

VC COLUMN

# Through the looking glass

EARLIER this month, the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings were released. Universities across the world look to these rankings with eager anticipation.

The table below shows the rankings of the five Malaysian public research universities as well as 11 foreign branch campuses in Malaysia.

A foreign branch campus is categorised as a foreign university that has a campus in Malaysia, but whose degrees are awarded by the campus in its home country.

Malaysia is host to foreign branch campuses of universities in Australia, China, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

University of Malaya (UM) is now ranked among the top 100 universities in the world.

The Higher Education Ministry has harboured a long-term aim to have a Malaysian university in the top 100.

It is interesting to note the year-on-year progress that UM has made since 2015. Its ranking has gone from 151st (2015) to 146th (2016), 133th (2017), 114th (2018) and 87th (2019). To have five consecutive years of continual improvement is a remarkable achievement.

Ben Sowter, research director at QS, said, "Malaysia has shone in this edition of the rankings. Its higher education system has a solid reputation among international academics and employers."

"To support this positive ascending trajectory, local universities should continue to focus on increasing the impact of the research they produce."

Research impact is becoming increasingly important as a way of measuring the

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quality of a university as everybody is looking at the return on investment made by funding agencies.

However, I will go slightly further and not just focus on public universities.

I urge all Malaysian universities, both public and private, to focus on increasing their research impact by delivering high-quality research.

A relevant concept is the Red Queen's race, which is based on a quote from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* – "It takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place."

This sentiment is pertinent to universities in Malaysia, who cannot rest on their laurels. To maintain our rankings next year, we must all work even harder.

The sector is already looking forward to this time next year when the 2020 rankings will be released.

More information is available at [www.topuniversities.com](http://www.topuniversities.com)

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Institution	Type	2018 Ranking	2019 Ranking
Monash University	Foreign branch campus	60	59
Shanghai Jiao Tong University	Foreign branch campus	62	59
University of Nottingham	Foreign branch campus	84	82
University of Malaya	Research university	114	87
University of Southampton	Foreign branch campus	102	96
Newcastle University	Foreign branch campus	161	141
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	Research university	230	184
RCSI & UCD Malaysia Campus	Foreign branch campus	168	193
University of Reading	Foreign branch campus	188	195
Universiti Putra Malaysia	Research university	229	202
Universiti Sains Malaysia	Research university	264	207
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	Research university	253	228
Curtin University	Foreign branch campus	262	250
Heriot-Watt University	Foreign branch campus	312	302
Swinburne University of Technology	Foreign branch campus	421-430	387
Xiamen University	Foreign branch campus	431-440	476