

Who Gets In? Elite University Selectivity

Evidence briefing, version 1.0. What thirty of the world's most highly ranked universities publish about who applies and who is admitted.

Elite Careers Strategy. Prepared 10 September 2026. Published 10 September 2026, version 1.0. Research lead: Hassan Akram. Sampling frame: QS World University Rankings 2027, published 18 June 2026. All sources retrieved and reverified 10 September 2026.

1. Summary

Complete institution-wide undergraduate admissions figures were verified for 13 of the 30 universities in the QS World University Rankings 2027 top-30 band. The remaining cases reveal substantial differences in what global admissions systems count, publish and make comparable.

Elite Careers Strategy attempted a complete census of published institution-wide undergraduate admissions data across the thirty universities placed from 1 to 30 in the QS World University Rankings 2027. The objective was a like-for-like pair for each institution: a published application count and a published count of positive admissions decisions, from the same institution, for the same cycle.

Record status	Institutions	Meaning
COMPLETE	13	A complete comparable pair was verified
PARTIAL	11	Part of the pair is published, the pair is not complete or not cycle-aligned
NON-COMPARABLE	4	Admissions architecture in which an institution-wide rate is not a meaningful object
NOT LOCATED	2	No pair located by this review

Binding boundary. Failure to verify a complete pair does not establish that a university withholds the data, or that the data do not exist. It records what one review, conducted on 10 September 2026 from publicly reachable official sources, was able to confirm.

2. Findings

F1. APPROVE WITH CORRECTED WORDING

ECS verified a complete institution-wide undergraduate admissions numerator and denominator for 13 of the 30 universities in the QS World University Rankings 2027 top-30 band. For the remaining 17, a complete comparable pair was not verified because of partial reporting, inaccessible official data, absence of a located pair or an admissions architecture for which an institution-wide rate is not meaningful.

Boundary. Failure to verify a complete pair does not establish that a university withholds the data or that the data do not exist.

Prohibited: Do not state that 17 universities do not publish a complete pair.

F2. APPROVE WITH QUALIFICATION

Among the 13 universities with complete records, the reported positive-decision rate ranged from 3.80% to 47.55%, equivalent to approximately 2.1 to 26.3 applications or applicants per recorded positive decision.

Boundary. These figures are not a global selectivity league table. Institutions count different units and operate materially different admissions systems. The range does not establish relative difficulty, applicant quality or educational quality.

Prohibited: Do not place McGill and Stanford at opposite ends of a graphic labelled easiest and hardest.

F3. APPROVE

The observed spread reflects admissions architecture and reporting definitions as well as competition. US admissions, UK conditional offers, qualification-based entry, programme-level selection and centralised allocation systems cannot be treated as one common process.

Boundary. Use Cambridge's progression from 4,893 offers to 3,669 acceptances only as an example of why decision stages matter.

Prohibited: Do not treat the five systems as one process.

F4. APPROVE

Every complete record located in this review came through one of three comparatively structured reporting environments: the US Common Data Set or official institutional reporting ecosystem, the UK's UCAS-linked reporting system, or McGill's voluntary publication of its admissions funnel.

Boundary. Do not claim that those systems guarantee complete or perfectly comparable reporting.

Prohibited: Do not present the CDS as a guarantee of comparability.

F5. APPROVE WITH NAMED SCOPE

ECS verified complete programme-level admissions figures for 13 of the 30 universities in this comparison. Across the public recruitment pages of 13 named elite employers reviewed on 10 September 2026, ECS could not verify an equivalent application-volume and intake pair for the same programme, geography and cycle.

Boundary. This does not establish that elite employers universally publish no recruitment data, deliberately conceal their selectivity or are more selective than the universities reviewed.

Prohibited: Do not say employers conceal data or are harder to enter.

F6. APPROVE AS A METHODOLOGICAL FINDING

QS rank and published undergraduate admissions ratios measure different things. The admissions figures in this review must not be read as a proxy for ranking position or institutional quality.

Boundary. Presented strictly as a definitional boundary. No rank association is calculated, because 13 records spanning five admissions architectures and two counting units cannot support one.

Prohibited: Do not imply that examples establish a statistical relationship.

F7. APPROVE

No defensible global admissions-selectivity league table can be constructed from these records. Seventeen institutions lack a verified complete pair, and the 13 complete records span materially different units, decision points and admissions architectures.

