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SLOWLY but surely, Malaysian universities continue to climb up international rankings and it looks like there is no stopping them.

In the recently released Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings by Subject, Universiti Malaya (UM) can proudly boast that it is featured in 26 subject categories. It takes the top spot among local universities in the 2016 rankings.

They even cracked the Top 50 by becoming 37th in the Electrical & Electronic Engineering category and 30th in Development Studies.

QS Intelligence Unit head Ben Sowter said 11 Malaysian universities made it into the sixth edition of the rankings.

"Malaysia has gained 25 new placements this year across the 42 tables," he said, adding that Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) had debuted in the top 100 of three subject tables.

The subjects are Architecture & Built Environment; Education; and Social Policy and Administration.

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) is now in 46th place for Chemical Engineering, an improvement from last year's ranking of 51-100.

Meanwhile, UKM, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) made it among the top 100 in various subjects (see table). Sowter said that USM and UKM are featured in 22 subjects, UPM in 19 and UTM in 12 subject tables.

"Overall, Malaysian institutions have taken a solid stride forward in the rankings this year. A key common stimulus seems to have been stronger international research performance," he said.

"Once an apparent winning strategy is identified, it's important to hold course and establish consistent leadership, both in the universities and the ministries which oversee them," he added.

UM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Mohd Amin Jalaludin said the subject rankings for UM had improved from last year.

While UM was among the top 100 for seven subjects in 2015, this year it bagged nine subjects in the top 100. The other subjects are Architecture/Built Environment; Chemical Engineering; Computer Science and Information Systems; Education; English Language and Literature; Linguistics; and Mechanical, Aeronautical and Manufacturing Engineering.

He said that Malaysia's premier university has moved towards trans- and interdisciplinary research which had increased research productivity in terms of both quantity and quality.

He also credited the rise in rankings to UM's emphasis on publishing in high-tiered journals to increase its visibility in the international arena.

# Local unis do well in world rankings

"Research is also boosted through focus on postgraduate research education that trains experts in specialised subject areas," he added.

Prof Mohd Amin said that UM's transformation has been driven by its strategic plan.

He said that the current strategic plan sees the university investing its resources and efforts to "revitalise the global UM brand name."

"This uphill task is even more challenging with the financial squeeze due to reduction in funding from the government faced by all public universities in Malaysia," he added.

Prof Mohd Amin said the university is working on shifting its work culture and emphasising on financial prudence and generating income.

Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) has shown an improvement in five subjects categories from last year. The subjects are Accounting and Finance; Education; Mechanical Engineering; Electrical Engineering; and Computer Science and Information System.

"With the specific strategies and goal setting planned, UiTM is expected to improve its ranking position in the years to come," UiTM vice-chancellor Emeritus Prof Datuk Dr Hassan Said said in a statement.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh congratulated all the Malaysian universities for their achievements in the sixth edition of the rankings.

"Our universities once again have shown that they are 'Soaring Upwards'," he told *StarEducate*.

He urged the universities not to rest on their laurels but to continue to strive for improvement in research and teaching outcomes.

Sowter said that although the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia remain dominant, the rankings show that excellence can be found in an ever-increasing number of places.

The expert opinion of 76,798 academics and 44,426 employers, the analysis of 28.5 million research papers and over 113 million citations sourced from the Scopus/Elsevier bibliometric database were used to determine the rankings.

The annual QS World University Rankings by Subject provides an insight into global university performance at the subject level. QS also produces the annual world university rankings.

**Malaysian universities in QS World University Rankings by Subject**

University	Best Subject	Rank in 2016
Universiti Malaya	Development Studies	30
Universiti Malaya	Engineering - Electrical & Electronic	37
Universiti Sains Malaysia	Engineering - Chemical	46
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	Architecture / Built Environment; Education; Engineering - Chemical; Social Policy & Administration	51-100
Universiti Putra Malaysia	Agriculture & Forestry	51-100
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	Architecture / Built Environment; Engineering - Chemical; Engineering - Electrical & Electronic	51-100
Universiti Teknologi Mara	Accounting & Finance	151-200
Universiti Teknologi Petronas	Engineering - Chemical	101-150
Multimedia University	Engineering - Electrical & Electronic	151-200
International Islamic University Malaysia	Education; Engineering - Mechanical, Aeronautical & Manufacturing	201-300
Universiti Utara Malaysia	Accounting & Finance	151-200
Universiti Malaysia Sabah	Agriculture & Forestry	151-200

Source: QS Quacquarelli Symonds 2004-2016 <http://www.TopUniversities.com/>