



# What Does It Take To Get 5 Stars?

An in-depth look at the QS Stars  
university rating system



# Contents

The **QS Stars university rating system** was developed to provide universities with another avenue to publicly highlight their strengths, besides the annual QS World University Rankings.

The rating system also allows universities to identify and improve upon areas of weaknesses, providing detailed assessments under each criterion.

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Under **QS Stars**, those universities who display exceptional performance and quality standards are awarded a 5 Star rating.

In this white paper, we will examine the requirements that universities need to meet to achieve a coveted 5 Star rating with QS Stars.



# How To Get a 5 Star Rating

EXCELLENT



There are several thresholds that universities must meet to achieve a 5 Star rating, including:

- An overall score of at least 700 out of 1000 points
- In faculty, at least 5% should be international
- In the student body, at least 5% should be international
- A point score of 70 or over in the learning environment category
- A point score of 85 or over in the employability category
- If assessed in the Research category, 150 academic references or three citations per faculty member
- If assessed in the Academic Development category, 105 points in the Teaching category

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To hit the 5+ Star rating, institutions must achieve 5 Star ratings in all categories, meet all pre-requisites for 5 Stars, and hit an overall point score of 900 points or more.

Under the QS Stars methodology, the Core Criteria includes four categories:

- Teaching
- Employability
- Internationalization
- Research or Academic Development (must pick one)

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Additionally, these are complemented by three other criteria, including:

- Learning Environment: Facilities or Online (must pick one)
- Specialist Criteria: Subject Ranking or Program Strength (must pick one)
- Advanced Criteria: Arts and Culture, Innovation, Inclusiveness, Social Responsibility (must pick two out of the four)

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So, what do the four categories under the core criteria cover to determine your QS Stars rating?

# Teaching

Under the Teaching category, universities must prove that they have a 10% faculty to student ratio, which means one faculty member per every 10 students.

This can be scaled down to a 2% faculty to student ratio (one faculty member per 50 students) to receive minimum points for this category.

For example, **Bond University in Australia** offers the nation's best faculty to student ratio, enabling small class sizes and ensuring they receive 5 Stars in the Teaching category.

Additionally, universities should show overall student satisfaction (75%, or scaled down to 50% for minimum points) or overall completion (90% of students graduating within the expected time for their course, or scaled down to 60%).

They also need to show overall satisfaction with teaching (75%, scaled down to 50%) or the number of faculty members with PhDs or an equivalent degree (80%, scaled down to 60%).

Finally, universities need to show further study with 30% of graduates pursuing further study within 12 months of graduation (scaled down to 10%).



# Employability

**The Employability** category is something that is unique to QS, as QS is the only international rankings provider that includes employability as an indicator.

QS runs the annual QS Global Employer Survey, which forms one of the core components of this QS Stars category.

Universities must show 50 employer nominations from the most recent QS Global Employer Survey analysis or demonstrate that 200 distinct companies (or a number equivalent to 1% of the student body) have attended on-campus employability events over a 12-month period.

They also need to demonstrate a strong graduate employment rate with 90% of graduates employed within 24 months of graduation (scaled down to 50%).

Universities can also receive 10 points for each of the following career support services (with two bonus points for three or more):

10 career advisors (scaled down to two), or one career advisor per 1000 students

Career interview trainings or resume writing support

At least one on-campus career fair in the last 12 months

Career advising sessions

An online career portal listing job vacancies or career advising sessions

For example, Loughborough University in the UK achieved a 5 Star rating in Employability thanks to its commitment to preparing students for life after study, developing strong industry links and offering the option for a paid placement year as part of a degree.



# Internationalization

With the Internationalization category, universities must demonstrate 50 joint-degree programs and/or university research collaborations leading to publications in Scopus™ in a recent five-year period, as per the latest QS World University Rankings analysis.

They also need to showcase an international faculty and student body with 25% international teaching staff and 20% international students.

For example, the Auckland University of Technology is consistently ranked number one in New Zealand for international outlook in university rankings, boasting over 5,400 international students from 150 countries. This and other factors earned them a 5 Star rating for Internationalization.

They also need to highlight inbound and outbound international exchange programs with 2% of inbound or outbound students on exchange for three months or longer, or 2% of outbound students on a university-organized international trip that lasts between two weeks to three months.

Universities can also set up an international support center dedicated to international students with at least one full-time staff member.



