

# World University Rankings 2022: Saudi Arabia and Egypt fastest risers

Middle Eastern nations have improved more quickly than mainland China over past four years, while Malaysia and Pakistan also on rise

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Universities in Saudi Arabia and Egypt are the fastest-rising higher education institutions in the world, improving more quickly over the past four years than those in mainland China, according to the latest *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings.

The average overall score for Saudi Arabian institutions is more than 12 points higher in the 2022 edition of the table, published today, compared with the 2018 edition, while the average score for Egyptian institutions is almost 11 points higher. For both nations, this is largely driven by an increase in their citation impact scores, while Egypt's industry income score has also risen. Mainland China's average overall score increased by just over 9 points.

Saudi Arabia features in the top 200 of the World University Rankings for the first time this year, with [King Abdulaziz University](#) ranking at joint 190th, up from the 201-250 band last year. Meanwhile, five universities in the country make the top 400, up from just two last year. One of Saudi Arabia's main goals in its Vision 2030 strategy is to have at least five universities in the top 200 in the world.

Elsewhere, Malaysia and Pakistan are also making strong progress and almost improving at the same rate as China (their scores increased by nearly 9 and by 6.5 points, respectively). These countries have also seen a significant increase in their average citation impact score, while Malaysia is the fastest-rising higher education system in terms of international outlook, and Pakistan has seen a significant boost in its industry income score.

The analysis considered only institutions that had been ranked in all years (2018-2022), and countries that had at least three such institutions.

Manar Sabry, senior assistant director for strategic analysis at [SUNY Binghamton University](#) and an expert on higher education in the MENA region, said Saudi Arabia's and Egypt's gains "follow decades of policy-driven growth in scientific research and an increase in funding" as well as collaboration with international research partners.

“Collaborative publications receive more citations and are of better quality, thus having a greater chance of being published in high impact journals,” she said.

Dr Sabry said this trend “can be sustained” but the countries must improve academic job security and address issues relating to research bureaucracy and academic freedom.

Glenda Crosling, head of the Center for Higher Education Research at Malaysia’s , said that Malaysia was seen as a “forerunner in transnational education” and that the development of joint programmes and foreign branch campuses had increased the nation’s international educational outlook and “broadened” its university system – with private universities operating alongside public institutions – through best practice.

She added that there had been “tenacious and focused investment in higher education” from the government.

“In some ways, Malaysia is a regional hub for higher education,” she said, noting that 50 per cent of intra-Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) student mobility in higher education in recent years involved students going to Malaysia.

“It would seem that as we come out of the pandemic, this intra-Asean student mobility could be enhanced and that Malaysia would be seen as a likely destination for it,” she added.

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