

How important are university league tables?

When navigating university league tables, it's important for you to recognise more than just an institution's 'overall position'. You should consider multiple university league tables with your top priorities for higher education study in mind.

And remember – if you discover that the institution you want to apply to doesn't rank highly on one league table, this doesn't mean this university isn't for you!



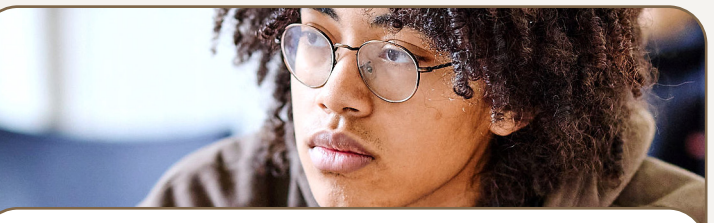
What will university league tables tell you?

League tables tell you more than simply which university is the best at teaching. When you look at league tables, it is important to understand the methodology used by each publication. Each source will state which criteria they've prioritised or considered – this will include, but is not limited to:

- Teaching excellence
- Research
- Student experience

This will explain why an institution might rank differently between university league tables. It will also help you understand how the strengths of different institutions are displayed. If you and a friend are interested in the same subject, you may be more concerned about the quality of teaching and student experience, while your friend may be more attracted by the quality of research. The significance of each league table really comes down to you as an individual student and your specific needs.

The different metrics a league table is presenting should also be considered. When viewing tables online, you can adjust rankings to view where a university ranks on the specific criteria you have prioritised as key to your university experience. For instance, if you thrive better in environments with frequent staff support you can arrange the *Guardian University Guide* to see the student-staff ratio at each institution, determining how much access you will have to your tutors.



Which university league tables are available?

There are three major league tables:

- The Sunday Times Good University Guide
- The Guardian University Guide
- The Complete University Guide

There are also student experience rankings such as *WhatUni?*, whose figures are primarily based on student surveys and opinion. Then there are international league tables, the most notable being: *Times Higher Education World University Rankings* or the *QS World University Rankings*.



Don't forget university subject league tables too

Major university guides will also provide rankings at subject level. Often students will not consider a university because it's in the bottom half of a league table, but you may discover that the same institution offers the best course in the country for your desired subject. This is especially true for areas like medicine, veterinary science and dentistry, where a smaller number of institutions offer these programmes.