Man har också ett mer begränsat syfte med sina rankningar; de rör enbart utbildningar inom området "business and management" (eller B-schools som tidskriften kallar dem):

Let the customer speak. That's the philosophy behind BUSINESS WEEK's ranking of the best business schools. We think B-schools have two customers: the graduates, who trade their suits for backpacks; and recruiters, who seek out the best and brightest from among the business schools' ranks. The frank views we receive from both groups have made BUSINESS WEEK's ranking a crucial source of information on business schools since it was first undertaken a decade ago.

We asked for feedback from graduates of the Class of 1998 at 61 top schools—10 more than in 1996. On the recruiter side, 259 companies who hired a total of 10,348 new MBAs this year gave us their input.

I den undersökning som riktades till tidigare studenter skickade Business Week ut ett frågeformulär med 39 frågor till 9.598 slumpvis utvalda studenter som examinerades under 1998:

We got back 6,020 replies, or a response rate of 63%. For the first time, we let grads complete the survey either online or on paper, and two-thirds of the respondents took the digital option. Grads were asked to answer most questions on a scale of 1 to 10. One example: "How would you judge the responsiveness of the faculty and administration to students' concerns and opinions?" In this case, an answer of 1 meant poor, while 10 stood for outstanding.

The 1998 surveys count for 50% of a school's student-satisfaction score. The other 50% comes from the responses of 4,891 graduates in the 1996 poll and 4,626 from 1994. Each carries a weight of 25%. This is done to ensure that short-lived changes don't have too much impact.

När det gäller den undersökning som riktade sig till rekryterare i ledande företag ställdes frågorna till 350 företag av vilka 259 svarade.

Recruiters were asked to rank their top 20 schools in order, based on the quality of the students and their company's experience with the graduates. The top school got 20 points, and No.20 got one point. Each school's total score was then divided by the number of responding companies that recruited MBAs from that school. Because larger schools tend to attract more recruiters, we gave some of the smaller schools an upward adjustment to counter any possible bias.

När det gäller den slutliga sammanställningen har Business Week valt att lägga ihop de samlade betygen från de båda grupperna för att få en slutlig tabell:

To come up with its overall ranking, Business Week combines the raw scores of both surveys rather than totaling a school's rank in both polls and dividing it by two. This approach accounts for the statistical significance of one school's lead over another in each poll and gives more credit to schools with a commanding advantage in one area. Because there are greater differences among the schools in the corporate survey, recruiter opinion tends to have a slightly greater weight in the overall ranking.

Om man skall göra någon kommentar till Business Weeks ranking är det kanske att de större skillnaderna i rekryterarnas bedömningar inte är så förvånande. Det kan väl också sägas att deras sakkunskap om de bedömda högskolorna kan vara något varierande. Medan personer som arbetar inom den akademiska världen kan ha en ganska välgrundad mening om akademisk status kan det vara svårare för en "praktiker" att ha en deciderad uppfattning om de olika utbildningsanordnarnas för- och nackdelar.

Business Weeks ranking finns på Internet under adressen:  
<http://www.businessweek.com/1998/42/covstory.htm>

## Yahoo Internet Life Magazine

I tre år har Yahoo Internet Life Magazine rankat "the most wired colleges" i USA, dvs. de högskolor som anses vara de mest och bäst datoriserade på olika plan. I en intervju i *The Chronicle of Higher Education* beskrev en av de ansvariga för 1999 års ranking hur den hade gått till:

The most important factors in calculating the rankings were those that showed technology in use to benefit the lives of students, said Robert Bernstein, one of the reporters who compiled this year's survey. Colleges and universities with well-developed on-line admissions and registration systems scored high. Having courses that use the Internet for research or class communication also improved an institution's showing.

This year, he said, the survey put less emphasis on the details of each campus's technology infrastructure, such as the number of personal computers, the size of the campus network, and the vaunted "port-to-pillow" ratio, which compares the number of high-speed network connections with the number of students in residence halls. It is "a statistic that isn't really valuable at all," Mr. Bernstein said.

I betygssättningen av högskolorna använde tidskriften bl.a. följande kriterier:

- Computers per 100 students: Number of computer terminals per 100 enrolled students
- Recent computer buys (%): Percentage of public computer purchased in the last two years
- Computer available 24/7 (%): Percentage of public computers made available around the clock
- Wired dorms (%): Percentage of on-campus undergrads registered for dedicated network connections
- Computer required/discounted: Students must own a computer/school offers purchase discounts
- Online registration: Students can register for classes online
- Distance learning: The school offers programmes that are taught entirely on-line
- Web space: Amount of web space guaranteed to students
- Multiple e-mail accounts: Students can set up multiple e-mail accounts at no extra charge

Yahoos ranking finns på internet under adressen:  
<http://www.zdnet.com/yil/content/college/>

## Princeton Review

Princeton Review är ett "test preparation company" som sysslar med att förbereda studenter för college i USA. Man har varje år omkring två miljoner kunder, dvs studenter som får hjälp med att bl.a. förbereda sig för olika slags högskoleprov.

Företaget ger också ut en uppmärksammat college-guide, där 311 högskolor rankas utifrån en rad aspekter, både akademiska och sociala. Det är studenternas åsikter som styr i denna ranking som dels finns utgiven som bok, dels tillgänglig via *Princeton Review On-line*.

I ett pressmeddelande beskriver man sin ranking på följande sätt:

56,000 Students rate their colleges on topics from profs to party scene -- dorms to campus food.

If it's top-notch teaching you're after, Reed College has the #1 academic program and the best profs. The most well-run university is the U.S. Military Academy—yes Sir. For the best dorms, check in at Randolph-Macon Woman's College. And if social life is paramount, the #1 party school is The State University of New York at Albany. Says who? The people most in the know: 56,000 students at 311 of the nation's top colleges surveyed by The Princeton Review for its annually-updated guide to the best colleges, now out in its 1999 edition: *THE BEST 311 COLLEGES* (Random House/Princeton Review, August 31, 1998, \$20 paperback) by Edward Custard with Tom Meltzer, Eric Owens, and Christine Chung.

Student responses to The Princeton Review survey—the largest on-going poll of student opinions of their colleges—determine the book's unique annual ranking lists of the top 20 (or bottom 20) colleges in 60 categories. Categories include: academics, financial aid, administration, dorms, food, and aspects of the campus culture: political leanings, social life, race/class interaction, and more. Attached is a short list of categories showing the colleges ranked #1 on them in this edition, and info on how the survey is conducted.

Published since 1992, this guide to the colleges The Princeton Review considers the best in the nation (less than 10% of America's 3,500 colleges are in it) features student-based rankings of the schools to give people considering them an inside perspective on what students who attend them say about them. Though the rankings offer an unscientific index of campus life and customer satisfaction, over the years they have: caused colleges to change their curricula, food, and

campus policies, generated considerable news, commentary and discussion, and even been the subject of a Doonesbury cartoon.

