



Times Higher Education Middle East & Africa

Africa is rising:

A moment of celebration for Sub-Saharan universities

Sub-Saharan Africa has reached a record 55 universities from 14 countries in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2026. Less than a decade ago, the region had only 10 institutions represented.

Nigeria now leads the region with 24 ranked universities, making it the most represented national system in Sub-Saharan Africa.

South Africa follows with 13, and continues to dominate the region's performance table, with four institutions in the global top 500.

Other countries are steadily expanding their footprint: Ghana with four ranked institutions, Botswana with two, and Kenya and Tanzania maintaining two each.

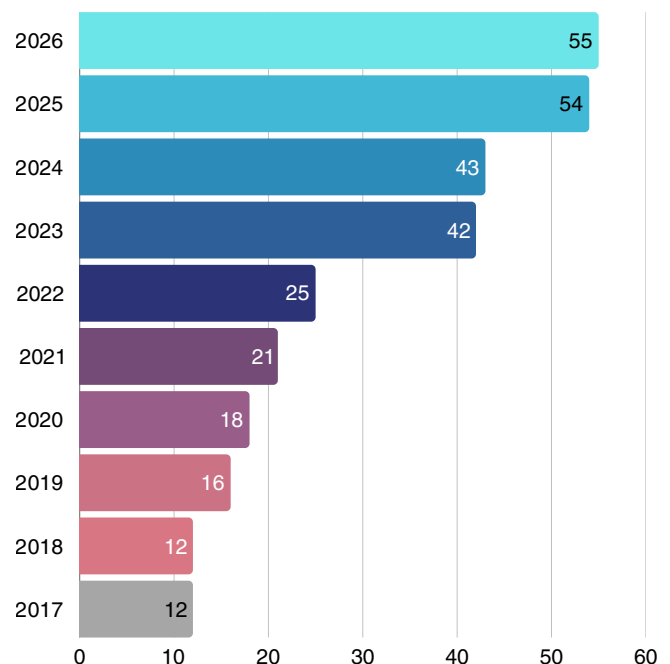
For the first time, Senegal joins the table with Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, signalling new momentum for Francophone Africa.

“

We are not just seeing improvements in representation, we are seeing improvements in quality too... **a great opportunity to build on the momentum** and ensure that Africa's university-led knowledge and innovation ecosystem is fit and ready to fully exploit the continent's huge demographic dividend. - Phil Baty

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Total number of ranked universities from Sub-Saharan Africa in the World University Rankings



Can Africa turn growth into global competitiveness?

Top 10 universities in the Sub-Saharan Africa in the World University Rankings 2026

Rank 2026	Institution
=164	University of Cape Town
301-350	Stellenbosch University
301-350	University of the Witwatersrand
351-400	University of Johannesburg
501-600	University of KwaZulu-Natal
501-600	University of Pretoria
601-800	University of the Western Cape
801-1,000	Makerere University
801-1,000	North-West University
801-1,000	University of Cape Coast
801-1,000	University of Ibadan
801-1,000	University of Lagos

= joint

Beyond increasing participation, the 2026 results mark a series of landmark performance breakthroughs for African universities.

South Africa's University of Cape Town climbed 16 places to joint 164th – its best-ever global position – while the University of Johannesburg broke into the top 400 for the first time.

The University of Pretoria also moved back up into the 501–600 and, demonstrating renewed momentum.

Elsewhere, Makerere University in Uganda achieved a historic milestone, moving into the global top 1,000. Nigeria's flagship institutions — the University of Ibadan and the University of Lagos— also entered the top 1,000.

New entrants underline the region's expanding diversity. Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar became Senegal's first ranked institution, a symbolic breakthrough for Francophone Africa.

These results underscore a shift in momentum: Sub-Saharan Africa's universities are achieving breakthroughs in visibility and performance.

The opportunity now is to build on this momentum and ensure the region's institutions are equipped to drive knowledge, innovation and development for the future.

Two contrasting trends stand out within the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2026.

The first is the stalling of East and South-east Asia's top universities. After years of rapid ascent, institutions such as Tsinghua University, Peking University and the National University of Singapore have held steady, falling short of breaking into the global top 10.

The second is the decline of leading US universities, particularly those outside the elite top tier. While the US continues to dominate the very top of the table, many institutions further down are slipping amid intense competition and financial and political pressures.

Across Europe, several systems are also under strain. Germany's Excellence Strategy has yet to deliver the expected leap in performance, and the UK faces mounting challenges from financial pressures and uneven performance.

Together, these patterns suggest a "moment of great flux" for global higher education, as international competition intensifies and long-established systems face new challenges.

Are we on the brink of a reshaping of global higher education?

The results underline the importance of universities everywhere **to continue strengthening research quality, global partnerships and competitiveness in order to succeed in an increasingly contested environment.**

For more analysis into this year's findings, see the academic insights of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2026 [here](#).

To explore the full rankings results, visit [here](#).

For details on how the universities are ranked, see the 2026 methodology [here](#).



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2025

Interdisciplinary Science Rankings 2026

20 November

Launch at the Interdisciplinary Science Forum in Washington DC, US

Arab University Rankings 2026

26 November

Launch at the Arab Universities Summit in Amman, Jordan

Latin America University Rankings 2026

December

2026

World University Rankings by Subject 2026

January

Asia University Rankings 2026

April

Launch at the Asia Universities Summit in Hong Kong

Sustainability Impact Ratings 2026

June

Launch at the Global Sustainable Development Congress in Jakarta, Indonesia

World University Rankings 2027

September

Launch at the World Academic Summit in Cape Town, South Africa

