

REGIONAL IACAC - Day 2

Ranking V/S Best Fit

Part of the Landscape, Not the
Bible



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South & Central Asia 2026

Meet the Speakers



Katherine Ernst Mehta

Edvanta Consulting



Namrata Pandey

La Mentora



Sandeep Bhalla

Xavier University



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College Rankings

Are we helping students find the **best university**,
or **the university** with the **best number**?



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The Number We Trust

Menti

A student has offers from two universities. Based only on the information available, what would you recommend?

0

University A — ranked #48

0

University B — ranked #91

0

I need more information before making
a recommendation



menti.com
5572 0712



End presentation

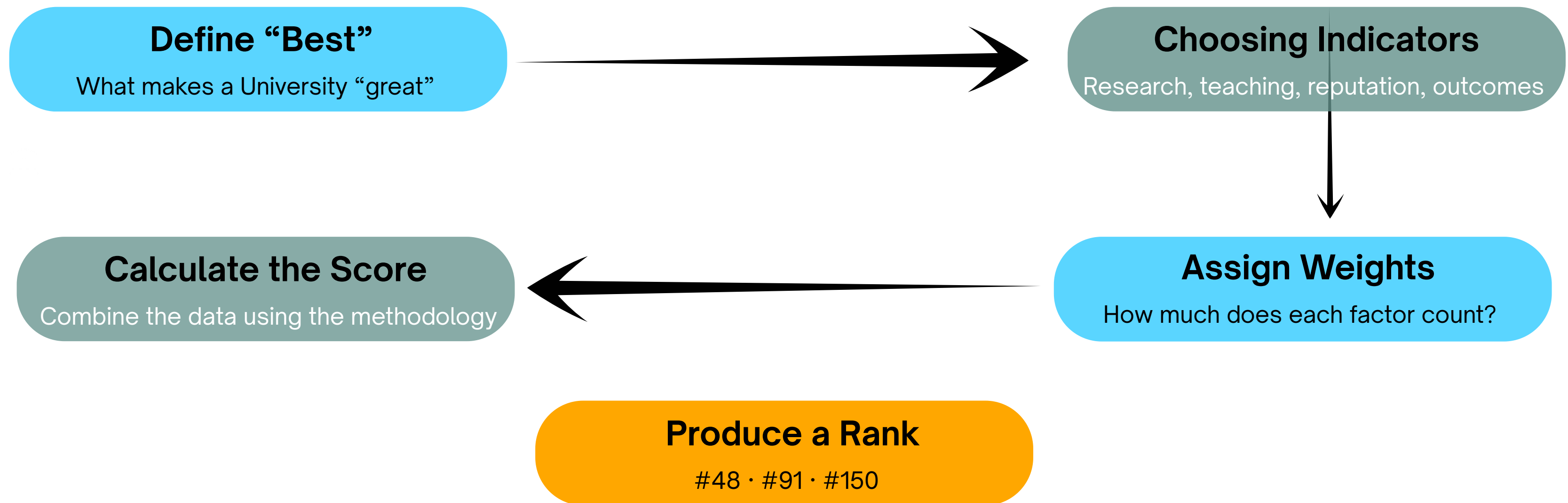


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How Does a University Become a Number?

UNDERSTANDING THE NUMBER

A ranking isn't a universal truth. It's the result of a model.



Different definitions of “best” can produce different rankings.



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Four Rankings. Four Ideas of “Best.”

COMPARISON



QS

Research & Discovery: 50%,
Employability & Outcomes: 20%,
Global Engagement: 15%,
Learning Experience: 10%,
Sustainability: 5%



THE

Teaching: 29.5%,
Research Environment: 29%,
Research Quality: 30%,
Industry: 4%,
&
International Outlook: 7.5%



Washington Monthly

Access: 25%,
Affordability: 25%
Outcomes: 25%
&
Community & National
Service: 25%



Shanghai Rankings

Quality of Education: 10%;
Quality of Faculty: 40%;
Research Output: 40%;
&
Per Capita Performance: 10%



A university can perform differently across ranking systems because the indicators, weights and underlying data differ.



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Brown: One University, Different Stories

What changes when we change the ranking system or the question we ask?

US News and World Rankings

#16

#3 for Best Undergraduate Teaching



Times Higher Education

#73

Global ranking · 2027 edition



ShanghaiRanking · ARWU

#101–150

Global ranking band · 2026 edition



Niche · Best Professors

#5

A different lens on the academic experience

So, which rank is the “Real” Brown?

All reflect different criteria. None, by itself, captures the whole university or tells us whether it is right for a particular student.



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When the Metric Becomes the Goal

THE INSTITUTIONAL SIDE

Admissions



Selectivity, application volume, early decision and waitlist strategy.

Yield



How many admitted students actually enrol?

Data & Reporting



Which figures are collected, reported and compared?

Institutional Priorities



Where leaders direct attention, resources and improvement efforts.

The Key Question

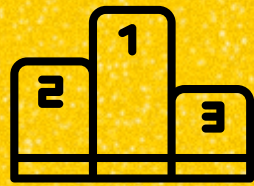
Are we improving the student experience—or improving the numbers used to evaluate it?



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Who Isn't on the List?

REFRAMING THE DECISION



Not Ranked

A status is not a verdict on quality.

