



Briefing Note: Embargoed results of the 2022 QS World University Rankings

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	8 June 2021	Priority:	Medium
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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this Briefing is for you to:

Note the analysis of the embargoed results of the 2022 Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings.

Agree that this Briefing will be proactively released after the results are published by QS.

☒ **Agree** ☐ **Disagree**

Summary

- The 2022 QS World University Rankings will be published on Wednesday 9 June 2021 at 8.00am, New Zealand time. QS has provided results to the Ministry of Education under embargo, and they must not be shared until the public release of the rankings.
- In the 2022 rankings, five of the eight New Zealand universities declined in ranking from last year while three improved in ranking. The highest-ranked New Zealand university, the University of Auckland, declined four places to reach 85=.
- The QS World University Rankings is one of the highest profile international university rankings. Your office may be asked for comment on the results.

- The Ministry will publish an updated factsheet on the results on the Education Counts website after the results are published.



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08/06/2021



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

9 / 6 / 2021

Background

1. The Ministry of Education monitors the release of international university rankings throughout the year. We brief you on the rankings because:
 - they are sometimes covered by the New Zealand media and the media often seek ministerial comment on the performance of New Zealand universities in the rankings
 - in the past, individual universities and Universities New Zealand have used the results of the rankings to advocate for more funding, especially when the rankings have declined
 - in the past, the results have also been used by the universities and Education New Zealand in marketing campaigns to attract international students.
2. QS has a naming convention where it assigns a year to the name of the rankings that is one year in advance of when it was actually published. For example, the 2022 QS World University Rankings will be released in June 2021.

How important is this ranking?

3. The Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings have the highest profile of the international university rankings. Your office may be asked for comment on the results.
4. First published in 2005, these are the flagship rankings produced by QS. The rankings examine universities across areas such as reputation, teaching, research and internationalisation to determine an overall ranking. In the 2022 edition, QS has published the rankings of the top 1,300 universities, 145 more than last year's edition.
5. The six indicators used by QS to rank universities are as follows (weightings applied to the indicators are in brackets):
 - a. *Academic reputation* (40%). A survey of academics that asks respondents to identify universities they consider best in research.
 - b. *Employer reputation* (10%). A survey of employers where respondents are asked to identify institutions they consider to have high-quality graduates.
 - c. *Citations per faculty* (20%). The number of citations over the last five years divided by the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty. This is weighted by broad faculty area to account for differing rates of citation.
 - d. *Faculty/student ratio* (20%). The number of (FTE) students per equivalent full-time faculty.
 - e. *International faculty ratio* (5%). The proportion of faculty members who are of a foreign nationality.
 - f. *International student ratio* (5%). The proportion of students who are of a foreign nationality.
6. These rankings attract the greatest attention in the New Zealand media as all the New Zealand universities are ranked by QS and they tend to be ranked higher than in other systems. The University of Auckland is ranked inside the world top 100 by QS, the only overall global international rankings system to do so.

7. Although it has a high profile, the QS rankings have been subject to much criticism. In particular, the high weighting applied to surveys of academics and employers in generating the overall rankings has been criticised. The academic survey results contribute 40% to the final overall score used to rank institutions. The number of responses have increased significantly over time from around 3,000 in the mid 2000's to over 130,000 in this year's rankings. Also, there have been a number of changes in methodology over time, resulting in instability in the rankings and making it difficult to interpret changes in rankings between years.
8. More detail on the QS World University Rankings can be found at <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary-education/university-rankings>.
9. We will publish an updated factsheet on the QS World University Rankings on the Ministry's Education Counts website after the public release of the results.

The 2022 results

10. Overall, five of the eight New Zealand universities declined in ranking from last year while three improved in ranking.
11. All eight New Zealand universities remained ranked inside the top 500.
12. In 2022, the rankings for the New Zealand universities were:
 - University of Auckland (85=), down 4 places from last year
 - University of Otago (194=), down 10 places from last year
 - Victoria University of Wellington (236=), down 13 places from last year
 - University of Canterbury (258), up 12 places from last year
 - Massey University (284), down 12 places from last year
 - Lincoln University (372), up 15 places from last year
 - University of Waikato (373=), up 2 places from last year
 - Auckland University of Technology (451=), down 14 places from last year.
13. It is difficult to know the extent to which COVID-19 may have impacted this year's rankings as there may be a lag before it starts to show up in the material collected by QS. The International student ratio is one metric where a COVID-19 impact might appear more quickly and clearly. In terms of this measure, six of the eight New Zealand universities showed a decline in the 2022 edition, with three of these being relatively significant.
14. A full table of rankings for New Zealand universities between 2005 and 2022 is presented in Annex One.
15. To put the New Zealand results in perspective, more Australian universities improved in ranking in the 2022 edition than declined. Of the 36 Australian universities ranked in both 2021 and 2022, 16 improved, 11 declined and nine remained the same. The highest-ranked Australian institution was the Australian National University (27=), followed by the University of Melbourne (37) and University of Sydney (38).

QS press release

16. Along with the embargoed 2022 results, QS had provided the Ministry with a press release tailored for the New Zealand market. However, QS made a late change to one of the rankings of the New Zealand universities and has not provided the Ministry with an updated version of the press release.
17. If QS subsequently provides us with a revised press release we will provide it to your office.

Release of the 2022 results

18. The 2022 QS World University Rankings will be published on Wednesday 9 June at 8.00am, New Zealand time. The Ministry of Education has received a copy of the results from QS under embargo. They must not be shared until the public release.
19. We will share this briefing with the Tertiary Education Commission, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, NZQA, and Education New Zealand before the results are published.

Proactive Release

20. We recommend that this Briefing is proactively released after the release of the results by QS as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Annexes

- Annex 1: Results of the QS World University Rankings for New Zealand universities 2005-2022

Annex 1: Results of the QS World University Rankings for New Zealand universities 2005-2022

University	2005	2006	2007	Significant change in method	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Significant change in method	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Auckland	67	52	46		50	65	61=	68	82	83	94	92=		82=	81	82=	85	83=	81	85=
Otago	114	186	79		114=	124=	125	135	130	133	155	159		173=	169	151	175=	176	184	194=
VUW			222		234	227=	229=	225=	237=	237	265=	275=		229=	228=	219	221=	215=	223=	236=
Canterbury			333		188=	186=	188	189	212	221	238	242		211	214=	214	231=	227=	270=	258
Massey	108	188	213		242	283	299	302	329=	308	343=	346		337	340=	316=	332=	287=	272	284
Lincoln											481-490	411-420		373=	343=	319=	317=	356=	387=	372
Waikato			340		319=	378=	314=	316=	357	374	401-410	401-410		338=	324	292	274	266=	375=	373=
AUT										451-500	471-480	501-550		481-490	441-450	441-450	464=	442=	437=	451=

Source: QS Quacquarelli Symonds (www.topuniversities.com)

Notes: 1. AUT = Auckland University of Technology, VUW = Victoria University of Wellington. 2. QS has a naming convention where it assigns a year to the name of the rankings that is one year in advance of when it was published. For example, the 2021 QS World University Rankings were actually released in June 2020.

Proactively Released