Materialet finns tillgängligt på internet under adressen:

<http://www.review.com/college/templates/temp1.cfm?body=index.cfm>

## The Gourman Report

En mycket omtvistad "college guidebook" med rankningar är den som producerats av en enskild akademiker som heter Jack Gourman. Den beskrivs i en artikel i *The Chronicle of Higher Education* på följande sätt:

A college guidebook arriving in stores this week states, with what appears to be scientific precision, that the best undergraduate history program in the United States can be found at Yale University, which received a score of 4.93 on a scale of 2.01 to 4.99. The guide, published by the Princeton Review and Random House, gives second place to the University of California at Berkeley (4.92), and third to Princeton University (4.91).

The close scores are hardly unique to the history-program rankings in the book. Most of the scores for the 140 disciplines and 1,273 undergraduate institutions ranked in the 394-page guide differ by only 1/100th of a point, with no wider gaps and no ties -- an outcome that researchers call a near-impossibility, statistically.

What's more, college officials say they have no idea how the rankings were determined, because no one ever contacted the institutions for the information.

The book itself -- The Gourman Report -- hailed on its cover as containing "the most authoritative and accurate assessments of higher education," provides no information on its methodology.

Gourmans bok har publicerats i rätt många år nu men den har aldrig fått samma status som den årliga rapporteringen i U.S. News & World Report. På senare tid har den dock fått vissa kopplingar till Princeton Review och den ges ut av det välkända förlaget Random House. Kritiken mot bristen på redovisad metodologi är dock stark från akademiskt håll men den bemöts av de ekonomiska intressenterna bakom boken:

Editors at the Princeton Review say the criticism is unfounded and comes mostly from institutions that score poorly. The editors point to dozens of colleges that have cited it in their public-relations materials, and to other institutions that send letters of support...

Mr. Schnittman, the Princeton Review editor, says no explanation of the methodology is needed in the book. Only reporters, not consumers, he says, typically read the methodology section in rankings reports. "I don't understand the methodology behind the Consumer Price Index, and yet I believe it," he says.

I den senaste utgåvan av Gourmans bok rankas inte bara utbildningsprogram utan också en rad kringfaktorer som bibliotek och styrelser. Men för många högskoleföreträdare är hela företaget vilseledande:

"It just doesn't make sense, especially when you don't know the methodology," says Tom Krattenmaker, a spokesman for Swarthmore College. The colleges being ranked "are so different in obvious ways, it's like comparing apples and chickens."

Most troubling to many college officials is the apparent stealth campaign that Dr. Gourman conducts to collect the data. "No one here has ever received a call or a survey from Gourman, so it's really hard to comment," says Lisa Baker, a spokeswoman for the University of Michigan, which ranked third in the guide.

"While we may disagree with U.S. News & World Report, at least we know on what basis they measure," says Michal Regunberg, vice-president for public affairs at Brandeis University...

## Critical Comparisons

Som framgår av den översikt av den amerikanska debatten som presenteras nedan finns det flera försök att möta de kommersiella rankingarna med olika typer av motåtgärder. *Critical comparisons of American Universities and Colleges* är en webbplats på internet som försöker hjälpa amerikanska familjer och studenter i valet av högskoleutbildning. Man samlar information från olika källor och försöker presentera fakta om de olika universiteten på ett så objektivt sätt som möjligt. Inte minst bygger man på officiellt material från US Department of Education.

Utgångspunkten är en markerad kritik av alla försök att göra tabeller av så komplexa företeelser som universitet och högskolor. Också det kommersiella syftet bakom rankingarna ifrågasätts:

Some college guides are short on facts, because they work for the schools they review, publishing their glowing self-assessments (for a price). Others are simply silly: in order to sell magazines they

proclaim a few colleges "The Best," as though what's right for someone else must be right for you, too.

CRITICAL COMPARISONS is different -- we're education professionals, we give you the facts, and we leave it to you to decide. Our information comes from the best sources: the U.S. Department of Education's exhaustive IPEDS database, studies conducted by the National Research Council, and crime statistics compiled by colleges and universities in compliance with Federal law. The interactive graphs and statistical analyses in each school's CC report enable you to 'compare and contrast' your choices in a way never before possible.

Critical Comparisons är också helt nätbaserad och nås under adressen:  
<http://www.memex-press.com/cc/index.html>



# Kanada

## Maclean's

I Kanada är det den ledande veckotidskriften Maclean's som står för rankningen av landets universitet och högskolor. Den senaste publicerades i november 1998. För att undvika alltför orimliga jämförelser mellan olika typer av högskolor gör Maclean's en indelning av dem i tre olika grupper:

The Maclean's ranking compares universities with similar structures and mandates. Using such factors as research funding, diversity of offerings and the range of PhD programs to define peer groups, the universities are placed in one of three categories:

**MEDICAL/DOCTORAL:** Universities with a broad range of PhD programs and research, as well as medical schools.

**COMPREHENSIVE:** Universities with a significant amount of research activity and a wide range of programs - including professional degrees - at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

**PRIMARILY UNDERGRADUATE:** Universities largely focused on undergraduate education, with relatively few graduate programs.

I de olika kategorierna använder sig tidskriften av ett antal faktorer som kan sammanföras i sex olika grupper. De tilldelas också olika vikt i sammanvägningen. *Undergraduate universities* rankas enligt 20 olika kriterier, *Comprehensive schools* enligt 21 och *Medical/Doctoral* enligt 22. Det betyder att de skilda kriteriegrupperna tilldelas något olika vikt i den sammanlagda bedömningen:

**STUDENT BODY (21 to 22 per cent of final score):** Students are enriched by the input of their peers. For that reason, Maclean's collects the incoming students' average high-school grades (12%), and the proportion of those with averages of 75 per cent or more (3%). As a measure of drawing power, the magazine also counts the proportion of out-of-province students in the first-year undergraduate class (1%) and, for Comprehensive and Medical/Doctoral universities, the percentage of international students at the graduate level (1%). The student-body section also includes graduation rates (2%): the percentage of full-time undergraduate

students in their second year (after the initial wave of first-year dropouts) who go on to graduate from the institution within on year of the expected time period. In addition, Maclean's collects data on the success of the student body at winning national academic awards (3%) over the past five years.

CLASSES (17 to 18 per cent): The rankings embrace the entire distribution of class sizes at the first- and second-year levels (7.5% for Primarily Undergraduate universities, 7% for the other two categories), as well as the third- and fourth-year levels (7.5% for the Primarily Undergraduate category, 7% for the others). Class-size groupings are: 1 to 25; 26 to 50; 51 to 100; 101 to 250; 251 to 500; 501 plus. Maclean's also ranks schools on the percentage of first-year classes taught by tenured and tenure-track professors (3%), a measure of how much access new students have to top faculty.

FACULTY (17 per cent): The rankings assess the calibre of faculty by calculating the percentage of those with PhDs (3%), and the number who win national awards (3%). In addition, the magazine measures the success of eligible faculty in securing grants from each of the three major federal granting agencies (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Medical Research Council of Canada), as well as the Canada Council, taking into account both the number and the dollar value received last year. Social sciences and humanities grants and Canada Council grants (5.5%) and medical/science grants (5.5%) were tallied as separate indicators.

FINANCES (12 per cent): This section examines the amount of money available for current expenses per weighted full-time-equivalent student (3.3%), as well as the percentage of the budget spent on student services (4.3%) and scholarships and bursaries (4.3%). When presenting their general operating budget, institutions deducted any funds used to pay off debt.

LIBRARY (12 per cent): This section assesses the breadth and currency of the university's collection. Schools received points for the number of volumes and volume equivalents per total number of students (4% for Primarily Undergraduate and Comprehensive, 3% for Medical/ Doctoral). An additional indicator, measuring total holdings, regardless of student numbers, was used in the Medical/ Doctoral category (1%) to acknowledge the importance of extensive on-campus collections in those universities. Maclean's measured as well the percentage of a university's operating budget that was allocated to library services (4%) and the percentage of the actual library budget that was spent on updating the collection (4%).

REPUTATION (20 per cent): This section reflects a school's reputation with its own graduates, as well as within the community at large. When looking at alumni support, schools received points for the number-- not the value--of gifts to the university over the past five years (5%). For its reputational survey (15%), Maclean's sent surveys to 4,697 chief executive officers of corporations in every region, a broad range of university administrators, and high-school guidance counsellors across Canada. The rate of return was 12.4%. They rated the schools in three categories: Highest Quality, Most Innovative and Leaders of Tomorrow.

När det gäller rankningen i fråga om "academic reputation" ställde Maclean's frågan till 4.697 olika personer runt om i Kanada. Det rörde sig om bl.a. studievägledare, akademiska lärare och företagsledare. Svarefrekvensen var dock låg: 12.4%. Man studerade också ett universitets anseende genom att titta på givmildheten från f.d. studenter ("alumni donations").

Mer om den kanadeniska rankningen finns på internet under adressen: <http://www.macleans.ca/pipeline/unimag/98introessay.html>

# Storbritannien

## The Times Good University Guide

1999 års upplaga av The Times Good University Guide publicerades under våren och ledde som vanligt till en omfattande publicitet och debatt i Storbritannien. En av de nyheter som slogs upp på The Times förstasida (23/4) var att Imperial College i London i år har gått om Oxford och nu intagit andraplatsen i ligatabellen efter Cambridge.

De åtta kriterier som rankningen bygger på är följande:

- Teaching assessment,
- Research,
- Entry standards,
- Staff-student ratios,
- Library and computer spending,
- Facilities spending,
- Degree levels och
- Graduate destinations (andelen studenter med arbete eller fortsatta studier efter examen)

Tidningen har belyst olika sidor av rankningen i ett stort antal reportage och artiklar och beskriver sin metodik på följande sätt:

The ranking of universities by The Times is produced entirely from published statistics. Positions are determined by a "poll of polls", in which results from the eight indicators are converted to a points score and aggregated.

The Higher Education Statistics Agency provided data on entry qualifications, staffing levels, library and computer spending, degree classifications, graduate destinations, entry grades and student facilities. These figures are for 1996-97, the latest available when the book of the guide went to press. The other sources are the three higher education funding councils, for the teaching and research assessments. None of the organisations was involved in aggregating or manipulating the data.

A team of three university experts - Dr Bernard Kingston (careers), Dr Andrew Hindmarsh (admissions) and Professor Bob Loynes (statistics) - compiled the ranking. The top university for each

indicator is awarded 100 points, the remainder a proportion based on the unadjusted scores.

Teaching assessments (weight 2.5)  
Research (weight 1.5)  
Entry standards (weight 1)  
Staff-student ratios (weight 1)  
Library and computer spending (weight 1)  
Facilities spending (weight 1)  
Firsts and 2:1s degrees (weight 1)  
Graduate Destinations (weight 1)  
1999 Score (max. 1,000)

Att rankningen trots de redovisade kriterierna - och trots att den delvis bygger på officiella utvärderingar - är förenad med betydande problem framgår av det som The Times själv skriver om undersökningen. Imperial College är en högskola koncentrerad på de två områdena teknik och medicin och är naturligtvis inte riktigt jämförbar med ett universitet som Oxford med dess breda spektrum av utbildningar. Tidningen säger också att placeringen för de "nya" universiteten (tidigare polytechnics) påverkas negativt av det faktum att de ofta har en mer öppen tillträdespolicy med försök att attrahera nya grupper och att de inte har så stora anslag för forskning.

Efter Oxford kommer London School of Economics på fjärde plats, också det en relativt specialiserad högskola som inte utan vidare kan jämföras med ett fullständigt universitet. På femte plats ligger University College London och på sjätte School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) i London, ytterligare en specialiserad institution. SOAS har tidigare i just den egenskapen varit utesluten från tabellerna men har själv bett att få vara med.

The Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) - den mer specialiserade högskoletidskriften - har också publicerat tabeller över de olika kriterierna, liksom rankningar per ämnesområde. Eftersom THES riktar sig till en kritisk akademisk publik har man dock avstått från försöket att ranka hela universitet och högskolor.

I en kommentar medger The Times att bedömningarna kan uppfattas som orättvisa, särskilt i förhållandet mellan "gamla" och "nya" universitet. Den senare kategorin har ju delvis har en annan utbildningspolitisk uppgift än de traditionella universiteten:

The new universities remain at a disadvantage in the table in the calculation of entry qualifications and research quality. Many of the former polytechnics pride themselves on their open-entry policies to extend access to higher education, while they have only relatively recently received equal treatment in research funding.

There have been only marginal changes to the methods used to compile this year's table, and no new indicators have been included. It is hoped to restore a measure of completion rates when reliable data are available and an indication of value added when there is a consensus on its compilation. The methodology is discussed annually with university representatives.

As in previous years, some famous names are missing from the table, which focuses on multi-faculty institutions primarily serving undergraduates. The Open University, for example, has no full-time students, while Cranfield University and the London Business School are mainly postgraduate. Buckingham University, as a private institution, is not subject to the assessments of the funding councils.

The Times' bedömningar bygger bl.a. på de officiella utvärderingar av grundutbildningen som gjorts av The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) på uppdrag av The Higher Education Funding Council for England. Denna "teaching assessment exercise" finns publicerad med en betygssättning för varje undersökt ämnesinstitution. Det skall dock noteras att dessa betyg inte är satta efter någon absolut skala utan bara återger granskarnas uppfattning om hur väl institutionen lyckats nå sin egen målsättning. (Mer om detta finns på QAA:s hemsida: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/>)

Allt material kring The Times' ranking finns för övrigt tillgängligt på internet tillsammans med ett stort antal kommenterande och analyserande artiklar. Adress: <http://www.the-times.co.uk/gug/>.