3. The thirteen verified records, grouped by admissions architecture

These records are not presented as one table sorted from lowest to highest. They are grouped by admissions architecture, because the groups are not measuring the same object. Within each group the institution's own terminology is preserved, and every row states the decision unit in the institution's own words.

These figures are not a league table of difficulty. Institutions count different units, make decisions at different stages and operate under different admissions architectures.

US institution-wide, applicants and admissions

One institution-wide application, counted as applicants. The decision is an unconditional admission. Figures come from each institution's Common Data Set Section C1 or its own published admissions statistics.

Institution	Cycle	Counting unit	Applications or applicants	Positive decisions	Decision unit, in the institution's own words	Rate	Applications or applicants per recorded positive decision
Stanford University [ECS-derived]	Fall 2025 (CDS 2025-2026)	Applicants	60,646	2,302	who were admitted (1,162 + 1,140 + 0)	3.80%	26.34
Harvard University	Class of 2029, autumn 2025	Applicants	47,893	2,003	Admitted (includes 75 admitted from the waiting list)	4.18%	23.91
Princeton University	Fall 2025 (CDS 2025-26)	who applied	42,303	1,868	Total first-time, first-year (degree-seeking) who were admitted	4.42%	22.65
Johns Hopkins University	Fall 2025 (CDS 2025-26)	who applied	50,259	3,072	Total first-time, first-year (degree-seeking) who were admitted	6.11%	16.36
Cornell University	Fall 2025 (CDS 2025-2026)	Applicants	72,523	6,077	Total first-time, first-year students who were admitted (published total, C.117)	8.38%	11.93
University of California, Berkeley	Fall 2025 (CDS 2025-26)	who applied	126,864	14,524	Total first-time, first-year (degree-seeking) who were admitted	11.45%	8.73

US institution-wide, applications and admissions

The same reporting ecosystem, but the denominator counts applications rather than applicants. An application count and an applicant count are not the same object and are not converted here. The decision each institution publishes differs too, and each row states it in that institution's own words.

Institution	Cycle	Counting unit	Applications or applicants	Positive decisions	Decision unit, in the institution's own words	Rate	Applications or applicants per
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							recorded positive decision
Yale University	Fall 2025 (Year Entered 2025, Class of 2029)	Total Applications	50,265	2,388	Total Admits	4.75%	21.05
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Class of 2029, autumn 2025	Applications	29,281	1,334	Offers of admission	4.56%	21.95
University of Pennsylvania	Fall 2025, Class of 2029	Applications	72,544	3,570	were offered admission	4.92%	20.32

UK UCAS, applications and conditional offers

A UK offer is conditional on examination results still to come, so it sits at a different stage from a US admission. Cambridge published 4,893 offers for the 2025 cycle and 3,669 acceptances.

Institution	Cycle	Counting unit	Applications or applicants	Positive decisions	Decision unit, in the institution's own words	Rate	Applications or applicants per recorded positive decision
University of Oxford	2025 cycle (UCAS applications by 15 October 2024, mostly for entry October 2025)	Applications	23,329	3,891	offers made	16.68%	6.00
University of Cambridge	2025 cycle (applications from September 2024)	Applications	22,513	4,893	Offers	21.73%	4.60

UK UCAS, applications and admissions

Imperial publishes admissions rather than offers, so its ratio is applications to admissions. It is not an offer rate and is not directly comparable with Oxford or Cambridge.

Institution	Cycle	Counting unit	Applications or applicants	Positive decisions	Decision unit, in the institution's own words	Rate	Applications or applicants per recorded positive decision
Imperial College London	2025-26 entry	Applications	32,214	3,259	New admissions 2025-26 entry	10.12%	9.88

Other voluntarily published institutional funnels

McGill publishes an institution-wide applicants, offers and entering class funnel by choice rather than under a shared reporting standard. Its figure is an offer rate, not an admission rate, its offers may include conditional offers, and its undergraduate count bundles professional-faculty entry.

Institution	Cycle	Counting unit	Applications or applicants	Positive decisions	Decision unit, in the institution's own words	Rate	Applications or applicants per recorded positive decision
McGill University	Fall 2025	Applicants	38,135	18,132	Offers	47.55%	2.10

Rate = positive decisions divided by applications or applicants, as published by the institution. Ratio = the reciprocal. Every arithmetic step is shown in calculations.csv. Records marked [ECS-derived] carry an ECS calculation from component rows in the institution's official Common Data Set, not a published total line; section 4 sets out every component, the addition, the reconciliation check and the reason the calculation was accepted. Cornell's totals are the published totals at C.116, C.117 and C.118.

