

The Rating System for Malaysian Higher Education and Malaysian Research Assessment Instrument measure how well higher education institutions are doing in the country.

By **KAREN CHAPMAN**
educate@thestar.com.my

GOOD news was in store with the recent release of the Rating System for Malaysian Higher Education Institutions 2011 (Setara).

A total of 35 higher education institutions obtained Tier Five or excellent status.

This is almost double the number of institutions in the last rating exercise where 18 higher education institutions achieved the Tier Five status under Setara 2009.

Started in 2007, Setara assesses the teaching and learning aspects of participating institutions as it is the most common denominator for all higher education institutions.

It consists of six tiers, ranging from Tier Six (outstanding), Tier Five (excellent), Tier Four (very good), Tier Three (good), Tier Two (satisfactory) and Tier One (weak).

A total of 54 universities and university colleges participated in the exercise but two institutions were excluded as there was insufficient data for them to be rated.

The final results show that out of the 52 universities and university colleges rated, 35 institutions achieved a Tier Five category representing approximately 67% of the

Excellent accomplishment



High five: Sunway University culinary students and chef lecturers baked a cake to celebrate the institution's Tier Five status under Setara 2011.

total population of universities and university colleges rated; 16 institutions in Tier Four, approximately 31%, and the remaining one, in Tier Three, that is, about 2%.

No universities and university colleges obtained Tiers One, Two or Six status.

The 35 which obtained Tier Five status comprise 13 public universities while the rest are private universities and university colleges.

These include the five research universities - Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Putra

Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia while private institutions included Nilai University and Sunway University. (see table on next page)

The rating exercise was carried out between March 2011 and July

2012 with data from 2011.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin who announced the results, said he was happy to note the improvements and achievements of all institutions

> SEE NEXT PAGE



Go for ratings: Mohamed Khaled says rating is more useful for quality enhancement because its purpose is to maintain quality assurance rather than as a competition between the institutions.

> FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

that took part in Setara 2011. "This is the third time Setara has been implemented and the progress and improvements can be seen in all higher education institutions, particularly in the teaching and learning aspects," he said in an interview. UM deputy vice-chancellor (Academic & International) Prof Dr Mohd Hamdi Abd Shukor said its Tier Five status was an indicator of the quality of teaching and learning for undergraduate study at the university.

"In line with the university's rapid transformation process, UM has placed emphasis on increasing the quality of its teaching staff and students as one of the key areas to be enhanced as it continues its progress towards becoming one of the top 100 universities by 2015," he said.

Prof Mohd Hamdi said the university's next challenge was to raise the bar higher by becoming the first public university to obtain Tier Six status.

UKM vice-chancellor Prof Tan Sri Dr Sharifah Hapsah Syed Hasan Shahabudin congratulated staff for working hard to maintain its Tier Five status.

"However, there is room for improvement and we must resolve to work harder to achieve the goals of the institution as well as the greater goals of the nation," she said.

Rated not ranked

Setara is a ratings exercise which assesses how each institution has achieved its benchmark of indicators.

Similar to the instrument used during the previous rating exercise in 2009, Mohamed Khaled said Setara 2011 was divided into three main domains namely input (20%), process (40%), and output (40%) which involves 26 criteria and 62 indicators such as the ratio of academic staff to students, percentage of PhD qualified academic staff, employment rate and graduate satisfaction.

"It does not give a ranking or position on how an institution is compared to another," he said.

Asked whether the ministry will consider carrying out a rankings exercise such as those by the Times Higher Education World University Rankings or the QS World University Rankings, he said rating was more useful for quality enhancement because its purpose was to maintain quality assurance rather than as a

competition between the institutions.

In addition, Setara would continue to be a rating system for teaching and learning, and to encourage internal adjustments and improvements by institutions.

UPM vice-chancellor Datuk Dr Radin Umar Radin Sohadi said the Setara and the Malaysia Research Assessment Instrument (MyRA) measure the fundamentals in higher education where data is both verified and audited.

"Hence it is more robust and reliable than rankings. Setara measures graduate attributes, graduate employability, employer satisfaction and student satisfaction in the learning environment while MyRA looks at various factors including impact factors, citations, intellectual properties and impact to humankind," he said.

Participation in Setara remains voluntary, added Mohamed Khaled. On whether the ministry would look into compelling all higher education institutions to take part in Setara in the future, he said it could become mandatory.

Most of the higher education institutions would advertise their respective Setara ratings in various forms such as during the ministry's annual national higher education carnival and other promotional platforms.

"This in itself will encourage higher education institutions to participate in Setara as in future, the odd ones out will be those which cannot quote or advertise their rating," he said.

