

# NUS still ranked top university in Asia

QS World University Rankings released despite calls by higher education leaders for rankings to be paused

✓ **SANDRA DAVIE,**  
SENIOR EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

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 released this morning amid calls by higher education leaders for university rankings to be paused.

Nanyang Technological University (NTU), though, dropped two places to 13th position worldwide and 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, followed by Stanford University and Harvard University.

Britain's top institution – and Europe's – is the University of Oxford, which fell from fourth to fifth place. Its 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

## Quacquarelli Symonds Asia University Rankings 2020 top 10

1	National University of Singapore
2	Nanyang Technological University
3	University of Hong Kong
4	Tsinghua University
5	Peking University
6	Zhejiang University
7	Fudan University
8	The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
9	KAIST – Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology
10	The Chinese University of Hong Kong

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 places year on year."

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 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 impact, 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.

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

The editor-in-chief of Science, Mr Holden Thorp, who previously held top leadership positions at American research universities, recently argued in the journal for rankings to be paused.

Noting 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.

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."

[sandra@sph.com.sg](mailto:sandra@sph.com.sg)