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# **Global University Rankings and the Academic Reputation Race**

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# Overview

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- **What are global rankings?**  
Some theoretical considerations
- **Why global rankings are a problem?**  
Some empirical observations
- **Why CHEPS is involved?**  
Some practical implications

# The University of Bath – A Blog

- The University of Bath is a [top 10 university](#) in the UK, consistently ranked among the world's top 200 universities.  
Ratings and Ranking Achievements:
  - According to the Times Higher Education - QS World University Rankings, it is placed 153rd in 2006, 145th in 2007 and 152nd in 2008.
  - Placed in the rank range of 201-302nd globally in the Academic Ranking of World Universities 2008.
  - 13th out of 114 institutions in the [Times University Ranking](#) 2010, moving up from 15th in 2009.
  - 9th out of 113 in the Complete University Guide 2010, moving up from 14th in 2009.
  - 6th in the table of Who's in Top Ten of Their Subjects from the Complete University Guide published by the Independent in 2009.
  - 10th in the Sunday Times University Guide 2008.
  - 9th in the Daily Telegraph University Ranking 2007.
  - 9th in the [Guardian University League Table](#) 2010, moving up from 13th in 2009.
  - Univ of Bath School of Management is rated 43rd in Europe for its MBA programs (Financial Times 2008).
  - 3rd in [European Studies](#) (RAE 2008).
  - 5th for Physics in the Times Higher RAE subject ratings.
  - 33rd nationally in the 2008 [RAE Ranking](#) by Research Power.
  - 4th for Architecture, 5th for Modern languages, 15th for Economics (Guardian 2009).
  - 15 subjects rated "Excellent" in the latest government assessments: Pharmacy & Pharmacology; Business & Management; Architecture & Civil Engineering; Economics; Computer Science; Electronic & Electrical Engineering; Mechanical Engineering; Mathematics, Statistics and Operational research; Education; Molecular Biosciences; Biosciences; Physics and Astronomy; Politics; Hospitality, Leisure, Recreation, Sport and Tourism; Social Policy and Administration.

## What are Global Rankings?

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- Defining a field of leading global research universities
- Constituting an arena for establishing field boundaries
- Constructing a quasi-market for research excellence and related reputation-based benefits

(Bourdieu 1988, Czarniawska 1997, Foucault 1970, Greenwood et al. 2002, Hazelkorn 2008, Powell & DiMaggio 1991, Sahlin-Andersson 2003, van Vught 2008, Wedlin 2006)

## Rankings as an input in field formation

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- **Defining a field**  
Belonging and distinction, rules and criteria
- **Constituting an arena for boundary work**  
Co-construction of authority  
in a multi-level, multi-actor game
- **Constructing a quasi-market**  
Reputation, money, and templates as  
self-fulfilling prophecies

# What Rankings Measure . . .

RANKING SYSTEM	INDICATOR DIMENSION	WEIGHTING
<i>SJT Academic Ranking of World Universities</i>	• Quality of Education	10%
	• Quality of Faculty	20%
	• No. Nobel Prize/Field Medal	20%
	• No. HiCi Researchers	20%
	• Research Output	20%
	• No. Articles in Nature/Science	20%
	• No. Articles in Citation Index	10%
<i>Times QS World University Ranking</i>	• Size of Institution	10%
	• Peer Appraisal	40%
	• Graduate Employability	10%
	• Teaching Quality/SSR	20%
	• International Students	5%
	• International Faculty	5%
<i>Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for Research Universities</i>	• Research Quality/Citations per Faculty	20%
	• Research Productivity	10%
	• No. Articles in last 11 years	10%
	• No. Articles in current year	10%
	• Research Impact	10%
	• No. Citations in last 11 years	10%
	• No. Citations in last 2 years	10%
	• Aver. no Citations in last 11 years	10%
	• Research Excellence	20%
	• HiCi index of last 2 years	20%
	• No. HiCi Papers, last 10 years	10%
• No. Articles High-Impact Journals in Current Year	10%	
• No. Subject Fields where University Demonstrates Excellence	10%	

## ... What (Some of) their Biases Are ...

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- measurable results
- beauty contest
- insignificant differences
  
- research
- certain type of research output
- English language
- science, life science and related
  
- defined by disciplinary epistemological elite
- universities as a whole
- older, larger comprehensive universities

## Playing the ranking game

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- **China, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Russia, Sweden try to create a small number of world-class universities focusing on research performance**

### **The example of Germany:**

- **Epistemological academic elites fuel these initiatives and benefit from them**
- **Incentives for the actorhood and agency of universities**
- **The role of academic capital, economic capital, and social capital**

## Playing the ranking game

	Examples of Actions	Approximate Weighting
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase output, quality and citations</li> <li>• Reward faculty for publications in highly-cited journals</li> <li>• Publish in English-language journals</li> <li>• Set individual targets for faculty and departments</li> </ul>	SJT = 40%; Times = 20% Taiwan = 70%
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merge with another institution, or bring together discipline complementary departments</li> <li>• Incorporate autonomous institutes into host HEI</li> <li>• Establish Centres-of-Excellence &amp; Graduate Schools</li> <li>• Develop/expand English-language facilities, international student facilities, laboratories, dormitories</li> </ul>	SJT = 40%; Times = 20%
Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit/head-hunt international high-achieving/HiCi scholars</li> <li>• Create new contract/tenure arrangements</li> <li>• Set market-based or performance/merit based salaries</li> <li>• Reward high-achievers</li> <li>• Identify weak performers</li> <li>• Enable best researchers to concentrate on research/relieve them of teaching</li> </ul>	SJT = 40% Times = 25% Taiwan = 30%
Public Image/ Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professionalize Admissions, Marketing and Public Relations</li> <li>• Ensure common brand used on all publications</li> <li>• Advertisements in <i>Nature</i> and <i>Science</i> and other high focus journals</li> <li>• Expand internationalisation alliances and membership of global networks</li> </ul>	Times = 40%

Source: Adapted from Hazelkorn, 2009.

## **... And Why That Is A Problem**

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- **Global research rankings fuel a costly academic reputation race**

**They stimulate policy-makers and universities to play the ranking game and to climb the global ladders of institutional reputation**

- **Global research rankings fuel organisational isomorphism**

**They largely favour traditional academic performance particularly in research, and lead to an increase in highly expensive mimicking behaviour and hence to more homogeneity**

## Why CHEPS is involved?

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Academic Ranking of World Universities

**CHERPA-network based in Europe wins tender to develop alternative global ranking**

**field-based, multi-dimensional, adoptive criteria, grouping approach, research & teaching & knowledge translation**