Materialet sammanställs också i en mer populär form i en handbok avsedd för studenter som står i begrepp att välja högskola. Där finns också rankingarna kompletterade med information som mer har att göra med de studiesociala faktorer som kan vara av intresse för blivande studenter.

# Tyskland

## Der Spiegel

Den tyska tidskriften Der Spiegel har också under våren 1999 utkommit med en ny ligatabell över Tysklands universitet. Utgångspunkten är dock helt annorlunda än den brittiska. Der Spiegel har låtit intervjua 12.374 studenter från 81 högskolor runt om i landet. De har hämtats från de tolv mest studerade ämnena och de har fått sätta betyg på sin undervisning på en skala 1-6. Tidskriften har också låtit intervjua 1.612 professorer som fått svara på frågan till vilket universitet de skulle skicka sina barn om det gällde studier i det ämne de företräder. Professorerna fick också frågan om vilka universitet de skulle avråda från.

I rangordningen är det studenternas betygssättning som fått den helt avgörande vikten. Det har lett till att det är små (och relativt okända) universitet som kommit högst upp på listan. Det har också gått mycket bra för universiteten i de nya förbundsländerna, dvs. det gamla DDR. I topp ligger Katholische Universität Eichstätt, en liten högskola med 4.000 studenter. Bland de fem bästa har tre östtyska universitet hamnat: Chemnitz, Greifswald och Magdeburg. Stora och välkända universitet som München, Köln, Heidelberg och Hamburg har fått medelmåttiga placeringar medan universitetet i Bonn hamnat sist.

I en kommentar till undersökningen säger Der Spiegels redaktion att resultatet visar på studenternas behov av en begränsad och överblickbar studiemiljö. När det gäller de östtyska universitetens goda betyg pekar man på att två tredjedelar av lärare och personal bytts ut där under åren efter Tysklands återförening. 40 miljarder mark har också pumpats in i de gamla DDR-högskolorna under samma period och de har i många fall fått lokaler och utrustning som är modernare än vid de gamla västtyska högskolorna.

De 16 frågor som de drygt 12.000 studenterna fått svara på är följande:

1. Är undervisningslokalerna sällan eller ofta överfyllda?
2. Inställs undervisningen ofta?
3. Får studenterna plats på de obligatoriska momenten när det enligt studieordningen lämpar sig bäst?
4. Motsvarar undervisningen examensfordringarna?

5. Ger studieplanen tillräckliga valmöjligheter?
6. Handleder lärarna sina studenter i tillräcklig omfattning?
7. Ges det ordentlig tid för diskussion av enskilda arbeten och uppsatser?
8. Är undervisningen relaterad till yrkeslivets krav?
9. Får studenterna lära sig att göra ett självständigt forskningsarbete?
10. Är nödvändiga böcker snabbt tillgängliga?
11. Uppehåller sig studenterna gärna i universitetets arbets- och pausrum?
12. Finns det tillräckligt med datorutrustade arbetsplatser?
13. Är datorplatsernas utrustning up-to-date?
14. Finns det tillräckligt med platser i laboratorier och övningsalar?
15. Är utrustningen i laboratorier och övningsalar helt modern?
16. Hur nöjd är du totalt sett med studieförhållandena?

Att det är en skillnad mellan den studentinriktade bedömningen och den som sker i enlighet med "akademisk status" framgår av det faktum att senare publicerade uppgifter om utländska forskares val av tyska samarbetspartners ger vid handen att de akademiskt/forskningsmässigt högst rankade universiteten är några av dem som hamnat mycket långt ned i der Spiegels listor. Diskrepansen mellan studenternas respektive forskarnas olika bedömningar av de tyska högskolornas status speglar det problematiska i rankingens teori och praktik.

Mer om Der Spiegels undersökning finns på internet:  
<http://www.spiegel.de/unispiegel/>



# Australien

## The Good Universities Guide to Australian Universities.

*The Good Universities Guide to Australian Universities* utges av ett kommersiellt förlag och omfattar sex olika handböcker, varav en är mer generell medan andra tar upp delområden som "post-graduate studies" och ekonomutbildning. En särskild guide handlar om "special opportunities in tertiary education for women and men entering non-traditional fields of study" och ytterligare en ger information om mer studiesociala frågor.

För att undvika den s.k. "äpple/päron-problematiken" gör man i de här guiderna inga ligatabeller över universiteten. I stället betygsätts olika aspekter på de enskilda högskolorna enligt en skala från fem stjärnor till en enda stjärna.

Förlaget presenterar självt sin guide på följande sätt:

*The Good Universities Guide to Australian Universities* is Australia's only independent and authoritative guide to universities, campuses and undergraduate courses throughout Australia. It features unique star ratings and rankings which compare universities and undergraduate courses based on statistical data provided by the universities... The Guide's comprehensive mapping of the undergraduate terrain also includes comparative rankings and in-depth profiles of 39 universities and 21 other institutions accredited to offer bachelor degrees. 30 fields of study are surveyed, including comparisons of which universities do best in which field. Special overviews of TAFE and private colleges which offer diploma courses are also reviewed. The A-Z index contains every undergraduate course and specialisation available.

Ett avsnitt i guiden är ägnat åt ett slags betygsättning av de australiska universiteten i fem betygsgrader i bl.a. följande kategorier:

- Prestige
- Per capita income
- Student demand
- Research performance
- Entry flexibility
- Gender balance
- Aboriginal participation

Man granskar också högskolorna med utgångspunkt i följande faktorer:

- Toughness to get in
- Getting a job
- Graduate starting salaries
- Student-staff ratios
- Educational experience

Underlag för bedömningen hämtas dels från universitet och högskolor, dels från följande officiella organ:

Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA)  
Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA)  
Tertiary admissions centres (TACS)

Antalet stjärnor i betygssättningen bestäms sedan av kriterier som illustreras av bl.a. följande exempel:

*The Toughness to get in campus rating*

\*\*\*\*\* a 5 star rating means that the minimum cut-off scores required for entry by school leavers into courses at this campus put it among the toughest 20 per cent of campuses with similar profiles;

\*\*\*\* 4 stars puts it in the second 20 per cent; and so on.

Cut-off scores are provided by the TACS and converted into a national 100-point scale which is provided by the Tertiary Institutions Services Centre. As some universities have more high-demand courses than others, comparisons are made 'within a field of study' and are based on the average score for entry into courses in each field.

*The Getting a job rating*

\*\*\*\*\* a 5 star rating means the proportion of job-seeking graduates who were successful in getting full-time employment within four months of graduation is high enough to put this campus among the top 20 per cent;

\*\*\*\* 4 stars puts it in the second 20 per cent; and so on.

Based on the Graduate Destinations Survey of graduates conducted by the GCCA.

*The Graduate starting salary rating*

\*\*\*\*\* a 5 star rating means the average starting salaries for new graduates are high enough to put this campus or institution in the top 20 per cent;

\*\*\*\* 4 stars puts it in the second 20 per cent; and so on.

Based on the Graduate Destinations Survey of graduates conducted by the GCCA.

REMEMBER Employment rates and starting salaries are influenced by many things other than the university attended, including differences between cities and regions in levels of demand for graduates.

#### *The Student-staff ratio rating*

\*\*\*\*\* a 5 star rating means there are relatively few students per teaching staff member (among the top 20 per cent of universities);

\*\*\*\* 4 stars puts the university in the second 20 per cent and so on.

Based on data for enrolments as provided by DETYA.

#### *The Educational experience: graduate rating*

\*\*\*\*\* a 5 star rating means graduates rated their courses (for overall satisfaction, teaching quality, and acquisition of generic skills) higher than graduates in similar fields in 80 per cent of other universities;

\*\*\*\* 4 stars means they rated their courses better than for 60 per cent of other institutions; and so on.

Based on the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) survey of graduates conducted by the GCCA.

Mer om den australiska guiden finns på följande internetadress:

<http://www.ashmill.com.au/>

# Asien

## Asiaweek

I genomgången av rankningar i olika länder kan det vara av intresse att också kortfattat nämna den rankning av asiatiska universitet som görs av tidskriften *Asiaweek*. Redaktionen beskriver den själv på följande sätt:

Like the U.S. News & World Report in America and the Times in Britain, Asiaweek aims to measure the academic excellence of universities by quantifying their achievements. In our first survey in 1997, we sent questionnaires to 78 schools. Last year, we asked 95 multi-disciplinary universities and 41 science and technology institutes to participate. (We split the list into two to avoid comparing apples with oranges - specialized schools have a narrower focus and accept fewer students than their broad-spectrum counterparts.) This year, the survey's universe has grown even bigger. We asked 149 Asian universities - 104 multi-disciplinary and 45 science and technology - to fill up an eight-page questionnaire. Seven of ten decided to participate, an improvement from last year's 65.4% response rate...

Asiaweek hävdar att det är viktigt att man i en undersökning av denna typ balanserar subjektiva och mer objektiva kriterier:

Still, we maintain that statistics are as important as subjective judgments in evaluating a university. A school's achievements can and should be quantified, and compared with those of its peers, if only to assure students and parents - and the taxpayers who often fund them - that the university is being run as it should. "It's good for the government to see the result of its investment," says Vice-Chancellor Lim Pin of the National University of Singapore. "Your survey also attracts collaboration with other institutions because it is conducted independently, and there is peer-assessment."

For the 1999 ranking, 80% of the total score is allocated to quality of students (25%), quality of teachers (25%), research output (20%) and financial resources (10%). To ensure comparability, all money figures were converted into PPP dollars, which take into account purchasing power in each country. The remaining 20% is devoted to a subjective evaluation by the universities themselves. Each was asked

to rate its peers on a scale of 1 to 5 based on their judgment of the school's overall excellence.

Också Asiaweeks ranking finns tillgänglig på internet under adressen:  
<http://www.pathfinder.com/asiaweek/universities/index.html>

# Debatten

Som redan framgått av den deskriptiva delen har frågan om rankning vällat en intensiv debatt i framför allt akademiska kretsar och i synnerhet i USA där företelsen har funnits längst. Självklart har det förts en intensiv diskussion också i andra länder men den här korta översikten kommer att koncentreras till den amerikanska debatten.

En sökning på Internet ger vid handen att det finns mycket skrivet i ämnet. Några av de viktigaste inläggen finns samlade på en särskild hemsida som upprättats av Education and Social Science Library vid University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign:

<http://www.library.uiuc.edu/edx/rankings.htm>

Där finns också en College Ranking Bibliography som är av intresse för den som vill tränga djupare in i ämnet.

## Kritiken från Stanford

Ett av de mest omtalade inläggen i den amerikanska debatten var det som gjordes av Stanford University's rektor Gerhard Casper i ett brev till U.S. News & World Report's redaktör hösten 1996:

September 23, 1996

Mr. James Fallows, Editor  
U.S. News & World Report  
2400 N Street NW  
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Mr. Fallows:

I appreciate that, as the new editor of U.S. News & World Report, you have much to do at this moment. However, it is precisely because you are the new editor that I write to you, personally.

I emphasize you, because of your demonstrated willingness to examine journalism in the same way that journalism examines all other facets of society. And I say personally because my letter is for your consideration, and not a letter to the editor for publication.

My timing also is related to the recent appearance of the annual U.S. News "America's Best Colleges" rankings. As the president of a university that is among the top-ranked universities, I hope I have the standing to persuade you that much about these rankings - particularly their specious formulas and spurious precision - is utterly misleading. I wish I could forego this letter since, after all, the rankings are only another newspaper story. Alas, alumni, foreign newspapers, and many others do not bring a sense of perspective to the matter.

I am extremely skeptical that the quality of a university - any more than the quality of a magazine - can be measured statistically. However, even if it can, the producers of the U.S. News rankings remain far from discovering the method. Let me offer as prima facie evidence two great public universities: the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor and the University of California-Berkeley. These clearly are among the very best universities in America - one could make a strong argument for either in the top half-dozen. Yet, in the last three years, the U.S. News formula has assigned them ranks that lead many readers to infer that they are second rate: Michigan 21-24-24, and Berkeley 23-26-27.

Such movement itself - while perhaps good for generating attention and sales - corrodes the credibility of these rankings and your magazine itself. Universities change very slowly - in many ways more slowly than even I would like. Yet, the people behind the U.S. News rankings lead readers to believe either that university quality pops up and down like politicians in polls, or that last year's rankings were wrong but this year's are right (until, of course, next year's prove them wrong). What else is one to make of Harvard's being #1 one year and #3 the next, or Northwestern's leaping in a single bound from #13 to #9? And it is not just this year. Could Johns Hopkins be the 22nd best national university two years ago, the 10th best last year, and the 15th best this year? Which is correct, that Columbia is #9 (two years ago), #15 (last year) or #11 (this year)?

Knowing that universities - and, in most cases, the statistics they submit - change little from one year to the next, I can only conclude that what are changing are the formulas the magazine's number massagers employ. And, indeed, there is marked evidence of that this year...

Let me examine an example in "Value added": The California Institute of Technology offers a rigorous and demanding curriculum that undeniably adds great value to its students. Yet, Caltech is crucified for having a "predicted" graduation rate of 99% and an actual graduation rate of 85%. Did it ever occur to the people who created this "measure" that many students do not graduate from Caltech precisely because they find Caltech too rigorous and demanding - that is, adding too much value - for them? Caltech could easily meet the "predicted" graduation rate of 99% by offering a cream-puff curriculum and automatic A's. Would that be adding value? How can the people who came up with this formula defend graduation rate as a measure of value added? And even if they could, precisely how do they manage to combine test scores and "education expenditures" - itself a suspect statistic - to predict a graduation rate?

Were U.S. News, under your leadership, to walk away from these misleading rankings, it would be a powerful display of common sense. I fear, however, that these rankings and their byproducts have become too attention-catching for that to happen.