These figures are not a global selectivity league table. Institutions count different units and operate materially different admissions systems. The range does not establish relative difficulty, applicant quality or educational quality.

4. ECS-derived totals: Stanford, and why Yale is not one

Stanford's Common Data Set publishes Section C1 as component rows without printing a total line, so ECS added the published components. The label **ECS calculation from component rows in the institution's official Common Data Set** is required at every public appearance of these figures. An ECS-derived total is never described as a directly published institutional total, and it is not the sole support for any headline.

Yale's Common Data Set has the same shape but prints only men and women rows, so a derived total would have been a floor. It is not used. Yale's figures in this briefing are the directly published, cycle-aligned totals from Yale's Office of Institutional Research report W033, Yale College Admissions Summary: 50,265 Total Applications and 2,388 Total Admits for Year Entered 2025, Class of 2029. The Common Data Set rows sum to 50,264 and 2,387, one short on each measure, which is exactly the gender-data caution the Common Data Set states. Those derived figures are retained below as corroboration only and are marked as such in the role column of `ecs-derived-totals.csv`.

Institution	Measure	Component rows, verbatim	Addition	Total	Reconciles	Common Data Set caution, verbatim	Why accepted	Locator
Stanford University	Applicants	Total first-time, first-year males who applied 31,609 / Total first-time, first-year females who applied 29,011 / Total first-time, first-year students of unknown sex who applied 26	31,609 + 29,011 + 26	60,646	YES - the published categories are exhaustive	Stanford's Common Data Set 2025-2026 carries no detail-need-not-sum note against Section C1. The standard Common Data Set caution is that where sex or gender data is missing the detail need not sum to the total.	Stanford publishes a third category, students of unknown sex, alongside males and females. With an explicit unknown category present the three published rows are exhaustive, so their sum is the population total rather than a partial count. The addition is exact and every component is an official published figure.	Section C1, Common Data Set 2025-2026, page 10
Stanford University	Admitted	Total first-time, first-year males who were admitted 1,162 / females who were admitted 1,140 / students of unknown sex who were admitted 0	1,162 + 1,140 + 0	2,302	YES - the published categories are exhaustive	As above.	As above. The unknown-sex row is present and reported as zero, so no admitted student falls outside the three published categories.	Section C1, Common Data Set 2025-2026, page 10
Stanford University	Enrolled	Total first-time, first-year males	945 + 894 + 0	1,839	YES - the published	As above.	As above.	Section C1, Common Data Set

		who enrolled 945 / females who enrolled 894 / students of unknown sex who enrolled 0			categories are exhaustive			2025-2026, page 10
Yale University	Applicants	Total first-time, first-year men who applied 22,819 / Total first-time, first-year women who applied 27,445	22,819 + 27,445	50,264	NOT GUARANTEED - only two categories are published and no Other or unspecified row is present	Since the total may include students who did not provide gender data, the detail need not sum to the total.	Accepted as a floor figure derived entirely from official published components. Yale prints no Other or unspecified row, so any applicant who did not provide gender data would be excluded from the sum. The derived denominator can therefore only understate the application count, which can only make the reported positive-decision rate look higher and the applications-per-decision ratio look lower than reality. The direction of any error is known and conservative against ECS's own framing. Not used as the sole support for any headline.	Section C1, page 9
Yale University	Admitted	men admitted 1,189 / women admitted 1,198	1,189 + 1,198	2,387	NOT GUARANTEED - only two categories are published and no Other or unspecified row is present	Since the total may include students who did not provide gender data, the detail need not sum to the total.	As above. Both components are official published figures and the addition is exact. The same two-category limitation applies to the numerator as to the denominator.	Section C1, page 9
Yale University	Enrolled	men enrolled 799 / women enrolled 834	799 + 834	1,633	NOT GUARANTEED - only two categories are published and no Other or unspecified row is present	Since the total may include students who did not provide gender data, the detail need not sum to the total.	As above.	Section C1, page 9

Stanford: <https://irds.stanford.edu/data-findings/cds> (accessed 2026-09-10), file SHA-256 dd67ed4e2996f9019cdc9ec35835f6654a178644fea9fa7ce78d79dcfc35ef0f. Yale: https://oir.yale.edu/sites/default/files/yale_cds_2025-26_md_20260616.pdf (accessed 2026-09-10), file SHA-256 be08ae428f286d300e05f99f6f75380e15d131432341d5bdbea6fa9b3a042712. Neither institution prints a total line for these row groups.

