

The Ranking Mania

It is admissions time in all professional colleges and hence certain print media houses in their attempt to increase circulation have perfectly timed their ranking exercise. Though the timing is perfect the methodology adopted has a number of loopholes. SASTRA University's endeavour is to point out some of those in the interest of the general public and well-wishers of SASTRA. SASTRA has already issued clarification for the Times of India ranking (<http://www.sastra.edu/mnews/2009/mar/ToI%20Rankings.htm>) and hence the following comments pertain to the rankings done by India Today, Outlook and Financial Express.

1. The rankings exercise done by Outlook is based on responses from 300 professionals – HR managers, doctors, lawyers and other professionals. This sample size is used to rank 8 different streams of education – Engineering, Medicine, Dental, Law, Architecture, Social work, Hotel Management and Mass Communication. Even if weighted averages have been taken and the sample population is divided based on the number of institutions in each of the eight streams, the sample size is not a true representation of the each of the stream. Hence the survey results suffer from a fundamental flaw in making a reality assumption that the sample best represents the population though it may be statistically valid.
2. Moreover, the parameters used are also very general and cannot by any means judge the quality of any professional institution and specifically engineering/medicine. The scores are based on perspectives of a group of individuals who surprisingly on arm-chair mode have access to information on infrastructure details, academic excellence, selection process and industry-institute links. Assuming, but not admitting, that this is possible, SASTRA's score in selection process will definitely shock Outlook readers who know SASTRA's admission policy. The transparent and merit based admission process of SASTRA has won public acclaim. For the benefit of the survey respondents and GKF Mode research team, here is SASTRA's admission policy:

For B.Tech programmes 70% of the total seats will be filled by SASTRA based on the qualifying +2 exam marks following the process of normalization. To bring all candidates from different examining Authorities / Boards in the same scale of comparison and to create a list in the order of merit, the +2 marks will be normalized. A first rank student of each board is considered to have obtained 100% mark and aggregate mark of all other students of the board are normalized with reference to that of the first rank student. For example, if the first rank is 97% and an applicant's aggregate is 90% then the applicant's normalized percentage is 92.78 ($90/97 \times 100$). A merit list is drawn based on the normalized percentage for making admissions. This method has been appreciated by the Govt of Tamilnadu which chose to adopt the same method for its single window counseling from 2007.

The remaining 30% of the seats will be filled by CBSE based on the AIEEE-2009 ranks and students will be allotted to SASTRA by MHRD.

For all PG programmes the admissions are made on the basis of the scores in the qualifying UG / PG degree programme and for all other arts and science courses admissions are based on the qualifying exam marks.

The entire admission process is done transparently which is not the case in many institutions that are ranked.

3. Another surprising element is the research agency involved. The same agency was involved in a ranking exercise for a different media group two months back. The difference being that for Outlook institutions other than Universities were also involved. It is beyond reasonable explanation on how both the ranking lists differ to a large extent.
4. India Today's ranking also suffers from the same flaw of perception based ranking and sampling methodology.
5. The Financial Express has also conducted a 'comprehensive' study of Universities. SASTRA did not participate in this ranking exercise and does not agree with the comprehensiveness of the study.

This is hosted in the general interest of readers and well wishers of SASTRA. We would also like to inform that as a policy, SASTRA does not participate in any University/College ranking exercise.