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**Abstract**

League tables of universities that measure performance in various ways are now commonplace, with numerous bodies providing their own rankings of how institutions throughout the world are seen to be performing on a range of metrics. This paper uses Lyotard's notion of language games to theorise that universities are regaining some power over being placed on league tables by creating narratives that manipulate their rankings to promote their own strengths. This paper examines the findings of a study involving university responses to global rankings throughout 2016 produced by two major ranking bodies, Times Higher Education and QS Top Universities. The existing literature has established that ranking tables can be used as a vehicle for humiliation and can produce terrors for all those involved. Thus, the significance of this study's findings is in new ways of theorising university responses to appearing on league tables at a time when academia is a high-stakes activity where institutions' abilities are measured and reported on at a global scale. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)