

Beyond the numbers: Choosing the right university

A new international university ranking released by *Time* magazine in partnership with Statista has placed more than two dozen Australian universities among the world's leading institutions for 2026. The ranking measures universities across three areas: academic performance, innovation and economic impact, and global engagement.

These results give families a sense of how Australian institutions are viewed internationally. Here is what parents and students should also keep in mind.

How Australian universities performed

Australian universities ranked strongly, with several appearing in the global top 200.

The top Australian institutions in this year's ranking are:

1. University of Queensland (Global #28)
2. University of Melbourne (Global #41)
3. University of Sydney (Global #58)
4. University of Western Australia
5. University of New South Wales
6. Australian National University
7. University of Adelaide
8. Monash University
9. Curtin University
10. James Cook University

What rankings do not tell

While global rankings are useful, they have limitations. This particular ranking focuses heavily on research impact and international partnerships. It does not measure:

- Quality of teaching
- Class sizes
- Student wellbeing and support
- Campus culture
- Career outcomes for graduates
- Strength of individual programs

This means that some smaller or specialised universities may not appear as highly ranked, even though they can offer excellent student experiences and strong teaching programs.

How families can use rankings wisely

Rankings are a helpful starting point, but they shouldn't be the only factor in deciding where to study. When supporting a young person's university choice, consider:

The right course, not just the right university

Some universities have exceptional programs in specific fields, even if their overall ranking is lower.

Lifestyle and location

A student's wellbeing is influenced by cost of living, transport options, climate, and the feel of the campus and surrounding community.

Career pathways

Look at graduate outcomes for the specific degree. Industry partnerships, internships, and real-world learning opportunities often matter more than global research reputation.

What this means for students

The latest rankings confirm that Australian universities are internationally competitive. But the "best" university for any student is the one that:

- Matches their academic interests
- Supports their learning style
- Provides clear pathways into future careers
- Feels like the right environment

Rankings offer a useful overview, but families are encouraged to explore multiple sources of information and focus on the individual student's goals, interests, and needs.

As mentioned previously, rankings are only one part of the overall university investigation on what is right for your daughter and can change based on what specific metric is used at that point in time.

I look forward to continuing to support your daughters as they continue to chart their futures.

Mr Ryan Richards

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