Could there not, though, at least be a move toward greater honesty with, and service to, your readers by moving away from the false precision? Could you not do away with rank ordering and overall scores, thus admitting that the method is not nearly that precise and that the difference between #1 and #2 - indeed, between #1 and #10 - may be statistically insignificant? Could you not, instead of tinkering to "perfect" the weightings and formulas, question the basic premise? Could you not admit that quality may not be truly quantifiable, and that some of the data you use are not even truly available (e.g., many high schools do not report whether their graduates are in the top 10% of their class)?

Parents are confused and looking for guidance on the best choice for their particular child and the best investment of their hard-earned money. Your demonstrated record gives me hope that you can begin to lead the way away from football-ranking mentality and toward helping to inform, rather than mislead, your readers.

Sincerely,

Gerhard Casper

Eftersom Stanford är ett av USA:s mest ansedda universitet väckte Caspers brev en betydande uppmärksamhet när det publicerades. Stanford följde i april 1997 upp detta brev genom att komma med ett förslag till alternativ när det gäller rankingar.



*An alternative to the U.S. News and World Report College Survey  
April 18, 1997*

Stanford University has taken the first step toward an alternative to U.S. News & World Report rankings by establishing a site on the World Wide Web that offers data directly to students and families, President Gerhard Casper said.

For this year, Stanford will continue to submit objective data - though not subjective reputational votes - to U.S. News.

Prospective college students, and their families, face a complex and stressful question: What is the best college for me - for my needs, my interests, my objectives? Many college guides help by providing valuable information which allows students to compare for themselves the programs and qualities of colleges and universities. One college guide, published by U.S. News & World Report, attempts to rank colleges and universities by a single yardstick. In doing so, U.S. News does a substantial disservice to prospective students and fails to meet basic standards of good social science and journalism.

Many colleges and universities, including Stanford, have begun to consider withdrawing from the annual U.S. News survey on the grounds that its methods of ranking institutions are misleading and inaccurate. At the same time, Stanford and other institutions wish to make useful information widely available and welcome objective reports about our programs. Because there is not yet a sufficient consensus on an alternative method of delivering information, Stanford will, this year, continue to submit objective data - though not subjective reputational votes - to U.S. News.

We also have taken the first step toward an alternative by establishing a new World Wide Web site - [www.stanford.edu/home/statistics/](http://www.stanford.edu/home/statistics/) - on which we offer data that may be helpful to prospective students. These data, many of them identical to those requested by U.S. News, are available immediately and free of charge, without students' having to wait to buy a copy of U.S. News.

We invite interested colleges and universities to join us in further refining definitions and categories, and in posting standardized web pages that clearly display facts and statistics on programs, students, student-faculty ratios, faculty quality, financial resources and other

pertinent indicators. The managers of Yahoo! have expressed willingness to provide a central link to such pages through their Web search programs. With such information, students and their families would be able to review and compare schools' programs and resources directly, without the distortion of information that occurs in U.S. News' ranking system.

I also urge U.S. News to reform its annual college survey practices. Several changes are needed.

U.S. News should eliminate its attempt to rank colleges and universities like automobiles or toasters. The fact that the rankings of many institutions change dramatically from year to year says more about inconsistent scoring methods than actual changes in quality. Such movement is entirely misleading.

U.S. News should stop drawing inappropriate conclusions from the data. For example, last year the magazine introduced "value-added" score based on "predicted" vs. actual graduation rates. As a result, some of the most rigorous programs in the country were penalized precisely because they do not make college so easy that everyone graduates. U.S. News should stop making "statistical estimates" to substitute for data not provided by a college or university or otherwise available in exactly the defined form. It is surely a violation of the standards of journalism to invent "facts."

The strength of the American system of higher education lies in the diversity of institutions available to students, from small colleges to large research universities, publics to privates, liberal arts colleges to church-affiliated schools. Each has something to offer, and no standardized lists of "best colleges" can begin to do justice to what is best for a given student. With full, accurate and complete information, students and families can make the choice of the institutions best for them. Stanford will continue to provide such information on its own and in cooperation with independent college guides. We urge U.S. News to attempt to become a more reliable and credible participant in this effort.

## **Kritiken från Association of American Law Schools**

I februari 1998 publicerade the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) ett upprop mot rankingar. The AALS kallade U.S. News & World Reports rankingar av USA:s juridiska utbildningar för "misleading and dangerous." Ledande företrädare för så gott som samtliga juridiska fakulteter

undertecknade uppropet. Man sände också ut följande brev till 93.000 studenter som sökt till juridisk utbildning runt om i USA:

***Law School Rankings May be Hazardous to Your Health***

Several commercial enterprises promote "ranking" systems that purport to reduce a wide array of information about law schools to one simple number that compares all 181 ABA-approved law schools with each other. These ranking systems are inherently flawed because none of them can take your special needs and circumstances into account when comparing law schools. According to students, the factors listed below are among the most important in influencing their choices of law school. These factors are excluded entirely or severely undervalued by all of the numerical ranking systems.

- Breadth and support of alumni network
- Breadth of curriculum
- Clinical programs
- Collaborative research opportunities with faculty
- Commitment to innovative technology
- Cost
- Externship options
- Faculty accessibility
- Intensity of writing instruction
- Interdisciplinary programs
- International programming
- Law library strengths and services
- Loan repayment assistance for low-income lawyers
- Location
- Part-time enrollment option
- Public interest programs
- Quality of teaching
- Racial and gender diversity within the faculty and student body
- Religious affiliation
- Size of first-year classes
- Skills instruction
- Specialized areas of faculty expertise

The absence of any consideration of these factors, combined with the arbitrary weighting of numerical factors, makes ranking systems an unreliable guide to the differences among law schools that should be important to you. As Newsweek editor Kenneth Auchincloss said, "Rankings generate huge hype, which is far more likely to serve the publisher's purpose than the readers'.... Applicants need help in widening their knowledge of schools that may be right for them, not narrowing their choices according to a ranking system."

A ranking system that exemplifies the shortcomings of all "by the numbers" schemes is the one produced annually by U.S. News & World Report. While ignoring the variables listed above, as do all numbers-based ranking systems, the U.S. News rankings purport to be derived from mathematical formulae based on data common to all law schools. The "weights" attached to the variables are arbitrary and reflect only the view of the magazine's editors. For example, according to the magazine, forty percent of the rankings is based on each school's "reputation." The reputation ranking is derived from a survey of a modest number of legal academics, lawyers, and judges across the country which asks them to rate comparatively all 181 ABA approved law schools. Reputation is an important factor in choosing a school, but schools with excellent reputations within their communities, states or regions may not be well known in other parts of the country. None of us has adequate knowledge about more than a tiny handful of law schools so as to permit us, with confidence, to compare them with each other.

