

Latest uni rankings out amid calls for halt due to Covid-19

Quacquarelli Symonds' list sees NUS stay in 11th place globally while NTU slips to 13th

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The National University of Singapore (NUS) held on to its top spot in Asia and placed 11th worldwide again in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings which were released this morning amid calls by higher education leaders for university rankings to be paused.

Nanyang Technological University (NTU), though, dropped two places to the 13th position worldwide and now ranks second in Asia.

The Singapore Management University (SMU), which climbed to 477th position last year, fell to the 511-520 band.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology was named the world's best university for a record-breaking ninth consecutive year, fol-

lowed by Stanford University and Harvard University.

The United Kingdom's top institution – and Europe's – is the University of Oxford, which fell from fourth to fifth place. Its centuries-old rival, the University of Cambridge, held on to its seventh placing.

Mr Ben Sowter, director of research at QS, said: "Last year, according to the World Economic Forum, Singapore overtook the United States to become the world's most competitive economy. The local universities have contributed to such extraordinary achievement by boosting the innovation capability of the city state and by educating a large proportion of its highly skilled workforce."

"NUS continues to lead nationally and regionally, followed closely by NTU. The latter, despite a small drop, continues to improve in our research impact indicator, rising 11



The National University of Singapore, top in Asia and 11th globally, said it was heartened to be placed among the top universities.

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places year on year."

Mr Sowter added that the ranking is dynamic and extremely competitive. This is especially true of universities in the top echelon.

In the latest ranking, all three ranked Singapore universities improved in the citation per faculty indicator, which measures the impact of the research produced, but all three of them dropped significantly in the indicator that measures the number of international students attending them. NUS lost 30 places, NTU 35 places and SMU 65 places.

QS uses six indicators to compile the ranking, including research im-

pact, faculty-student ratio and how the university is regarded by other academics and employers. It also gives weighting to the proportion of international students and faculty, which is used as an indication of a university's ability to attract talent from across the world.

The ranking, though, comes at a time when higher education has been disrupted by the pandemic, with campus closures and teaching and examinations moving online.

It has also led to calls to pause these rankings, including that by US News & World Report.

The editor-in-chief of Science,

Mr Holden Thorp, who previously held top leadership positions at American research universities, recently argued in the magazine for rankings to be paused. Noting that the inequities that exist in higher education are being amplified by Covid-19, he said: "This is not a time for institutions to be using precious resources to chase these numbers."

Rather, he said, universities need to support struggling students and academics.

Associate Professor Jason Tan of the National Institute of Education agreed that companies that produce such rankings need to relook the usefulness of the league tables and the criteria they use.

"The priorities and focus have changed considerably for universities. Right now, most are focused on helping their new graduates who are facing bleak job prospects, and how to reopen their campuses safely in the new academic year."

NUS said it was heartened to be placed among top universities in the world and Asia, but said: "The Covid-19 pandemic has been a 'reset' button for higher education and it may also redefine university rankings in the years to come."

It stressed that the university's key priority now is to provide support to its graduating class, students, faculty members and staff.

It also said: "We are doing everything we can to resume campus operations in a safe and careful way amid Covid-19."

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How they rank

Latest	Previous	Institution
1	1	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
2	2	Stanford University
3	3	Harvard University
4	5	California Institute of Technology
5	4	University of Oxford
6	6	ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology)
7	7	University of Cambridge
8	9	Imperial College London
9	10	University of Chicago
10	8	UCL (University College London)
11	11	National University of Singapore
12	13	Princeton University
13	11	Nanyang Technological University
14	18	Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne
15	16	Tsinghua University
511-520	477	Singapore Management University

Source: QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS