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Research Trends Editorial Board

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Country trends



UK universities climb in THES rankings

In November 2007 the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES), in cooperation with QS (Quacquarelli Symonds), published its annual QS World University Rankings. Since its inception in 2004, this ranking system has developed into one of the most robust measures of comparative international university quality.

The 2007 rankings identify 32 UK universities among the top 200 from around the world. The top 10 of these UK universities are identified in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Top 10 UK universities by THES ranking

2007 UK rank	2007 THES rank	2006 THES rank	Change in rank position	Name
1=	2=	2	0	University of Cambridge
1=	2=	3	+1	University of Oxford
3	5	9	+4	Imperial College London
4	9	25	+16	University College London
5	23	33=	+10	University of Edinburgh
6	24	46=	+22	King's College London
7	30	40	+10	University of Manchester
8	37	64=	+27	University of Bristol
9	57	73	+16	University of Warwick
10	59	17	-42	London School of Economics

Most of these top 10 universities show positive changes in their ranking between 2006 and 2007. Indeed, the University of Bristol increased 27 places, King's College London increased 22 places and both University College London and the University of Warwick increased 16 places. However, these were not the highest climbers among the UK universities. Table 2 illustrates the UK universities that increased the most within the top 200.

Table 2 – UK universities showing the highest increase in rank within the THES rankings

2007 UK rank	2007 THES rank	2006 THES rank	Change in rank position	Name
26	147	228=	+81	Lancaster University
32	190	258=	+68	University of Surrey
29	171=	238	+67	University of Dundee
16=	80=	141	+61	University of Southampton
24	137=	195	+58	University of Aberdeen

THES made several key changes to its methodology last year. Perhaps the most significant of these is the use of Scopus data to compile the World University Rankings. This will certainly have had an impact on universities' movement up and down the rankings, but there are many other contributing factors that could have affected the scores. With this in mind, we asked the top-cited authors from Lancaster University, the university with the highest rank increase, why they think their institution performed so well.

The most cited article from Lancaster University between 2002-2006 was authored by Professor David Lyth and co-authored by Professor David Wands of the University of Plymouth ("Generating the curvature perturbation without an inflaton", 2002, *Physics Letters, Section B: Nuclear, Elementary Particle and High-Energy Physics*, Vol. 524, No. 1-2, pp. 5-14). Professor Lyth, commenting on his university's impressive jump in ranking, says that "there has been a change in the methodology of our research - more thorough peer review and no self-citing of one's own institution is permitted. In addition, we have seen strong growth in staff numbers; in the physics department we have seen academic and research staff numbers grow by nearly 50% in the past six years."

This article has shown a strong presence for UK universities in the THES rankings. The UK has a continued trend for quality research output, which is often groundbreaking and opens up the possibility for many other studies in new areas. 2007 was the first year THES employed its new methodology and several institutes have shown promising jumps in its rankings, based in part on their research. Future rankings will show whether they can maintain and cement their leading international positions.

To find out more about why Professors Lyth and Wand's paper was cited, please also visit [Why did you cite...?](#)