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Top UK universities face funding and foreign student shortage

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Imperial College London, renowned for its science teaching, shot up from sixth to second place, dethroning for the first time the historically dominant “Oxbridge” duo, with Oxford and Cambridge ranking third and fifth respectively.- REUTERS PIC

LONDON: Some of UK's top universities could see their attractiveness decline due to hits to funding and tighter regulations on overseas students, the annual QS 2025 university rankings warned on Tuesday.

Four British universities retained their spots in the top 10 of more than 1,000 universities ranked by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), a benchmark ranking alongside the Times and Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

Imperial College London, renowned for its science teaching, shot up from sixth to second place, dethroning for the first time the historically dominant "Oxbridge" duo, with Oxford and Cambridge ranking third and fifth respectively.

More than half (52) of the UK's universities were bumped down on the list, out of the 90 that were part of the ranking.

"This year's results suggest that British higher education has limited capacity remaining to continue excelling in the face of funding shortages, drops in student applications," and restrictions affecting the intake of international students, said head of QS Jessica Turner.

In the last few months, the Conservative government has introduced several measures to reduce regular migration which it judges to be too high.

These including barring overseas students from bringing dependents and hiking the minimum salary needed for skilled workers visas.

The policies have been criticised by universities, whose budgets are heavily dependent on the higher fees paid by international students.

In the first four months of the year, 30,000 fewer student visa applications were made than in the same period in 2023, according to government statistics.