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MALAYSIA'S universities proved their mettle by being placed among the world's top institutions in the QS World University Rankings 2020.

Universiti Malaya (UM) and UCSI University both lead the way for the public and private universities respectively.

Twenty Malaysian universities feature in the listing with 10 improving their positions, two remaining stable, seven new entrants and only one dropping. (see table)

Brickbats have sometimes been thrown at world ranking exercises but they can be used as a benchmark for Malaysian universities against the best in the world.

UM has made history by being ranked 70th in the QS World University Rankings 2020.

The country's premier university moved up 17 places from 87th last year.

It has improved steadily from 151 in 2015 to 146 in 2016, 133 in 2017, 114 in 2018 and 87 in 2019.

It is the sixth consecutive year in which UM has risen, and the second consecutive year in which it has achieved a top 100 rank.

The rankings, produced by global higher education consultancy QS Quacquarelli Symonds, rank the world's top 1,000 universities.

UM vice-chancellor Datuk Abdul Rahim Hashim said the university will continue its teaching, research, community and industry engagement to the highest quality.

"Ranking is not our ultimate goal but an outcome of our efforts.

"Our goal is to make an impact with what we do and if the impact is good and of high quality, then it will reflect in the ranking. This has always been UM's stand," he added.

"Many academics and institutions would say it does not matter and it really should not matter much but it is a way we can benchmark and perhaps look at how we can best move forward from where we are.

"If we move blindly, how would we know if we have been successful. So, it should not matter in some sense but it helps us to set a direction to move forward," said Abdul Rahim.

In terms of international collaborations, he said the university's researchers have been co-authoring papers with international experts in their areas of research.

This has led to their papers being published in renowned international publications, which has led to UM being cited more often.

"Ranking gives the university the visibility it needs to enable collaborations with top global (including local) institutions and industries," he said, adding that it has quite a number of collaborations established with partners, especially from the United Kingdom, the Middle East, Australia and Japan.

"We are currently working towards establishing collaborations with potential partners from other parts of the world especially China as well as with multi-national industries. "With enough support and funding, I believe we can make this happen," added Abdul Rahim.

Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) made the biggest leap up the rankings. It went up 43 places from last year to 159 this year.

UPM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Aini Ideris said making it into the top 200 universities is proof that they "have successfully accomplished our Putra Global 200, one of the important aspirations we set in UPM's Strategic Plan 2014-2020."

She added that this also showed the university is ahead of its target. "(We) will continue to set new goals in our transformation plan,"

# Reaching for the stars

## Twenty Malaysian universities make an impact in the QS World University Rankings 2020.

### Top 10 Malaysian universities in QS World University Rankings 2020

Institution	2020 rank	2019 rank
Universiti Malaya (UM)	70	87=
Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)	159	202
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)	160=	184=
Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)	165=	207
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)	217=	228
UCSI University	442=	481=
Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP)	482=	521-530
Taylor's University	511-520	601-650
Management and Science University	541-550	Not ranked
Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)	591-600	601-650

Source: QS Quacquarelli Symonds 2004-2018 [www.TopUniversities.com](http://www.TopUniversities.com)



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she added.

The other three research universities namely Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia is ranked 160, Universiti Sains Malaysia 165 and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia is at 217.

### Impressive improvements

QS research director Ben Sowter said Malaysia's higher education system has performed exceptionally well in the rankings.

"We believe that the alacrity with which Malaysian universities have pursued transnational education opportunities with institutions in the United Kingdom and Australia have helped to improve their global recognition.

This also facilitates the sort of international partnerships and exchange opportunities that lead to better research and more employable students," he said.

He advised Malaysian universities to keep collaborating with top international universities so that students will continue having access to top quality education.

Malaysia has another reason to celebrate as it now has five of Asia's top 50 universities.

In 2016, only one of Asia's top 50

universities was Malaysian.

"The Malaysian government has put education at the core of its agenda and it is supporting an ambitious vision with concrete and significant investments," said Sowter.

Congratulating Malaysian universities, Education Minister Dr Maszlee Malik reminded them that international rankings are not everything.

"Instead, priority should be given to substantial elements that will give a high impact on education and the culture of academic excellence, and contribute to the higher education's ecosystem," he said.

"We want universities to produce academics and students based on integrity and social responsibility.

"All universities should have the ability to produce talented graduates who are future proof, determined and adaptable to changes happening around them," he added.

Although Maszlee stressed that rankings are not the most important element in determining a university's success, they are crucial for attracting international students.

This is because, he added, these

students look at a university's rankings when deciding on the institution to attend.

### Push for excellence

UCSI University is ranked the nation's best private university for the second year in a row.

It beat its peers by breaching the top 500 of the QS World University Rankings last year to rank 481. UCSI University moved up 39 spots to rank 442 this year.

UCSI vice-chancellor and president Senior Prof Datuk Dr Khalid Yusoff said the milestone is a result of a consistent university-wide push for excellence.

"It reflects the strategies adopted and the dedication and commitment of all concerned," he added.

Its Institute of Music also emerged for the second time in the top 100 for the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2019 in the field of performing arts.

Sowter said UCSI University has improved its performance in four of the six indicators used to compile the rankings.

"Indicating that it is not simply excelling in one single area of its mission, but adopting a strategically holistic approach to improve-

ment," he added.

"It ranks 255th for our Faculty/Student Ratio indicator, which is the best score for this indicator of any private Malaysian university," he added.

Sowter said UCSI University is "highly-regarded for the quality of its graduates" with only Taylor's University scoring a higher Employer Reputation score.

"UCSI University has demonstrated its capacity to attract talented foreign students at an impressive rate: its score for International Student Ratio is 142nd in the world, and better than any featured Malaysian university," he explained.

On Taylor's University's rise from 601-650 to 511-520, its vice-chancellor and president Prof Michael Driscoll said in addition to its high Employer Reputation score, it also saw improvements in Academic Reputation, International Faculty, International Student and Faculty/Student Ratio.

"Research and enterprise are a strong focus area of Taylor's University, in line with the aspiration to be one of the top 100 universities in Asia by 2022.

"We hope that our efforts to be more balanced in our approach to higher education will see us further enhance our standing," he said.

MSU celebrated its inclusion in the rankings for the first time, with it in the 541-550.

MSU senior vice president, Global Affairs and Strategic Communication Datuk Rosli Yusoff said that it is "the best newcomer university in Malaysia" in the rankings.

"The university's latest achievement is in tune with our effort to nurture and empower quality human capital through excellence in education and the training we provide," said Rosli.

Sunway University vice-chancellor Prof Graeme Wilkinson said it is an unprecedented achievement and recognition for a fledgling university in Malaysia.

Sunway University is ranked 751-800.

"The challenge is to move forward from the new milestone towards greater heights.

"I am confident we shall do so in due course, given our strong investments in research, outstanding people and key international partnerships," he said.

Other universities on the list are Universiti Teknologi Petronas (482), Universiti Utara Malaysia (591-600), International Islamic University Malaysia (651-700), Universiti Teknologi Mara (651-700), Universiti Malaysia Perlis (701-750), Universiti Malaysia Pahang (751-800), Multimedia University (801-1,000), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (801-1,000), Universiti Tenaga Nasional (801-1,000), Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (801-1,000) and Universiti Malaysia Sabah (801-1,000).

Massachusetts Institute of Technology is number one in the world for a record eighth consecutive year.

Asia's top universities are the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University, which are tied at 11th place.

For more information, visit <https://www.topuniversities.com/qs-world-university-rankings>.