The idea that all law schools can be measured by the same yardstick ignores the qualities that make you and law schools unique, and is unworthy of being an important influence on the choice you are about to make. As the deans of schools that range across the spectrum of several rating systems, we strongly urge you to minimize the influence of rankings on your own judgment. In choosing the best school for you, we urge you to get information about all the schools in which you might have some interest. An abundance of information, far more information than is used in any ranking system, is available from the sources noted in the box below. The next step is to seek information directly from the law schools, including catalogs or bulletins and other materials that will answer the specific questions relating to your special needs and interests. Finally, there is no substitute for on-site visits to the law schools that most interest you as you reach the end of the admission process. Law schools may all have met the same standards of quality to become accredited, but they are quite different from each other. The unique characteristics of each law school will inform you why one school may be best for you and another school best for someone else. We want you to make the best choice for you.

## Försvar för rankningar

En av dem som i den amerikanska debatten uppträtt till försvar för rankningarna är *Alvin P. Sanoff*, som numera driver ett konsultföretag i utbildningsbranschen men som tidigare varit en av de ansvariga för U.S. News & World Reports undersökningar. I en artikel i *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (4 sept. 1998) skrev han bl.a. följande:

During the six years I spent at U.S. News as managing editor of the magazine's "America's Best Colleges" project, I learned just how much the rankings matter to many institutions. How could I not have learned that, after countless, often-heated conversations with presidents and deans who came to U.S. News to complain about the basic concept of ranking colleges or to take issue with a particular measure used in the complex methodology? Of course, many of these same critics were quick to publicize their ranking when their institution did well...

Often I found myself thinking that these critics had lost all perspective, imputing almost mystical powers to the rankings. I knew that the rankings had some impact on whether students put a college on their list of possibilities, and, in some cases, the rankings even influenced whether a student applied to an institution. But research has shown clearly that the rankings are just one of many factors influencing the selection process. For example, drawing on the annual nationwide freshman survey done at the University of California at Los Angeles, Patricia McDonough and her colleagues at U.C.L.A.'s Graduate School of Education and Information Studies found that only 11 per cent of the students surveyed viewed the U.S. News and other rankings as "very important in their college choices." Other studies have shown that the rankings are not nearly as powerful an influence as such basic factors as a college's cost, its location, and the quality of the academic major the student is considering...

So colleges that believe that they excel, yet find themselves doing only moderately well in the U.S. News rankings, feel that the rankings just do not reflect the reality they see. Certainly, the use of rankings as a tool, as U.S. News acknowledges, has limits. For example, the magazine's ability to consider such factors as how well a college trains its graduates for their particular fields is constrained, in part, by a paucity of data on what happens to a college's graduates after they leave their alma mater and by disagreement among educators about what constitutes a successful educational outcome...

Enligt Sanoff vore det bättre om högskolornas företrädare valde att samarbeta med dem som gör rankingar i stället för att hela tiden kritisera försöken till oberoende och utomstående bedömningar av utbildningens kvalitet:

There is no question, for example, that the rankings offer valuable information on retention and graduation rates and class size – data that tell a great deal about the quality of the undergraduate experience at an institution. Colleges should acknowledge the

importance of this information instead of engaging in a wholesale condemnation of the rankings. At the same time, it is perfectly reasonable for colleges to make the point that the "fit" between an applicant and an institution is more important than a college's particular rank.

Moreover, colleges could make the rankings better if they collected meaningful data on how they actually foster students' development; the information could then be incorporated into the rankings' methodology. Such efforts would be far more productive than constantly railing against the rankings. Any such efforts to place the rankings in context should be aimed, of course, not just at potential applicants and their families, but also at foundations, alumni, and other constituents who might be inclined to place too much reliance on the rankings per se. A lessening of passions and a focus on honest education will, in the long run, best serve the interests of colleges and universities.

En annan skribent, journalisten Nicholas Lehmann från *The Atlantic Monthly* hävdade för sin del att högskolornas kritik delvis är ett slags hyckleri:

Since the U.S. News rankings began in 1983 as a survey solely of the reputations of colleges and universities, the magazine and the schools have been engaged in what politely might be called a vigorous discourse about them. In part it's an argument about the criteria, which the magazine has repeatedly updated and, even the critics agree, improved (reputation now accounts for only 25 percent of a school's score)...

Colleges are especially distressed that the rankings matter. Outside a handful of highly selective institutions, most private colleges are undersubscribed: They need good students who can pay much more than such students need them. Annoyance at the rankings is partly a mask for fear that a bad ranking will lead to a drying up of applications, and perhaps also of alumni contributions, government funding, and attractiveness to faculty.

The rankings are an intrusion, in other words, into the serene life of a president. They're one of many indications that universities are no longer the ivory-tower institutions they once prided themselves on being. Fifty years ago, total enrollment in American higher education, though increasing rapidly, was about a sixth of what it is today. Only about a quarter of 18- and 19-year-olds were in school, compared with more than three fifths now. Higher education's total revenues have increased even more rapidly than enrollments—from \$5 billion in the 1939-40 school year (in inflation-adjusted dollars) to \$119 billion in 1992-93...

To become large, national institutions, universities needed statistical means of evaluating prospective students and faculty and of justifying their government funding. During the middle decades of the century, they developed the techniques of a national marketplace. For professors, universities instituted an elaborate system of peer review, so that today there is a clear sense of who the top people in the country are in every specialty from particle physics to romantic poetry. These faculty rankings are the basis for the distribution of jobs, grants, university funds, and publishing contracts—not to mention the real coin of the realm, prestige among colleagues. At the same time, higher education adopted standardized tests like the SAT and ACT, which enabled them to put a number to every high school student's intellectual potential and thus to make nationwide comparisons among applicants. If you apply to Harvard, a computer will analyze your test scores, your grade point average, and the quality of your high school and come up with a number predicting your college "GPA, SAT which is used in admissions decisions...

If ranking is a sin, then, colleges and universities aren't innocent of it. (We shouldn't forget, just because they're so obvious, to mention as well those staples of academic life, tests and grades.) When institutions are applying the standards, ranking is every bit as prevalent in academia as it is in the military. The main difference is that in universities, people don't display their rank on a uniform.

## Andra skeptiska akademiska röster

En erfaren akademisk rådgivare som kanadensaren Kevin Paul tillhör dem som förhåller sig skeptiska till rankingarnas möjligheter att ge blivande studenter någon vägledning. På en internetsida har han publicerat fyra frågor och svar kring ämnet:

*Is it possible to have a meaningful assessment of a university distilled down into a single line of statistics in a magazine?*

There are qualitative differences between universities but, the differences that really matter to you are not reflected in the ranking data.

Students want to know what the quality of the Engineering school is like, or the class size in the history department, or amount of scholarships for the business program. You get no idea what these vital stats are from these rankings. A ranking that groups all departments together is meaningless.

*Is a ranking actually telling you about the quality of the education you'll receive?*

The general overall quality of Canadian universities is still quite high (although that is in danger from government short-sightedness and internal university flaws).