# Research or Academic Development

## Research

This category allows universities to choose whether they want to be assessed under either Research or Academic Development, including these requirements:

### Research:

- Seven papers per faculty member indexed on Scopus™ in a recent five-year period
- Eight citations per paper indexed on Scopus™ in a recent six-year period
- 30% of funds for the past fiscal year was allocated to research (scaled down to 10%)
- 200 nominations received in the latest QS Global Academic Survey analysis

## Academic Development

- 30% of student body participating in teaching or research assistantships (scaled down to 10%)
- A learning development center with three full-time staff (scaled down to one)
- A 3:3 faculty office hours to classroom teaching hours per week (scaled down to 1:3)
- 70% of total faculty members participating in faculty development programs (scaled down to 30%)
- Membership in a range of international, national, and regional university networks

# Conclusion

While a range of other factors go into a QS Stars rating, these are the core criteria you should be aware of if you're interested in getting your university assessed.

## So, what benefits could a QS Stars rating provide to your university?

- An evidence-based marketing tool that can be listed on marketing materials and in communications with prospective students
- A framework for improvement with weaknesses identified and opportunities highlighted
- A showcase of your strengths and a detailed analysis of how they contributed to your QS Stars rating

To learn more about 5 Star ratings and why your university should be assessed, [reach out to our QS Stars team today](#).





# About QS

QS Quacquarelli Symonds is the world's leading provider of services, analytics, and insights to the global higher education sector. Our mission is to enable motivated people anywhere in the world to fulfil their potential through educational achievement, international mobility, and career development.

Our QS World University Rankings portfolio, inaugurated in 2004, has grown to become the world's most popular source of comparative data about university performance. Our flagship website, [www.TopUniversities.com](http://www.TopUniversities.com) – the home of our rankings – was viewed 149 million times in 2019, and over 94,000 media clippings pertaining to, or mentioning, QS were published by media outlets across the world in 2019.

## QS portfolio

- **QS Digital and Events** provides prospective undergraduate, graduate, and MBA applicants with independent guidance throughout their search and decision making. Our world-class digital platforms include TopUniversities.com, TopMBA.com, and QSLeap.com which support search and inform applications to programs matching their profile and aspirations. In parallel, prospective students can meet, either virtually or face-to-face, with admissions officers of international universities and business schools. For universities and business schools, it offers effective and innovative digital and off-line student recruitment and branding solutions.
- **QS Enrolment Solutions** supports higher education institutions to maximize their student recruitment with a range of specialist services, from data-driven insights and high-quality lead generation to optimized communications and student conversion. With over 20 years of experience QSES has an unequalled understanding of international student decision-making. Our international office locations (UK, Romania, India, Malaysia and Australia) enable us to operate across time zones to deliver high value to our partners and exceptional services for applicants.
- **The QS Intelligence Unit** is a leading originator of institutional performance insight drawing on unique proprietary datasets gathered in pursuit of its published research. Best known for the widely referenced QS World University Rankings, today comprising variants by discipline and geography, the unit also operates a sophisticated, multi-dimensional quality standard; a comprehensive analytics platform facilitating advanced benchmarking; and an in-demand consulting team. Our insights both inform and are informed by frequent presence and digital conferences for educators, university leaders, and policy makers.
- **QS Unisolution** is dedicated to developing SaaS technology solutions to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of international mobility, relations, and recruitment functions within education, positively impacting the educational experience for the students, staff, and partners we serve.

For more information about the QS services, please visit [www.qs.com](http://www.qs.com) or contact [b2bmarketing@qs.com](mailto:b2bmarketing@qs.com)



To continue empowering motivated individuals and institutions across the world alike during the coronavirus outbreak, QS' response has included:

- Moving its [student recruitment events online](#), ensuring that universities and talented potential applicants across the world are still able to achieve high-quality personalized engagement.
- Expanding its range of digital marketing offerings, empowering student recruitment teams as they seek to maintain outreach and enrolment efforts.
- Launching a webinar series designed to enable university faculty and administrators alike to share best practices as they transition their educational offerings into the virtual classroom.
- Ongoing surveys of prospective students and institutions globally to analyze how the COVID-19 crisis is impacting them.

In 2019, as part of our commitment to sustainability, [QS became a certified CarbonNeutral® Company](#), reflecting our efforts to reduce our impact on the environment through a range of efficiency initiatives and offsetting unavoidable emissions through a verified carbon offset forestry project in Brazil.



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