



Global University Rankings and Admission Excellence: A Strategic Framework for Enhancing Institutional Reputation and Student Recruitment

Prof. Madya Dr. Mashitoh Yaacob

Pusat Pengajian Citra Universiti (School of Liberal Studies)

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)

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INTRODUCTION: THE RANKINGS REALITY

Why Rankings Matter Now More Than Ever



35%

of institutions cite ranking
as top internationalization goal



70%

of international students
consider rankings in decisions



100+

ranking systems worldwide
(from just 3 in 2003)



\$100M+

global rankings market
value annually

"Rankings are not the enemy of excellence—but neither are they its definition. Our challenge is strategic engagement while preserving institutional value."

THE MAJOR RANKINGS LANDSCAPE

Understanding the Big Three + Regional Systems

Different rankings measure different things – context matters

QS Rankings

40% Reputation Focus

- Academic/Employer reputation
- Faculty/student ratio
- Citations per faculty
- International diversity

THE Rankings

30% Research Quality

- Teaching environment
- Research environment
- Research quality
- International outlook
- Industry income

Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) Rankings

100% research

- Nobel prizes & awards
- Highly cited researchers
- Nature & Science publications
- Research Productivity

Regional Rankings

Context-Specific

- QS Arab Region
- QS Asia Rankings
- Regional university rankings
- Specialized rankings

THE INFLUENCE CYCLE

How Rankings Shape the Higher Education Ecosystem



Three Key Impacts

- Strategic Impact**
Drive institutional priorities and investments
- Financial Impact**
Affect enrollment, funding, partnerships
- Reputational Impact**
Shape perceptions globally and locally

WHAT RESEARCH REVEALS?

Stakeholder Perspectives: Key Findings from Malaysian HE Study

Mixed-Methods Research | 384+ Surveys | 6+ Focus Groups



STUDENTS

Rankings influence 60% of decisions

International students more sensitive:
78%

Rankings used for initial filtering

BUT: Program fit matters most



FACULTY & STAFF

✓ **68%** feel pride in ranking success

⚠ **61%** experience increased pressure

⚠ **55%** concerned about priorities

≈ Mixed on quality correlation



EMPLOYERS & AGENTS

72% use as quick reference

Agents: essential marketing tool

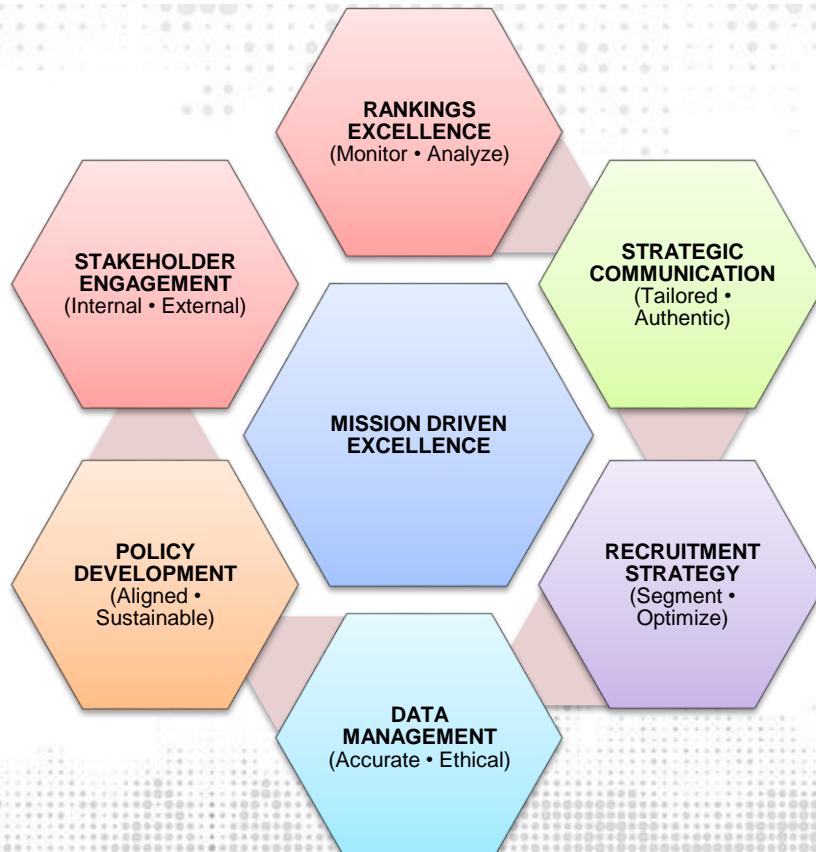
Employers: skills > rankings

Government: competitiveness indicator

"Rankings significantly influence behavior – but perceptions are nuanced and complex."

THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

Six Components for Admission Excellence



Five Foundation Principles:

- a) Mission Alignment
- b) Evidence-Based
- c) Stakeholder-Centered
- d) Contextually Sensitive
- e) Ethical Integrity

Strategic Communication Essentials

Communicating About Rankings: The Art of Balance

DO ✓

- ✓ Provide methodology context
- ✓ Emphasize subject-specific strengths
- ✓ Highlight multiple quality indicators
- ✓ Be transparent about limitations
- ✓ Tailor messages by audience
- ✓ Celebrate achievements appropriately

DON'T X

- X Overstate ranking importance
- X Make misleading comparisons
- X Ignore institutional weaknesses
- X Let rankings dominate messaging
- X Create unrealistic expectations
- X Game or manipulate data

Audience Segmentation Strategy

Prospective Students: Program quality + outcomes + rankings

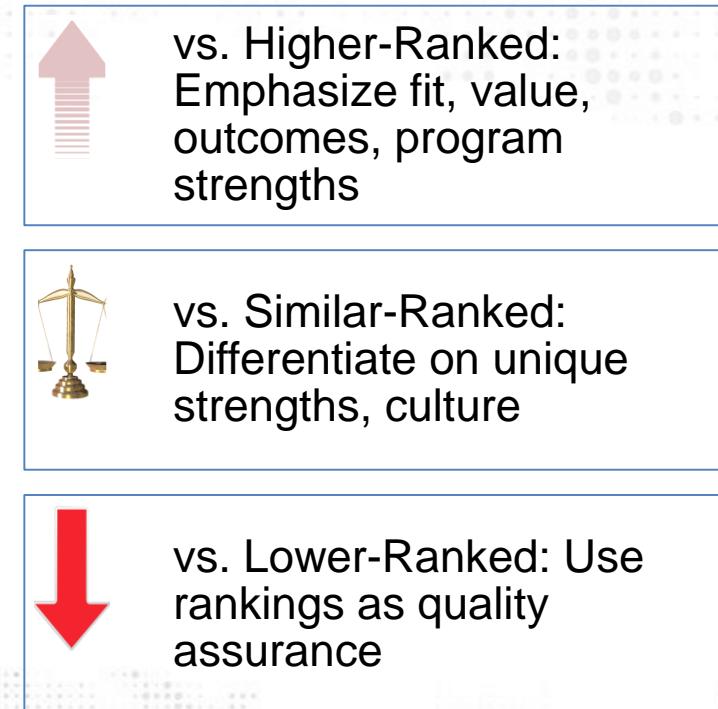
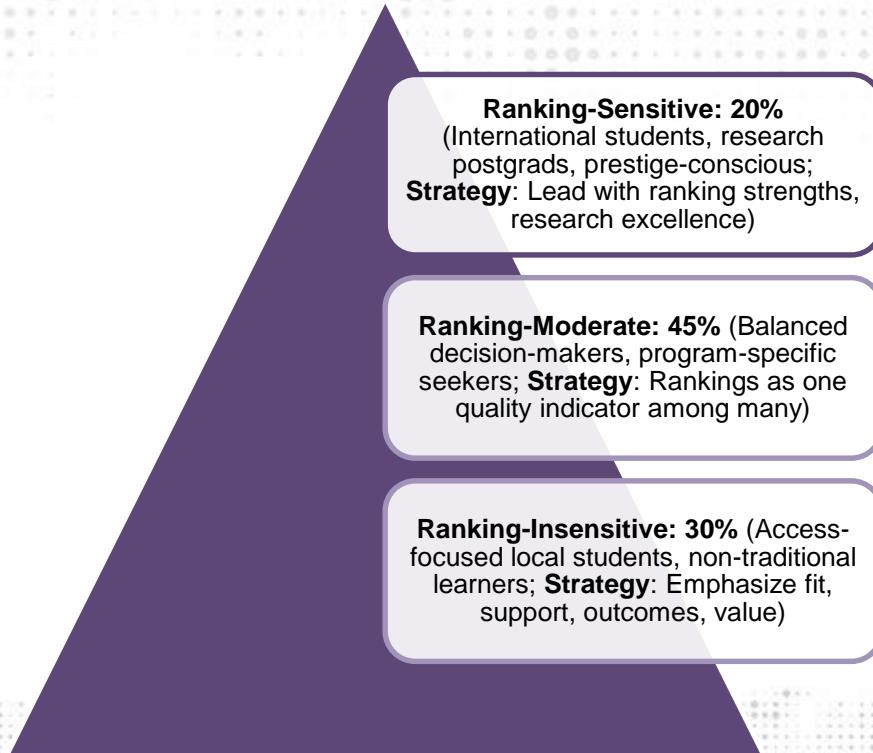
Parents: Value, ROI, rankings as quality signal

