

Yet again, Malaysian varsities not among world's top
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Malaysian universities have once again failed to make the cut in the latest Times Higher Education (THE) World Reputation Rankings 2015, with too few scholars citing the country's tertiary institutions as being among the best in the world.

The list of the world's 100 most prestigious universities released today includes two Singapore varsities, and is based on the largest survey of leading academics across the world, said THE rankings editor, Phil Baty.

"As long as academics cite them as being among the very best universities in the world, they will appear in the rankings," Baty told The Malaysian Insider in an email.

"Unfortunately, not enough scholars around the world named any Malaysian university in sufficient numbers for them to make the top 100. Singapore had two top entries – NUS (National University of Singapore) in 24th place and NTU (Nanyang Technological University) in the 91-100 band."

Malaysia has never been featured on the list, which is in its fifth year, despite Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh's recent statement that the country's universities are world class and on par with varsities in Britain, Germany and Australia.

But unlike Malaysia, those three countries were singled out by THE as having among the highest number of institutions in the World Reputation Rankings 2015.

The US had the most number of institutions at 43, followed by the United Kingdom (12), Germany (six) and Australia (five).

Harvard University tops the list again in this year's ranking, followed by Cambridge University and Oxford University. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology dropped to fourth place from second place last year, and Stanford University edged to number five.

NUS and NTU are the only Southeast Asian institutes that have made the list, but NUS dropped from 21st place to 24, while NTU remained in the 91-100 band.

Other Asian universities in the top 50 of the World Reputation Rankings are the University of Tokyo (at 12th place), Tsinghua University, China (26), Kyoto University, Japan (27), and Peking University, China (32).

"This ranking is very simple and very powerful. It is based purely on subjective judgment. But it is the expert subjective judgment of those who know most about excellent teaching and research – leading academics from all around the world. And their opinion matters deeply," said Baty (pic, left) in a press release.

"A university's global academic reputation is vital – it not only influences investments and funding decisions, but more importantly, it helps a university to develop and nurture its single greatest asset: its student and academic talent."

The 2015 results were drawn from 10,507 survey responses from published senior academics who reported an average of 15 years working in higher education, said THE.

In his reaction, DAP MP for Serdang, Dr Ong Kian Ming said he was not surprised that Malaysia failed to make the cut.

"I think this is a good reminder to our Education Minister II, Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh that our Malaysian universities are still nowhere near world-class status, despite his recent comments that Malaysia has a world-class education system," said Ong.

"Datuk Seri Idris conveniently refers to the QS University Rankings where Malaysia has universities in top 300, but in other rankings like THE, it seems that Malaysia is not even recognised.

"I think that Idris should focus on further improving the gains that have been already made by public universities, but he must also admit that we are nowhere near world class status."

In the QS World University Rankings released last year, Universiti Malaya (UM) was at number 151 while Universiti Kebangsaan Malaya (UKM) was ranked 259th.

The ranking also put Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) at number 294, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) at 309 and Universiti Putra Malaysia at 376.

Last year, Baty expressed disappointment that UM and UKM did not submit data for another of its rankings: the annual World University Rankings 2014-2015, effectively missing out on the opportunity to be assessed against other universities in the world.

The full list of the 2015 Times Higher Education World Reputation survey can be viewed here. – March 12, 2015.

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