Stanford publishes males, females and students of unknown sex, so the three rows are exhaustive and their sum is the population total. That is why Stanford's derived total is accepted and Yale's was not. Yale publishes men and women only, so a derived total could only ever be a floor; the published W033 totals confirm it was low by exactly one applicant and one admit.

5. Full census, all thirty institutions

QS 2027	Institution	Country or region	Admissions architecture	Status	Cycle	Limitation
=16	Cornell University	United States	US institution-wide (CDS/IPEDS ecosystem)	COMPLETE	Fall 2025 (CDS 2025-2026)	Published totals, not derived. The sex rows sum exactly to each total (36,834 + 35,687 + 2 = 72,523; 2,794 + 3,282 + 1 = 6,077; 1,806 + 2,020 + 1 = 3,827), an internal consistency check. Retrieved by opening the official .xlsx linked from Cornell IRP. Workbook SHA-256 1ecae098250b9d66ab609bc3285d8b25a. Includes early decision and early action per the CDS instruction.
5	Harvard University	United States	US institution-wide (CDS/IPEDS ecosystem)	COMPLETE	Class of 2029, autumn 2025	Publishes no capacity or available-places figure.
=2	Imperial College London	United Kingdom	UK UCAS institution-wide	COMPLETE	2025-26 entry	No offers stage published, so only an applications-to-admissions ratio is computable. Excludes Graduate Entry Medicine, Intercolated Medicine and Oxbridge applicants. Applications counted at a 31 October 2025 census and include deferred entry.
=20	Johns Hopkins University	United States	US institution-wide (CDS/IPEDS ecosystem)	COMPLETE	Fall 2025 (CDS 2025-26)	Admitted includes 247 wait-list admits. First-time first-year only; transfers excluded.
1	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	United States	US institution-wide (CDS/IPEDS ecosystem)	COMPLETE	Class of 2029, autumn 2025	Counts applications, not applicants. Institution publishes the 4.6% itself.
30	McGill University	Canada	Faculty/programme application with institution-wide funnel reporting	COMPLETE	Fall 2025	Undergraduate/Professional bundles professional-faculty entry with undergraduate. Offers may include conditional offers; the source does not say. No explicit publication date - a live current-year page.
27	Princeton University	United States	US institution-wide (CDS/IPEDS ecosystem)	COMPLETE	Fall 2025 (CDS 2025-26)	Admitted includes 36 wait-list admits. Princeton's public admission-statistics webpage publishes the enrolled profile only; the CDS is where the pair lives.
=2	Stanford University	United States	US institution-wide (CDS/IPEDS ecosystem)	COMPLETE	Fall 2025 (CDS 2025-2026)	TOTALS ARE ECS-DERIVED by addition of the published sex rows; the CDS notes detail need not sum to a total where sex data is missing. Retrieved by opening the official file published on the Stanford IR&DS Common Data Set page; the page links the file via Google Drive. PDF SHA-256 dd67ed4e2996f9019cdc9ec3