Faculty/Staff: Transparent strategy, acknowledge limitations

Alumni/Donors: Progress narrative beyond just rankings

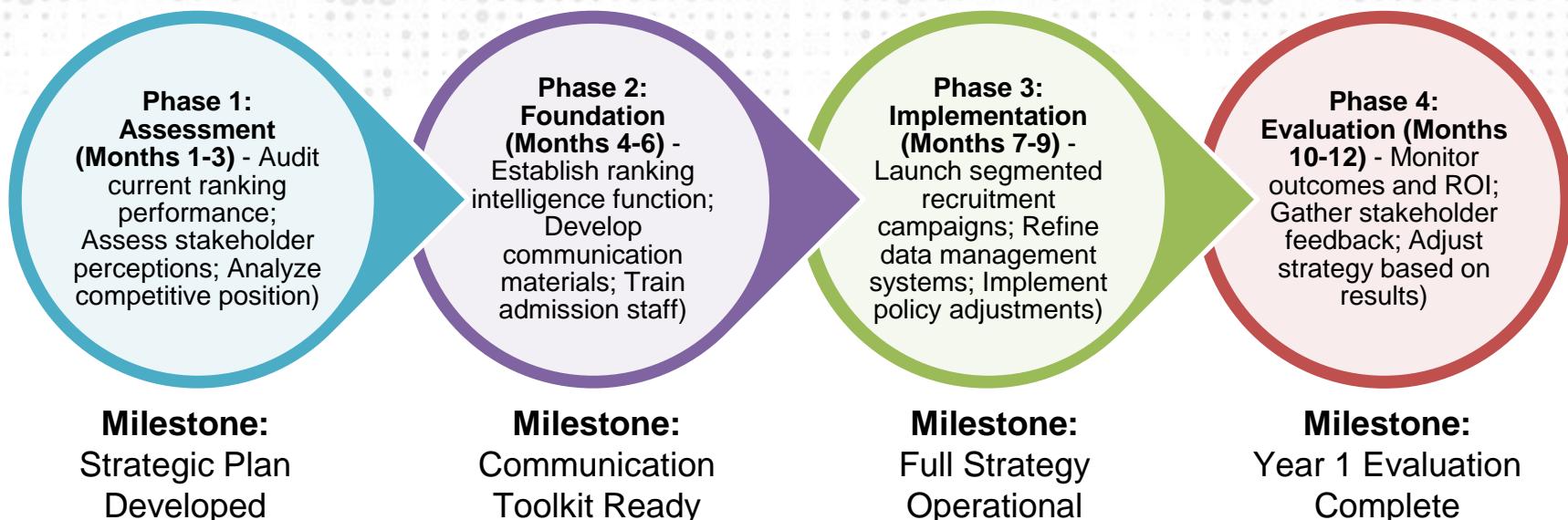
Recruitment Strategy Framework

Market Segmentation & Competitive Positioning



Implementation Roadmap

From Strategy to Action: 12-Month Implementation Plan



Four-Phase Timeline with Key Milestones

Success Metrics Dashboard

Best Practices from Leading Institutions

Learning from Excellence: Four Case Studies

AU University of Melbourne

APPROACH

Transparent Communication

- Clear methodology explanations
- Honest limitation discussions
- Multiple quality indicators

