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**Author**

BOWMAN, Nicholas A.

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Anchoring effects in world university rankings: exploring biases in reputation scores / Nicholas A.

Bowman ; Michael N. Bastedo

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**Abstract**

Despite ongoing debates about their uses and validity, university rankings are a popular means to compare institutions within a country and around the world. Anchoring theory suggests that these rankings may influence assessments of institutional reputation, and this effect may be particularly strong when a new rankings system is introduced. We test this possibility by examining data from the first 3 years of the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) world university rankings.

Consistent with an anchoring hypothesis, the initial THES rankings influenced peer assessments of reputation in subsequent surveys, but second-year rankings were not related to changes in reputation in the third year. Furthermore, as expected, early peer assessment ratings were not associated with changes in future rankings. These findings provide strong evidence for an anchoring effect on assessments of institutional reputation. We discuss the usefulness of these peer assessments, along with ways in which reputational surveys can be improved. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Bowman, Nicholas A., E-Mail: nbowman@nd.edu