

## The Second Edition of the Russian Version of the Pilot Ranking of BRICS Universities Has Been Published

The Association of Rating, Ranking and Other Performance Evaluation Makers (ARM) has prepared the second edition of the Russian version of the Pilot Ranking of BRICS Universities. In 2025, the geographical coverage of the ranking expanded significantly due to the rapid enlargement of the grouping. In addition to the ten BRICS members presented in the 2024 ranking, Indonesia and nine more participants which had gained partner state status in the BRICS grouping by June 1, 2025 – Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, and Uzbekistan – are also included in the current version of the study. Thus, the updated list of top BRICS universities includes 750 participants from 20 countries worldwide. Notably, 75% of the ranked higher education institutions (HEIs) are located in five countries: China (216), Russia (169), India (97), Brazil (56), and Iran (28).

The Russian version of the Pilot Ranking of BRICS Universities is part of *The Three University Missions* family of rankings. The list is compiled based on 17 verifiable objective indicators, with subjective expert assessments fully excluded. The initial shortlist included over 1,000 participants, and the final published list features 750 BRICS universities (vs. 600 in the pilot ranking).

The 2025 ranking winners are Peking University (the 1st place), Lomonosov Moscow State University (the 2nd place), and Saint Petersburg State University (the 3rd place) that took over the podium from last year's winner, Tsinghua University. In addition to Chinese and Russian universities, the Top-100 also includes educational institutions from 10 other countries: India, South Africa, Thailand, Brazil, Malaysia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Belarus, the UAE, and Egypt. The University of Cape Town was once again recognized as the best among participants from South Africa (the 20th place). The national leader of Thailand, Chulalongkorn University, took the 23rd place. Among Indian universities, the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore earned the highest score (the 25th place). The leading HEIs of Saudi Arabia, Belarus, and Malaysia scored among the fourth ten: King Saud University, Belarusian State University, and the University of Malaya ranked 32nd, 36th, and 38th, respectively. The highest-ranked Brazilian university was the University of São Paulo (the 43rd place). The Indonesian Gadjah Mada University ranked 57th, the flagship university of the UAE – the United Arab Emirates University took the 62nd place, and the American University in Cairo once again became the leader among Egyptian universities (the 68th place). As for representatives from other countries, they did not make it into the Top-100. The closest to entering the Top-100 are Tehran University of Medical Sciences (Iran) and Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (ranked in the 126–150 range).

A wide range of criteria of *The Three University Missions* family of rankings allows to assess in a fair manner all the key missions of HEIs – educational, scientific, and social. Through the lens of specific indicators, the strengths and weaknesses of educational institutions in all BRICS countries were identified.

The ranking demonstrated that **Russian** and **Chinese** universities are the most successful ones in fulfillment of the first, educational mission, accounting for 85 institutions in the Top-100 of the “Education» category. Chinese participants achieved strong results across most criteria in this group of parameters (student performance in Olympiads, staffing, and funding). This year, Chinese universities made the greatest progress in the indicator measuring students' success at international student Olympiads – the average score of Chinese institutions was 1.8 times higher than the overall average score of all ranking participants. The per-university leader in this specific indicator was Uzbekistan, represented in the ranking by two participants.

Among the BRICS countries, Russia is the most attractive destination for young people seeking education abroad. 169 Russian universities provide education to more than a quarter (27%)

of all international students of HEIs included in the Russian version of the pilot ranking of BRICS universities. Russia surpasses even China in the absolute number of international students, though Chinese universities are much wider represented in the ranking (accounting for 22% of the total number of international students across the 750 ranking participants). As for the per-university specific indicator, Russia's ranking is also significantly higher than the average – 12.2% versus 7.3% per HEI. Educational institutions in **Malaysia** (12.9%) and **Belarus** (12.4%) are also very attractive to international students, and the highest degree of internationalization is recorded in **the United Arab Emirates** with nearly 45% of the students coming from abroad.

Financially, **Saudi Arabia** and **Thailand** clearly stand out: universities in these countries are, on average, funded 50–90% more than their competitors in other countries (per student, based on purchasing power parity). As far as staffing is concerned, countries with socialist roots traditionally set the tone. The highest faculty-to-student ratios are recorded in **Cuba** (0.106) and **Belarus** (0.104), with slightly lower figures in **China** and **Kazakhstan** (0.095 and 0.087).

Regarding the scientific mission, objective data indicate significant achievements by Chinese HEIs, demonstrating high competitiveness both at the BRICS level and in comparison with Western countries. A few years ago, the USA outpaced China in normalized citation rates for scientific publications, but in the current global ranking *The Three University Missions* China surpassed the USA (1.23 versus 1.16). The most cited BRICS countries also included **Egypt**, the UAE, **Iran** and Saudi Arabia. Egypt and Saudi Arabia are the leaders in terms of intensity of scientific collaboration within the BRICS framework – scientists from these countries effectively develop relations with foreign colleagues and outperform other participants in preparation of joint scientific publications with foreign partners from the BRICS grouping. Russia, not in the top for publication activity, received the highest ranking on another scientific criterion – “Number of IREG-listed scientific awards for faculty and university alumni”, with the average score of Russian universities being twice higher than the average across all participants. **India** ranked second in this parameter.

Indicators for the “Third mission» have reflected the strong positions of **South Africa** representatives for several years now. South Africa is the only BRICS country with universities included in the Top-5 across all criteria in the “University and Society» group. However, other countries also have their strengths – for instance, India led in the number of the university's Wikipedia page views, while **Uganda** and **Nigeria** topped the per-university count of alumni with personal Wikipedia pages. The Chinese participants outperformed the competitors in the number of massive open online courses and social media followers. **Indonesia** took the first place by a wide margin in university website traffic with 757,000 visitors (compared to **Brazil's** 477,000 and the ranking average of 241,000). Finally, **Ethiopia** received the highest ranking for transparency. This indicator comprehensively assesses information openness policies. ■