A university that appears at the bottom of the rankings might be overlooked by students who are looking for a degree in something which happens to be excellent at this low ranked university. For example, Carleton University has often taken a beating in the Maclean's ranking. This ignores the fact that it has many superb programs such as Journalism, Canadian History, and International Relations.

*What role should rankings play in your final decision?*

You should enjoy the interesting entertainment these rankings provide (I do). But do not take them seriously when making your education choices. You will have to do more than open a magazine to get reliable information about the different universities. Our research has shown that - thankfully - only 2% of applicants consider the rankings to a significant part of their decision.

*When ARE rankings useful?*

Earlier this fall Maclean's came out with an issue that ranks law schools. The approach they took is a significant improvement. It deals with only one discipline and they asked the opinion of thousands of people who know best - the recent grads, professors, working lawyers and judges. Far from perfect, but on a better track. Now if they would only do it for all subjects, I would change my opinion and you would have a valuable supplement.

I work at a university that has been consistently rated #1 or near the top in these rankings, so my opinion isn't sour grapes.

Källa:

[http://www.sk.sympatico.ca/Contents/University\\_Bound/article\\_university\\_rankings.html](http://www.sk.sympatico.ca/Contents/University_Bound/article_university_rankings.html)

Till dem som vill hissa en varningsflagga inför rankingsepidemin hör också den halvofficiella sammanslutningen av universitet och högskolor i USA, *The College Board*:



The rapid rise of rankings and guidebooks as the yardsticks for quality in higher education has caught many college and university administrators by surprise. The competitive nature of American higher education and a strong consumer oriented relationship between students and institutions have created an environment that has facilitated the success of college ratings and guidebooks. At the moment, however, evidence from a variety of sources suggests that the impact of guidebooks on students and institutions is not as pronounced as the popular only a relatively small proportion of potential college students have their matriculation decisions strongly influenced by guidebooks and rankings. Similar evidence indicates that guidebooks and rankings do not exert a strong influence on most college and university administrators.

Because the high visibility of guidebooks and rankings is still a very recent phenomenon, it is difficult to determine their long term impact on institutions or their impact as an important source of information for students and parents. If their influence on students and their parents increases, their impact on college and university administrators will grow. If rankings and ratings become used by state policy makers, their importance will also increase. There is still much we don't know about the impact of rankings and guidebooks on prospective students and on institutions of higher education, but we do know they are not going to disappear soon!

Se artikeln Ranking & Ratings på The College Boards hemsida på internet:  
<http://www.collegeboard.org/cbregions/mwro/emrsu97/html/rank.html/>

# Slutreflexioner

Efter denna med nödvändighet relativt summariska genomgång av några internationella rankningar kan man göra åtminstone några iakttagelser som kan vara viktiga för den fortsatta debatten:

- Rankningar eller bedömningar av den typ som presenterats i den här rapporten görs sällan av några myndigheter eller officiella organ på utbildningsområdet. Det är i allmänhet tidskrifter eller förlag som har tagit initiativet. Ett undantag kan möjligen vara Storbritannien, där ett slags betygssättning av enskilda institutioners status inom utbildning och forskning sker i officiella former som ett led i anslagstilldelningen. Den brittiska modellen för anslagstilldelning innebär ju i sig ett slags rankning men den innehåller också komponenter av regional- och utbildningspolitisk natur som ligger utanför en mer förenklad "statusrankning".
- Universitetsrankningarnas historia är ganska kort - drygt 15 år - och de som var först ut på plan har under de gångna åren ändrat sin metodik på flera viktiga punkter. Det är också stora skillnader i metodik mellan de olika rankningsmodellerna. Några försöker att utifrån offentliga data (ofta i kombination med mer subjektiva akademiska värderingar) positionsbestämma varje enskild högskola i numeriska termer. Andra har helt och hållet valt den subjektiva metoden där t.ex. studenternas bedömningar av lärarnas insatser och utbildningens relevans faller utslaget. I flera fall grupperar man också högskolorna med hänsyn till deras olika uppgifter, detta för att undvika en orättvisande jämförelse mellan institutioner som har vitt skilda utbildningspolitiska mål.
- Det finns i akademiska kretsar en vitt utbredd mistro mot rankningarna, både principiellt och metodiskt. Framför allt vänder man sig mot tron på möjligheten att jämföra hela universitet eller högskolor med varandra och rangordna dem i något slags ligatabeller. I stor utsträckning är denna kritik grundad på uppfattningen att högre utbildning och forskning är alldeles för komplexa företeelser för att kunna sammanfattas i enkla formler. Den bygger också på ett avvisande av de metoder som låter enskilda högskolor åka upp och ned i tabellerna år från år, något som kan ge den oinformerade läsaren en uppfattning om att en högskolas förändringar går lika snabbt som förändringarna i en opinionsmätning.
- Mycket tyder på att det är de "konsumentinriktade" undersökningarna som skulle kunna ena de vitt divergerande intressen som gör sig gällande på området. En presentation av australisk modell, där man granskar en rad akademiska och sociala faktorer och undviker en detaljerad poängsättning

är en möjlig väg ur det jämförelsedilemma som en mer tabellinriktad ranking lätt råkar in i. I denna typ av "varudeklarationer" är det ju också studentens intresse som klarare sätts i centrum samtidigt som man respekterar den enskildes förmåga att själv dra sina slutsatser utifrån ett öppet redovisat material.

- Eftersom det i många länder redan finns avsevärda ekonomiska intressen i rankingsverksamheten är det inget som tyder på att den kommer att upphöra. Försöken till bojkott från universitetens sida i t.ex. USA har inte visat sig framgångsrika. En externt granskande journalistik eller förlagsverksamhet är ju också demokratiskt legitim och i många fall säkert också positiv för högskolesektorns utveckling. Samtidigt kan det finnas ett lika legitimt demokratiskt intresse av att upplysa om rankingarnas metodiska problem och begränsningar. En konstruktiv dialog mellan högskolor och de rankande aktörerna förefaller vara det bästa sättet att få till stånd en extern fristående granskning som inte uppträder med falska eller överdrivna pretentioner och som i vid mening kan sägas tjäna ett allmänintresse.



Högskoleverkets arbete med omvärldsanalys går ut på att bevaka, beskriva och analysera trender och tendenser i den svenska högskolans omvärld. I en serie arbetsrapporter presenteras några resultat av detta arbete. Syftet är att relativt snabbt och enkelt nå ut till olika målgrupper i sektorn. Rapporterna har olika inriktning och ambitionsnivå och har författats av olika medarbetare vid Högskoleverket. Gemensamt är att rapporterna diskuterar förhållanden utanför högskolan som är av betydelse för högskolans framtida utveckling.

Arbetsrapporterna finns tryckta i detta format och på verkets hemsida:

[www.hsv.se/verksamhet/utredningar/omvarldsrapporter.html](http://www.hsv.se/verksamhet/utredningar/omvarldsrapporter.html)