The ministry, he added, would also recommend Tier Five Setara-rated institutions to the Public Service Department so that its sponsored students could be sent there.

Mohamed Khaled said that the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) carried out the Setara exercise.

The MQA, he added, was also working on a Discipline-Based Rating System (D-Setara) which would be based on four disciplines for all higher education institutions. More information on D-Setara would be revealed next January, he said.

Open and distance-learning institutions were separately assessed using an instrument that was adapted from the Setara 2011 instrument to capture the peculiarities of the open and distance learning mode.

Open University Malaysia president Prof Emeritus Tan Sri Anuwar



Assessment: Dr Radin Umar says Setara and MyRA measure the fundamentals in higher education.

Ali said he was pleased that the indicators for measurement have been improved from the previous rating exercise to take into account open and distance learning institutions.

"The indicators now take into account our blended approach as we are not like normal universities," he said.

Research fundamentals

Mohamed Khaled also announced the results of MyRA where universities are given "star ratings" for their research, development and commercialisation efforts.

He said UM, UKM, UPM and USM received the top rating of six stars under MyRA.

Similar to Setara, he said MyRA which was conducted by the ministry's Higher Education Department, was not compulsory but all higher education institutions are encouraged to take part.

"It is good if all public universities could participate and assess their strengths and weaknesses, and potential in terms of research and development. This is important as many of the public universities, excluding research universities, have the potential to develop their research capacity.

"We're not going to force Setara or MyRA on any university, but there will be policy implications from the results," he added.

Incentives for more research funding is based on the MyRA 2011 assessment.

Two non-research universities which were rated five stars under MyRA, namely Universiti Teknologi Petronas and Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia, will receive a total of RM10mil in research grants to enhance their research and development activities in 2013.

Vacancy for StarEdu reporter

Do you have a superb command of the English Language? Are you creative and have a passion for the written word? Are you an independent worker, a quick thinker and a good writer?

If your answers to these questions are positive, then you may be the candidate that we are looking for.

In addition to the list above, if you're a social media addict, enjoy working with teenagers and teachers, meeting academics as well as, organised in how you think and carry out your tasks, the nation's largest English daily seeking to fill this vital post at Menara Star, Petaling Jaya, would like to hear

from you.

Our fringe benefits include a competitive salary package and an allowance, a five-day work week, two-months' annual bonus, medical and dental care, hospitalisation, term life and personal accident insurance coverage, and additional EPF contributions as a retirement benefit.

Impress us! E-mail in your resume with full contact details and a recent passport-sized photograph to chelsea@thestar.com.my and cc_recruitment@thestar.com.my.

Closing date: Nov 30. Only shortlisted candidates will be notified.

Rating System for Malaysian Higher Education Institutions (Setara) 2011

Public institutions	Private institutions
Tier 6 (Outstanding)	
—	—
Tier 5 (Excellent)	
Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia	Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	Binary University of Management and Entrepreneurship
Universiti Malaya	Curtin University of Technology Sarawak Campus
Universiti Malaysia Pahang	Cyberjaya University College of Medical Sciences
Universiti Malaysia Perlis	International Medical University
Universiti Putra Malaysia	Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur
Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia	Management and Science University
Universiti Sains Malaysia	Monash University Sunway Campus
Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka	Multimedia University
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	Nilai University
Universiti Teknologi Mara	Open University Malaysia
Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia	SEGi University
Universiti Utara Malaysia	Sunway University
	Swinburne University of Technology Sarawak Campus
	Taylor's University
	Universiti Kuala Lumpur
	Universiti Teknologi Petronas
	Universiti Tenaga Nasional
	Universiti Tun Abdul Razak
	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman
	University of Nottingham (Malaysia Campus)
	Wawasan Open University
Tier 4 (Very Good)	
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan	Aimst University
Universiti Malaysia Sabah	HELP University
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak	INTI International University
Universiti Malaysia Terengganu	Kolej Universiti Insaniah
Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris	Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor
Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan University College	Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia
	TATI University College
	Twintech International University College of Technology
	UCSI University
	Universiti Industri Selangor
Tier 3 (Good)	
Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin	—
Tier 2 (Satisfactory)	
—	—
Tier 1 (Weak)	
—	—

Source: Higher Education Ministry

Prof Mohd Hamdi said the six star rating under MyRA was a testament of all the hard work by UM's management, staff and fellow researchers.

"UM has always prided itself on the quality of its researchers and we

are in the midst of increasing the number of research activities and commercialisation through the formation of a UM Centre of Innovation and Commercialisation, UM High Impact Research and eight research clusters," he said.