

## New Zealand Universities in the Times Higher Education Top Universities Rankings 2008

2008 Ranking	2007 Ranking	University
65	50	University of Auckland
124=	114=	University of Otago
186=	188=	University of Canterbury
227=	234	Victoria University of Wellington
283	242	Massey Universtiy
378=	319=	University of Waikato

## New Zealand vs Competitor Countries in the THE Rankings 2008

Country	Top 100	Top 200	Top 500	Total Unis
New Zealand	13%	38%	75%	8
Australia	17%	22%	51%	41
UK	14%	25%	42%	118
Canada	6%	14%	24%	83
USA	2%	3%	5%	1,900 approx.
Germany	2%	6%	25%	159

## Notes on the Times Higher Education Rankings

### Methodology

The Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) 'Top University' rankings are probably the best known international comparative rankings. Each year, a ranked list is compiled, and the 'Top 200' is widely reported.

As part of the process, considerably more than 200 Universities are considered. An extended list of the top 500 is also compiled.

There are other ranking lists – the Shanghai Jiao Tong Academic Ranking is well known, and the Financial Times EMBA rankings are an example of a programme ranking. However, the THES ranking seems to be the most comprehensive in terms of methodology, and is certainly widely quoted.

The THES methodology (as outlined at the 2006 British Council 'Going Global' Conference, from which this explanation is drawn) concentrates on four key themes for comparison:

- Quality of research output
- Employability of graduates
- Internationalisation of university
- Commitment to quality of teaching

A Peer Review process, involving 2,375 academics in 88 different countries, is the key qualitative measure used by THES, and a key differentiator by comparison with other rankings. THES also

use a comprehensive employer review to help determine employability. This qualitative approach is endorsed by some academic leaders; for example "Peer Review is an effective way to evaluate universities. It takes smart people to recognise smart people" - (Sir Richard Sykes, Rector, Imperial College – who come in at 9 on the list!). However, there are a range of quantitative tools used as well, including citations/faculty, student faculty ratios and the size of the international faculty. THES are the first to admit that these various indicators have limitations but the combination of factors gives them a fairly comprehensive picture. Overall, 50% of their methodology is qualitative and 50% quantitative.

### **Why aren't all of our Universities in the Top 500?**

Lincoln University is quite small, and given that size does matter in rankings (both in quantitative terms and for the sheer fact that its graduate/alumni pool is far less extensive and this mitigates against the qualitative evaluation) it is unlikely to appear in most general rankings regardless of its individual faculty excellence.

AUT is very new in university terms, and again this will impact it adversely in both types of measure.

### **New Zealand Compared**

So is New Zealand's comparative performance good or bad? How did other countries do? Is 75% or 46<sup>th</sup> or 340<sup>th</sup> something to brag about or not?

The first thing that needs to be taken into account is what constitutes the comparison? Different countries have different tertiary systems, many with varying levels and types of universities. Just because an institution is called a University doesn't mean it is exactly comparable with the New Zealand definition of the term. Because of this, the following numerical comparisons generally are made against the top tier of universities for those countries that have more than one type.

The United States has the largest university system in the world, with around 1,900 in total (a precise number is hard to define for the reasons above). These range from the very best (Harvard and Yale are the THES numbers one and two for 2008, and they have 20 in the top 50 including six of the top 10) to not so good. Obviously, with 1,900 to choose from one would expect the USA to dominate the rankings – although even if the whole 500 were US institutions, it would still put only 25% of their total into that category. However, in spite of their being the '900lb gorilla' in the system, in percentage terms, they achieve just 5% - a long way from 75%!

Turning to the UK, they have 89 universities in their 'top tier', although if you include those classified as 'University Institutions' the total is 118. Cambridge and Oxford grab slots 3 and 4, there are 8 in the top 50 and they have 25% of their universities in the top 200. Performance tapers off however, in the top 500 with a total of 42% overall.

Australia is a standout performer, with six in the top 50 (15%) – the Australian National University leads the charge at position 16 (this makes it the 3<sup>rd</sup> country to appear behind the USA and UK. They have just over 50% of their total number in the top 500.

Canada is the other major English speaking system – of their 83 universities they have three in the top 50 (3.6%), and 24% in the top 500.

The rankings table charts the performance of at least 3,863 universities across 20 countries. Lest the charge be made of selective comparisons, these 20 countries between them have all the top 50 universities, 90% of the top 200 and 78% of the top 500. To even be in the Top 500 is probably to be in the top 8% of all universities in the world – 500 sounds a lot but it a modest

portion of the overall number of universities in operation world wide. So a Top 500 spot is a considerable achievement in itself.