						(first 24). Includes early decision, early action and summer starters per the CDS instruction.
=20	University of California, Berkeley	United States	US institution-wide (CDS/IPEDS ecosystem)	COMPLETE	Fall 2025 (CDS 2025-26)	Sex splits are allocated for IPEDS consistency, not reported as collected; totals unaffected. Berkeley's own student-profile page gives different Fall 2025 figures (applications 126,843, admits 14,502) and labels the unit Applications. The CDS is used.
6	University of Cambridge	United Kingdom	UK UCAS institution-wide	COMPLETE	2025 cycle (applications from September 2024)	Counts applications. Excludes 289 deferred entrants. UCAS bars applying to both Oxford and Cambridge.
4	University of Oxford	United Kingdom	UK UCAS institution-wide	COMPLETE	2025 cycle (UCAS applications by 15 October 2024, mostly for entry October 2025)	All domiciles, institution-wide, aligned triple from one cycle. UCAS caps applicants to one Oxford programme choice, so applications approximate applicants. A minority deferred entry to October 2026.
15	University of Pennsylvania	United States	US institution-wide (CDS/IPEDS ecosystem)	COMPLETE	Fall 2025, Class of 2029	UNIT MISMATCH INSIDE THE SOURCE: the numerator is labelled applications, the same sentence then says 'of those applicants'. Penn's own CDS is Box-hosted and could not be retrieved. Penn Admissions' class profile gives 2,421 enrolled against the Facts page's 2,420.
=16	Yale University	United States	US institution-wide (CDS/IPEDS ecosystem)	COMPLETE	Fall 2025 (Year Entered 2025, Class of 2029)	Published total, not ECS-derived. W033 counts admitted students who postpone enrolment within the applications and admits totals. Yale's Common Data Set 2025-2026 prints only men and women rows for the same cycle; those sum to 50,264 and 2,387, one short of the published totals on each measure, which is the gender-data caution the Common Data Set itself states. The Common Data Set figures are retained as corroboration only.
29	Australian National University	Australia	ATAR selection via state tertiary admission centre	PARTIAL	2025 first half year	Commencing-cohort counts only. 'Applicant background' is a category label, not an applicant count.
7	California Institute of Technology	United States	US institution-wide (CDS/IPEDS ecosystem)	PARTIAL	Fall 2024 (CDS 2024-2025)	TOTALS ARE ECS-DERIVED. The Excel-to-PDF export scrambles label-to-value mapping, so the reading is inferred from block order and has not been confirmed against a rendered grid. Fall 2024 only; no 2025-26 edition located. Do not publish without a locally opened copy.
13	Peking University	China (Mainland)	Gaokao allocation against province and	PARTIAL	2025	No applicant count exists to divide by. Under the gaokao, candidates are allocated against provincial quotas by score rather than applying to a university in the Western sense.

			programme quotas			
18	The Chinese University of Hong Kong	Hong Kong SAR	Multi-route; local entry via JUPAS clearing house	PARTIAL	2024	Route-restricted numerator: excludes non-JUPAS local, Mainland Gaokao and international entrants, so it is not an institution-wide admission total. No applicant denominator.
11	The University of Hong Kong	Hong Kong SAR	Multi-route (JUPAS, non-JUPAS, Mainland, international), quota per route	PARTIAL	2025 / 2026	Admission numerator with no applicant denominator. JUPAS publishes applicant counts only system-wide across all nine participating institutions, so they cannot be attributed to HKU.
=22	The University of Melbourne	Australia	ATAR selection via state tertiary admission centre; programme-level	PARTIAL	Semester 1, 2026	Post-census enrolments, not offers, and no applicant count. The all-students total row did not render.
19	The University of New South Wales	Australia	ATAR selection via state tertiary admission centre; programme-level	PARTIAL	Term 1, 2026	Mandated profile is an intake profile with no applicant count, so no application-to-admission pair exists even when the table renders. Table data loads client-side and was not retrievable.
28	The University of Sydney	Australia	ATAR selection via state tertiary admission centre	PARTIAL	2025	Intake counts only; no applicant or offer counts. The source's own intro says 'by programme' while the rendered tables are institution-wide aggregates.
14	Tsinghua University	China (Mainland)	Gaokao allocation against province and programme quotas	PARTIAL	as at 31 December 2025	No applicant denominator. Must not be confused with the enrolment row on the same page (undergraduate 16,526).
=8	UCL	United Kingdom	UK UCAS, published at faculty level only	PARTIAL	2025/26	Faculty-level only. UCL publishes no institution-wide grand total, and ECS has not summed the faculty rows. Excludes Clearing.
24	University of Chicago	United States	US institution-wide (CDS/IPEDS ecosystem)	PARTIAL	Fall 2025	TOTALS ARE ECS-DERIVED and PROVISIONAL. Two separate reads produced inconsistent label-to-number pairings. The document header year contradicts the link text. Do not publish without a locally opened copy.
=22	EPFL	Switzerland	Qualification-based entry for the domestic majority	NON-COMPARABLE	from 2025	The 3,000 is a policy cap, not a count of admissions. No paired applicant and admitted counts published; detailed statistics sit behind authentication.
=8	ETH Zurich	Switzerland	Qualification-based entry (no institution-	NON-COMPARABLE	2024 / 2025	Holders of a Swiss Matura are admitted unconditionally, so for the largest applicant group there is no selection stage and an admission rate is not a meaningful

