

## Contenders cum laude: Universities competing in the global rankings game

Recording running time: 33 min 58 sec

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### Part 1. Reading the Introduction

Read the introduction to the talk and decide whether the statements below are *True*, *False* or *Not Given*

- [1] \_\_\_\_\_ The ranking of universities is a recent trend.
- [2] \_\_\_\_\_ League tables are used by prospective students to decide on which university to enter.
- [3] \_\_\_\_\_ Governments generally do not display any interest in university ranking.
- [4] \_\_\_\_\_ University of Melbourne is featured high on University League Tables
- [5] \_\_\_\_\_ The purpose of the talk is to evaluate the validity of ranking.

I'm Eric van Bommel. Thanks for joining us. The business of ranking universities around the world has become, of late, very conspicuous in the higher education landscape. Companies now compete to create, in effect, league tables of universities from all corners of the globe and the universities themselves can be relied on to trumpet their standings in their promotional and advertising campaigns. Naturally, prospective students and their parents are taking notice when choosing where to apply; governments, in deciding where to direct higher education dollars, are paying attention as well. But is the world university rankings game a good thing? Can rankings really capture what universities are doing or have to offer and what is their impact over time likely to be for higher education as a whole?

To help us with these questions we're joined in the studio by Simon Marginson, Professor of Higher Education in the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne. Simon researches and writes extensively on the globalisation of higher education and he also serves on the editorial board of Times Higher Education, one of the major rankers of universities, as well as on the advisory committee of the Academic Ranking of World Universities, yet another of the best known in the rankings industry. And full disclosure, Simon and I are both employees of the University of Melbourne, and the University of Melbourne sees itself as very much a contender in the world rankings.

Simon, thanks for joining us on Up Close.

### Part 2. Listening

Listen to the recording and decide whether the statements below are *True* or *False*.

- [1] \_\_\_\_\_ To some extent, university ranking reflects the economic competitiveness of a country.
- [2] \_\_\_\_\_ Global ranking is the single factor that determines the performance of a university.
- [3] \_\_\_\_\_ Ranking can be distorted in the way that it measures the quantity of the output research and not its quality.
- [4] \_\_\_\_\_ The French government tightened its grip on Universities as a result of their not-so-spectacular ranking.
- [5] \_\_\_\_\_ To boost their ranking, Germany fed additional resources to already strongly performing universities.

# Authentic Listening

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[6] \_\_\_\_\_ Compared to the French or Chinese government, the Australian government demonstrates the same level of interest in having top universities.

[7] \_\_\_\_\_ On the whole, Simon Marginson believes that the world ranking of universities is a good think.

## Part 3. Listening. Different approaches to university world ranking (The Shanghai Rankings)

Listen to the recording and answer the questions below.

[8] What did Shanghai Rankings noted for?

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[9] List at least three variables that the Shanghai ranking system uses to rank universities.

[a] \_\_\_\_\_

[b] \_\_\_\_\_

[c] \_\_\_\_\_

[10] What are the two publication-relevant categories that according to Simon Marginson contribute to the world ranking of universities?

[a] \_\_\_\_\_

[b] \_\_\_\_\_

[11] What are the shortcomings of ranking based on citation criteria?

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[12] What are the Shanghai Rankings criticised for?

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## Part 4. Listening. Different approaches to university world ranking (The QS World University Rankings)

[13] While the Shanghai Rainkings are referred to as objective, the QS World University Rankings are subjective. What makes them subjective?

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[14] Which countries are 'favoured' by the QS World University Rankings and which are underrepresented?

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[15] What is the 'halo effect' and what is it relevance to the QS World University Rankings

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# Authentic Listening

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## Part 5. Listening. Different approaches to university world ranking (Times Higher Education World University Rankings)

[16] What makes Times Higher Education World University Rankings differ from the previous two mentioned?

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[17] Why do both The QS World University Rankings and Times Higher Education World University Rankings use student / staff ratios as their indicators and not teaching outcomes?

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## Part 6. Other rankings

[18] According to Simon Marginson, which of the rankings mentioned are the most reliable ones? Do you think he may be biased in his preferences? Why?

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[19] What's the universities' attitude to the ranking? How do they utilise the ranking?

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[20] True or False? According to Simon Marginson, European universities are not as good as American universities and this is reflected in the ranking. Explain your answer.

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[21] Universities of which countries overwhelmingly top the list of best universities, according to all objective rankings?

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[22] How do Chinese universities rank?

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[23] The Asian Business Valuation ranking is, according to Simon Marginson, an example of shonky ranking. Why is it shonky?

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[24] While understanding the need for League Tables, as a social scientist Simon Marginson doesn't really use them in his line of work. What kind of evaluative indicators does he prefer and why?

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[25] What's U-Multirank and how will it work?

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