Eligibility



Does the institution meet the ranking's inclusion criteria?

Participation



Has the institution participated or submitted the required information, where applicable?

Available Data



Is there sufficient data for the institution to be assessed?

Student Outcomes



What do programme quality, affordability & graduate outcomes tell us?

Don't confuse absence with inferiority

First understand why an institution is missing and evaluate it on evidence relevant to the student.

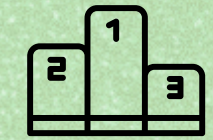


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Ranking $\neq$ Reputation $\neq$ Fit

REFRAMING THE DECISION

RANKING



How did this university perform in a particular ranking system?

Evidence: indicators, weights and scores

REPUTATION



How is this university perceived by employers, academics, alumni and the wider public?

Evidence: perceptions and recognition

FIT



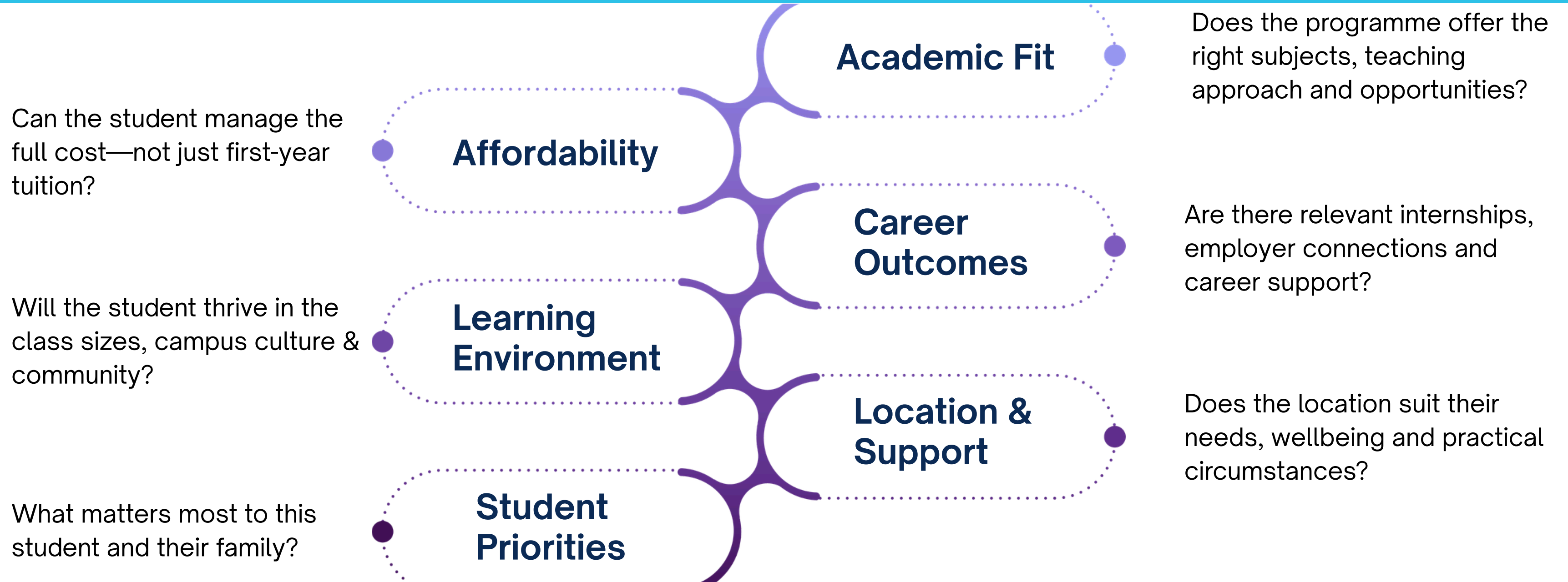
How well does this university meet this particular student's needs and circumstances?

Evidence: programme, cost, outcomes and priorities



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So, What Does “Best Fit” Actually Mean?



Counsel the Student, *Not the Number*

Meet Ananya

An aspiring Psychology major who wants undergraduate research, career opportunities and meaningful faculty interaction.

Family Budget: \$40,000 per year
Learning Preference: Smaller Community
Career Interest: Behavioural Psychology

University A

Rank: #38
US News and World Rankings

Scholarship: \$5,000 Student Population: 35,000

Good research · Excellent internships · 18:1 student-faculty ratio

University B

Rank: Not Ranked

Scholarship: \$18,000 Student Population: 4,000

Very strong research · Good internships · 10:1 student-faculty ratio

University C

Rank: #115
THE The World Rankings

Scholarship: \$12,000 Student Population: 18,000

Strong research · Excellent internships · 14:1 student-faculty ratio

University D

Rank: #168
Washington Monthly

Scholarship: \$22,000 Student Population: 9,000

Good research · Excellent internships · 18:1 student-faculty ratio



The Best University Isn't Universal

**Use Rankings as a
*Reference***

Understand what they measure—and what they leave out.

**Look beyond
*Reputation***

Examine the programme, cost, outcomes and learning environment.

**Put the student at
the *Centre***

Make recommendations that you can explain and support with evidence.

**The ranking tells us where a university sits.
*Counselling helps us understand where a student belongs.***



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