			wide competitive selection)			construct. No institution-wide applicant count published. Numerus clausus applies only to Human Medicine.
12	Nanyang Technological University	Singapore	Programme-level admission on national examination results	NON-COMPARABLE	AY2025-26	Same structure as NUS. Facts and Figures carries no admissions section. Singapore MOE publishes intake by programme across all six autonomous universities, not by institution.
10	National University of Singapore	Singapore	Programme-level admission on national examination results	NON-COMPARABLE	AY2025/2026	No institution-wide applicant count exists on NUS's own domain. Admission is decided per programme against grade thresholds. The Registrar publishes enrolment only.
26	Fudan University	China (Mainland)	Gaokao allocation against province and programme quotas	NOT LOCATED	2025	Publishes plans by province and programme but no institution-wide admitted total and no applicant count. The undergraduate teaching quality report PDF body could not be reached.
25	Technical University of Munich	Germany	Qualification plus programme-specific aptitude assessment	NOT LOCATED	winter semester 2025/26	No paired application and admission figures on any acceptable TUM page. Only total enrolment (51,954) is published, which is not an admission count. The German statistics page renders client-side and returned no numeric content.

6. Comparability audit

Group	Institutions	Comparability	Reason
Group A: US CDS ecosystem	Stanford, Harvard, Princeton, MIT, Yale, Penn, Johns Hopkins, Cornell, UC Berkeley, Caltech, Chicago	C1 within the group for institutions counting the same unit; C2 where one counts applicants and another applications	One institution-wide application, an unconditional admission decision, a standardised CDS Section C1. Harvard, Princeton, Johns Hopkins, Berkeley, Cornell and Stanford count applicants; MIT, Penn and Yale count applications. Yale's figures come from its OIR report W033 rather than its Common Data Set, because the Common Data Set prints no total line.
Group B: UK UCAS institution-wide	Imperial, Oxford, Cambridge	C1 within the group for applications-to-offers; C2 against Group A	A UK offer is CONDITIONAL on later examination results; a US admission is not. Cambridge's 4,893 offers became 3,669 acceptances. Imperial publishes admissions rather than offers, so its ratio is applications-to-admissions and is not an offer rate.
Group J: McGill	McGill	C2 against all other groups	Publishes an institution-wide Applicants / Offers / Entering Class funnel, but Undergraduate/Professional bundles professional-faculty entry, and offers may include conditional offers. Its 47.55% is an offer rate, not an admission rate.
Groups C to I	UCL, NUS, NTU, HKU, CUHK, Peking, Tsinghua, Fudan, ETH, EPFL, TUM, UNSW, Melbourne, Sydney, ANU	C3 - excluded from all ratio comparison	No verified institution-wide pair. In most cases architectural: no institution-wide application exists to count.
	all	C3 - no numerical comparison permitted	No employer application-volume and intake pair was verified for a named programme, geography and cycle.

Any university vs any employer			
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C1 = directly comparable. C2 = comparable only with a stated definitional caveat. C3 = not comparable, excluded from ratio comparison.

7. Method

- **Sampling frame.** Every institution assigned a position from 1 to 30 in the QS World University Rankings 2027, published 18 June 2026. Tied positions retained; the frame was not forced to exactly 30 by removing tied institutions. Frame payload SHA-256
c65bd873a71ee106d1b7d24afda9af3b4536440d9f8b07887417475a4ba16bd5.
- **QS is a sampling device only.** No QS indicator, score or rank is used as evidence of admissions selectivity.
- **Sources.** Institutional and official-system publications only. No third-party aggregator, no purchased data, no estimate.
- **Retrieval.** Headless browser retrieval with a receipt written for every request. A refusal to a plain command line request is not treated as evidence that a source has been withdrawn; three sources in the wider ECS evidence base returned exactly that refusal and were recovered intact through a browser.
- **Cycle alignment.** Numerator and denominator must come from the same institution and the same cycle. Cross-cycle pairing is a defect, not a record.
- **Rounded inputs.** A rounded figure may not be divided by a precise figure. Records built that way were removed.
- **Terminology.** Applications per recorded positive decision. The source's own decision unit is displayed beside every figure. Source terminology is preserved unchanged in the evidence record.
- **Integrity gate.** An automated gate tests every record for status consistency, arithmetic, rounded inputs, cycle alignment, source locator, decision unit and undefined comparatives. It is proved against ten deliberately defective records before every run.

