Analysis of International Education Costs vs. University Rankings

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1 Executive Summary

This comprehensive study examines the relationship between international education costs and university rankings across the top 10 QS-ranked countries for Master's degree programs. Our analysis reveals no direct correlation between academic prestige and affordability, challenging common assumptions about premium education pricing.

2 Introduction

The international education sector is growing rapidly, with more students exploring study opportunities beyond their home countries in search of both quality and affordability. The QS World University Rankings serve as a trusted benchmark for comparing institutions across dimensions such as academic reputation, graduate employability, and sustainability. **While top-ranked universities typically involve higher costs, the total expense varies significantly between countries due to differences in living costs, visa requirements, and local economic conditions.**

For many prospective students, cost considerations are just as critical as academic quality when making study abroad decisions. However, limited research has systematically compared education costs across top-ranking university destinations, making it difficult for students to make informed decisions about cost-effective study options. This study addresses this knowledge gap by examining both academic performance and financial affordability through merging QS ranking data from 2024 and 2025 with international education cost datasets. Our analysis focuses specifically on master's degree programs in the top 10 countries with the highest QS university rankings. We calculate total study costs including tuition, accommodation, visa

fees, and insurance to provide comprehensive cost comparisons. The findings aim to provide practical guidance for international students seeking optimal value in their education investment.

3 Methodology

Research Design and Data Sources

This study uses `quantitative analysis` to examine the relationship between international education costs and university rankings. We integrated **QS World University Rankings data from 2024-2025** with the **Kaggle International Education Cost dataset**, focusing exclusively on Master's degree programs across the top 10 QS-ranked countries.

Data Processing Frameworks

As illustrated in Figure **??**, our research methodology follows a systematic five-stage approach from initial data collection through final analysis. The comprehensive framework ensures data quality and analytical rigor while maintaining focus on the top-performing QS ranking countries.


```
Step 1
Merge QS Rankings 2024 & 2025 Data
          ↓
Step 2
Identify Top 10 Countries from QS Rankings
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Step 3
Filter Kaggle Dataset for These 10 Countries
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Step 4
Select Master Level Programs Only
          ↓
Step 5
Calculate Total Study Cost
```
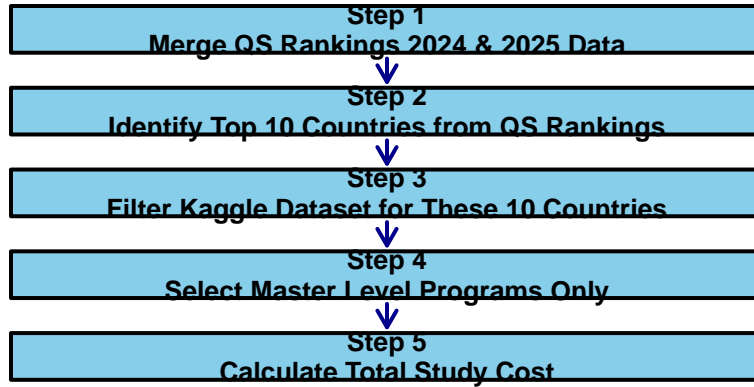
Figure 1: Five-Stage Data Processing Framework for International Education Cost Analysis