RESULT

✓ Enhanced trust & reputation

MY Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

APPROACH

Mission-Driven Balance

- Selective ranking participation
- National language preservation
- Regional leadership focus

RESULT

✓ Authentic identity maintained

US Arizona State University

APPROACH

Holistic Quality Framework

- Charter-driven strategy
- Access + Excellence model
- Comprehensive metrics

RESULT

Ranking success + mission fulfillment

Common Success Factors:
Clear strategy | Realistic goals |
Sustained investment | Authentic
quality | Sophisticated
communication

LB American University of Beirut

APPROACH

Regional Excellence

- Arab Region ranking emphasis
- Historical reputation leverage
- Strategic global positioning

RESULT

Regional leadership + global profile

Challenges & Ethical Considerations

Navigating the Rankings Minefield

•⚠ METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES:

Research bias over teaching;
Western model dominance; Size
advantages for large institutions;
Important outcomes not measured

⚠ ETHICAL DILEMMAS:

Gaming vs. genuine improvement;
Selectivity vs. access mission;
Short-term gains vs. long-term
quality; Transparency vs.
competitive positioning

Success requires
navigating these
challenges with
wisdom, integrity, and
strategic thinking

❖ RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS:

High investment requirements;
Opportunity costs; Competitive
disadvantages; Sustainability
concerns

❖ STAKEHOLDER TENSIONS:

Faculty resistance; Student
expectations; External pressures
(government, media); Cultural
differences

Recommendations for Arab Higher Education

Strategic Priorities for Arab Institutions

Building Excellence with Regional Identity

"Regional excellence creates global recognition."

1



Strengthen Regional Positioning

- Lead in QS Arab Region Rankings
- Build regional knowledge networks
- Emphasize Arab world contributions

2



Leverage Distinctive Strengths

- Islamic studies, Arabic language excellence
- Subject-specific strengths
- Historical reputation and legacy

3



Balance Internationalization & Local Service

- Strategic international recruitment
- Maintain local connections
- Develop meaningful global partnerships

4



Invest in Sustainable Quality Improvement

- Research capacity through faculty development
- Teaching excellence and innovation
- Student support and success initiatives

5



Collaborate Regionally

- Collective advocacy for appropriate methodologies
- Share resources and bestpractices
- Develop regional quality frameworks

The Role of Arab Admission Professionals

Leading Change: Your Critical Role

From Responders to Strategic Actors



STRATEGIC LEADER

- Bring admission perspective to strategy
- Advocate for balanced approaches
- Use data to inform decisions
- Challenge unhelpful assumptions



CULTURAL BRIDGE

- Navigate global standards & local contexts
- Communicate across cultures effectively
- Preserve Arab higher education values
- Balance tradition and innovation

INNOVATION CHAMPION



- Develop sophisticated ranking communications
- Tell authentic institutional stories
- Leverage digital platforms effectively
- Create new approaches to recruitment

NETWORK BUILDER



- Engage with international admission professionals
- Share Arab HE perspectives globally
- Learn from diverse contexts
- Build collaborative partnerships

**Call to Action: "You are not just responding to rankings:
You are strategic actors shaping your institution's future."**

Key Takeaways - Remember These Six

Core Messages for Strategic Ranking Engagement

"Pursue excellence **WITH** rankings, not **FOR** rankings."



Rankings Are Tools, Not Masters

Use strategically, don't be controlled by them



Context Is Everything

What works for Harvard may not work for you—develop context-appropriate strategies



Balance Is Essential

Global competitiveness + Mission fidelity + Student success = Balanced excellence



Admission Offices Are Strategic Actors

Lead institutional thinking, don't just respond to rankings



Collaboration Creates Opportunity

Work together to improve systems and share best practices



Students Are the Ultimate Goal

Rankings matter only insofar as they serve student success and educational quality



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Thank you
Terima Kasih