8. Limitations

- Seventeen of the thirty institutions have no verified complete pair. Two are recorded as not located, which is a statement about this review and not about the institution.
- Caltech's record rests on the Common Data Set 2024-2025 and is a cycle behind the rest of the US group. It is held at PARTIAL rather than compared across cycles.
- Chicago publishes an application and admission pair but is held at PARTIAL pending confirmation of the counting unit against the same cycle.
- Imperial publishes admissions rather than offers, so its ratio is applications-to-admissions and is not an offer rate.
- McGill's offers may include conditional offers, and its undergraduate figure bundles professional-faculty entry. Its 47.55% is an offer rate, not an admission rate.
- A UK offer is conditional on examination results still to come. A US admission is not conditional in the same way. Cambridge published 4,893 offers and 3,669 acceptances for the 2025 cycle.
- No association between QS rank and admissions ratio is calculated. Thirteen records spanning five admissions architectures and two counting units cannot support one.

9. The employer comparison, and why it is not made numerically

Across the public recruitment pages of 13 named elite employers reviewed by ECS on 10 September 2026, ECS could not verify both an application-volume figure and a programme-intake figure covering the same programme, geography and cycle.

The thirteen employers reviewed were JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Bank of America, Citigroup, McKinsey & Company, Bain & Company, Boston Consulting Group, Freshfields, Clifford Chance, A&O Shearman, Linklaters and Slaughter and May.

This does not establish that the figures do not exist, that the employers deliberately withhold them, or that their programmes are more selective than the universities reviewed.

No numerical comparison between any university and any employer is made or permitted on this evidence, because no employer numerator and denominator on equivalent terms was available to compare.

10. Commentary

Attributed commentary. Not a dataset finding.

"For families, entry to an elite university is one selection gate, not the end of selection. The next system is often less transparent."

Hassan Akram, Founder and Principal Advisor, Elite Careers Strategy

The first sentence is interpretation and carries no evidential claim. The second is supported only within the named employer-review scope set out in section 9.

11. Source register, all thirty institutions

Institution	Source	Locator	URL	HTTP	Accessed	Grade
Australian National University	Cohort profile and ATAR information The Australian National University	cohort profile table	https://study.anu.edu.au/study-options/cohort-profile-and-atar-information	200	2026-09-10	A
California Institute of Technology	Common Data Set 2024-2025	Section C, C1-C2 Applications	https://iro.caltech.edu/documents/31491/Caltech_CDS_2024-2025_May_2025.pdf	200	2026-09-10	A
Cornell University	Common Data Set 2025-2026	sheet CDS-C, answer codes C.116, C.117, C.118	https://irp.cornell.edu/common-data-set	200	2026-09-10	A
EPFL	Bachelor/CMS admission criteria & application	Swiss maturity certificate section	https://www.epfl.ch/education/admission/admission-2/bachelor-admission-criteria-and-application/	200	2026-09-10	n/a
ETH Zurich	Application with Swiss matriculation certificates ETH Zurich	admission prerequisites list	https://ethz.ch/en/studies/bachelor/application/swiss-matriculation-certificate.html	200	2026-09-10	n/a
Fudan University	Undergraduate admissions disclosure index	admissions charter	https://xxgk.fudan.edu.cn/bkszs/list2.htm	200	2026-09-10	n/a
Harvard University	Admissions Statistics	admissions statistics block	https://college.harvard.edu/admissions/admissions-statistics	200	2026-09-10	A
Imperial College London	Imperial College Statistics Guide 2025-2026	Applications and admissions - undergraduate, Total row	https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/planning/public/statistics-guides/Imperial-College-Statistics-Guide-2025-2026.pdf	200	2026-09-10	A
Johns Hopkins University	Common Data Set 2025-2026 Johns Hopkins University	Sections C1 and C2	https://oir.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025-2026-CDS-Johns-Hopkins-University-v2.pdf	200	2026-09-10	A
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Undergraduate Admissions - MIT Facts	facts page, admissions block	https://facts.mit.edu/undergraduate-admissions/	200	2026-09-10	A
McGill University	Admissions Profile Enrolment Services - McGill University	Fall 2025 Admissions Profile, Undergraduate/ Professional summary block	https://www.mcgill.ca/es/admissions-profile	200	2026-09-10	A
Nanyang Technological University	AY2025-26 Grade Profiles, Polytechnic GPAs and	IGP Table 3	https://www.ntu.edu.sg/docs/default-source/undergraduate-admissions/igp/ntu_igp.pdf	200	2026-09-10	n/a

