Of schools, colleges & universities

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ACCORDING to many people, the best place in UK to study economics or one of the disciplines of business is the London School of Economics or LSE in short. For engineering and medicine, many would agree on Imperial College and of course King's College. For Oriental and African studies, it would be the School of Oriental and African Studies, or SOAS in short!

So you have decided to pursue your higher education (Undergrad / Postgrad) from UK, a country home to two of the oldest universities in the English-speaking world, namely Oxford and Cambridge, often jointly referred to as Oxbridge. A country rich with culture and heritage and from where many of the world's most influential people hail from. But chances are high that you might feel baffled and lost by all the lucrative advertisements on newspapers, television and radio everyday! Certain groups of people will claim that their college/ university is the best and so you should go there and perhaps pay them money for doing so! But at the end of the day, your degree remains yours and so it is advisable to choose the institution that best suits you in terms of your subject area, cost, affordability and in many cases, the location! Many people tend to believe that an institution in London guarantees quality. **NO, that is entirely untrue and you can take my word for it!** Although it is true that London, the capital city of UK and the hub of higher education in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, is home to some of the most prestigious names including Imperial College, King's College, SOAS, University College London, Queen Mary (University of London), it is also equally true that it is also home to the largest number of the so called *visa* colleges! For those of you who haven't heard of this term before, a *visa* college is one whose primary function is to send you an offer letter so that you can apply for a British student visa. Once you get to UK (assuming that you *do* get a visa with an offer letter from such an unheard of college, which is highly unlikely in the first place), the *visa* college's only work is to continue renewing your 'studentship' after every semester, and *nothing* else. Imparting education is one of their least priorities! So for people who are keen to get a good higher degree in UK, visa colleges are a complete no-no.

So, it is very important to know about your institution where you will be spending valuable time, energy and your parents' hard-earned money. One good place to find the complete list of universities (and their affiliated schools and colleges) is:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_universities_in_the_United_Kingdom. And yes, although rankings are not the infallible Holy Scripture, they are good places to start the selection process. Rankings again, are of two types. University ranking, which shows the overall rank of a university for a certain academic year based on goodwill, employability, student satisfaction, research endowments received and a range of other factors. The second type of course is the subject based ranking. For example, since I am interested in Electrical Engineering, I would be more interested in the Electrical Engineering subject ranking compared to how good the university is overall. Details about subject ranking will be explained later, in due course.

Listed with this article are the Top 20 Universities (Overall) ranking of British universities according to two of the most well accepted ranking systems in UK; the Times Higher Education ranking and The Guardian Rankings:

Ranking Source:
Times:
http://www.topuniversities.com/worlduniversityrankings/results/2007/overall_rankings/uk_ireland/
Guardian:
http://image.guardian.co.uk/sysfiles/Education/documents/2008/05/08/rankingsrevised.xls

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Times Higher Education Rankings

1. University of OXFORD
2. University of CAMBRIDGE
3. IMPERIAL College London
4. UCL (University College London)
5. University of EDINBURGH
6. KING'S College London
7. University of MANCHESTER
8. University of BRISTOL
9. University of WARWICK
10. LONDON School of Economics and Political Science
11. University of BIRMINGHAM
12. University of SHEFFIELD
13. University of NOTTINGHAM
14. University of YORK
15. University of ST ANDREWS
16. University of LEEDS
17. University of SOUTHAMPTON
18. University of GLASGOW
19. CARDIFF University
20. University of LIVERPOOL

The Guardian Rankings

1 Oxford
2 Cambridge
3 London School of Economics
4 Warwick
5 St Andrews
6 Imperial College
7 UCL
8 SOAS
9 Edinburgh
10 Loughborough
11 York
12 Lancaster
13 Bath
14 Exeter
15 Leicester
16 Durham
17 Dundee
18 Aston
19 Nottingham
20 Glasgow