	Programme Places for A level and Polytechnic Applicants					
National University of Singapore	Indicative Grade Profile (IGP)	IGP page body and FAQ	https://nus.edu.sg/oam/admissions/indicative-grade-profile	200	2026-09-10	n/a
Peking University	2024-2025 Peking University information disclosure annual report	admissions section of the annual disclosure report	https://xxgk.pku.edu.cn/docs/2025-11/06afdbf397a548af9ffa167e907d69ed.pdf	200	2026-09-10	A
Princeton University	Common Data Set 2025-2026	CDS-C Page 8, sections C1 and C2	https://ir.princeton.edu/sites/g/files/toruqf2041/files/documents/CDS_2526_Princeton_v2.pdf	200	2026-09-10	A
Stanford University	Common Data Set 2025-2026	Section C1-C2: Applications, Common Data Set 2025-2026 page 10	https://irds.stanford.edu/data-findings/cds	200	2026-09-10	A
Technical University of Munich	TUM in figures - TUM	University Admission body text	https://www.tum.de/en/about-tum/facts-and-figures/tum-in-figures	200	2026-09-10	n/a
The Chinese University of Hong Kong	CUHK Facts & Figures	JUPAS Admission Results 2024 section	https://factsfigures.cuhk.edu.hk/	200	2026-09-10	A
The University of Hong Kong	Overview - Quick Stats The University of Hong Kong	Quick Stats Overview, Student Admission table	https://www.cpaohku.hk/qstats/	200	2026-09-10	A
The University of Melbourne	Student profile	student profile breakdown	https://study.unimelb.edu.au/how-to-apply/undergraduate-study/student-profile	200	2026-09-10	A
The University of New South Wales	Undergraduate Admissions ATAR Requirements UNSW Sydney	ATAR Profile and Student Profile sections	https://www.unsw.edu.au/study/how-to-apply/undergraduate/admissions	200	2026-09-10	A
The University of Sydney	Student and ATAR admission profiles	ATAR profile and student profile tables	https://www.sydney.edu.au/engage/schools/career-adviser-and-teacher-resources/student-and-atar-admission-profiles.html	200	2026-09-10	A
Tsinghua University	Statistical data - Tsinghua University	school basic data table, new students row	https://www.tsinghua.edu.cn/xxgk/tjzl.htm	200	2026-09-10	A
UCL	Undergraduate application data 2025/26	faculty total rows	https://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/undergraduate/sites/prospective_students_undergraduate/files/undergraduate_application_data_2025-26.pdf	200	2026-09-10	A
	Common Data Set - UC Berkeley	sheet tab CDS-C, rows 1-20	https://opa.berkeley.edu/campus-data/common-data-set	200	2026-09-10	A

University of California, Berkeley	Office of Planning and Analysis					
University of Cambridge	Undergraduate Admissions Statistics 2025 cycle	Summary bullets p.3; Table 1.1 Totals row	https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2026-05/ug_admissions_statistics_2025_cycle.pdf	200	2026-09-10	A
University of Chicago	University of Chicago Common Data Set 2025-26	CDS-C Page 8	https://data.uchicago.edu/common-data-set/	200 after a 302	2026-09-10	A
University of Oxford	ANNUAL ADMISSIONS STATISTICAL REPORT	Table 1.1, p.4	https://assets-oxweb.admin.ox.ac.uk/2026-07/Undergraduate%20Admissions%20Report%202026_0.pdf	200 via browser fetch; direct curl 403	2026-09-10	A
University of Pennsylvania	Facts University of Pennsylvania	Undergraduate Admissions (Fall 2025) section	https://www.upenn.edu/about/facts	200	2026-09-10	A
Yale University	Yale College Admissions Summary (W033)	Yale College First-Time First Year Admissions, row Year Entered 2025 / Class of 2029 (report OIR W033, last updated 10-16-2025)	https://oir.yale.edu/data-browser/student-data/admissions/yale-college-admissions-summary-w033	200	2026-09-10	A

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