



## Background

This survey was conducted online and was live from 10<sup>th</sup> March until 29<sup>th</sup> April 2008. A total of 86 responses were received from 75 institutions, including both further and higher education institutions.

The survey was conducted as part of JISC infoNet's Strategy Planning & Implementation initiative funded by the JISC Organisational Support Committee.

Questions 1, 4a and 5 required respondents to choose an answer from pre-supplied categories.

Questions 2, 3 and 4b gave respondents a free-text field, giving them the freedom to answer how they wished. All of the answers provided were then grouped for the purpose of analysis.

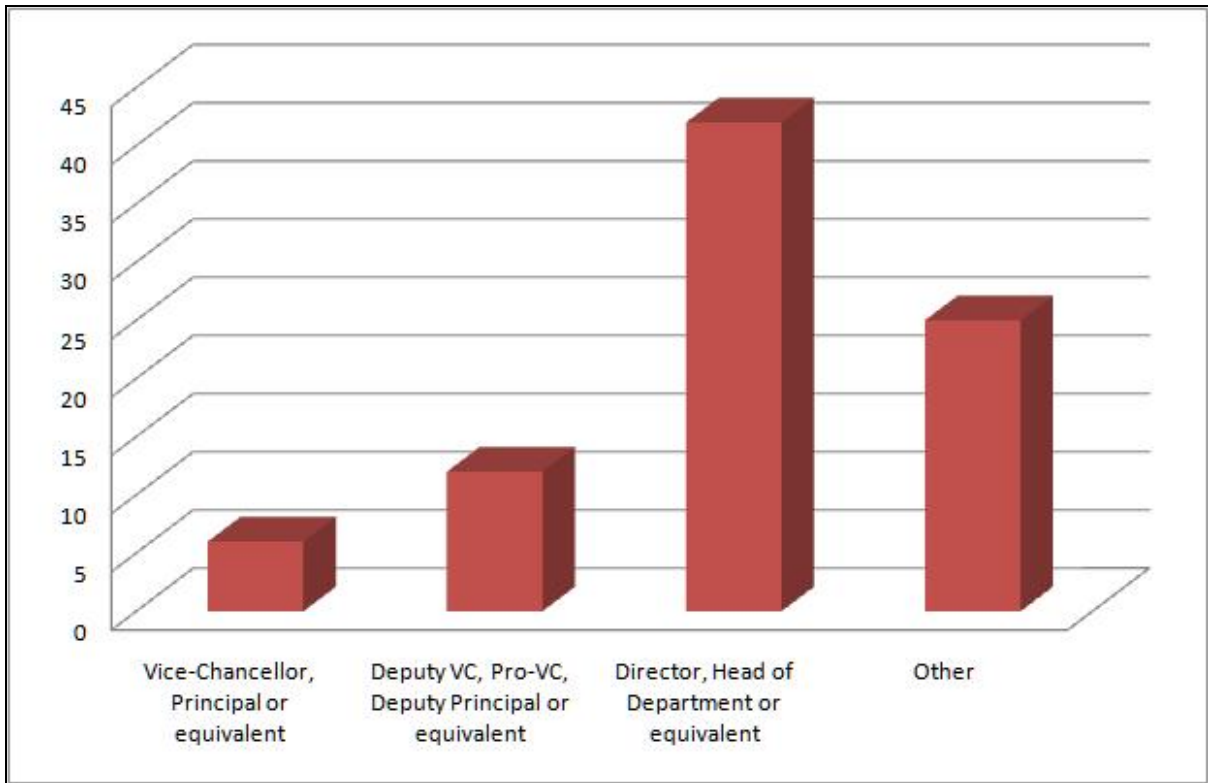
## Summary

The answers provided to question 2 suggest issues relating to 'organisational infrastructure' are considered the most pressing challenges faced by institutions, even eclipsing financial concerns and the stresses of operating within an increasingly competitive, market-driven sector. This impression is confirmed by the answers provided to question 3 where five of the top six issues cited as wasting the most time, effort and energy within the institution can all be described as being of an infrastructural nature (relating to the quality and efficiency of processes, communication & collaboration, IT infrastructure, information quality & access and poor decision-making processes).

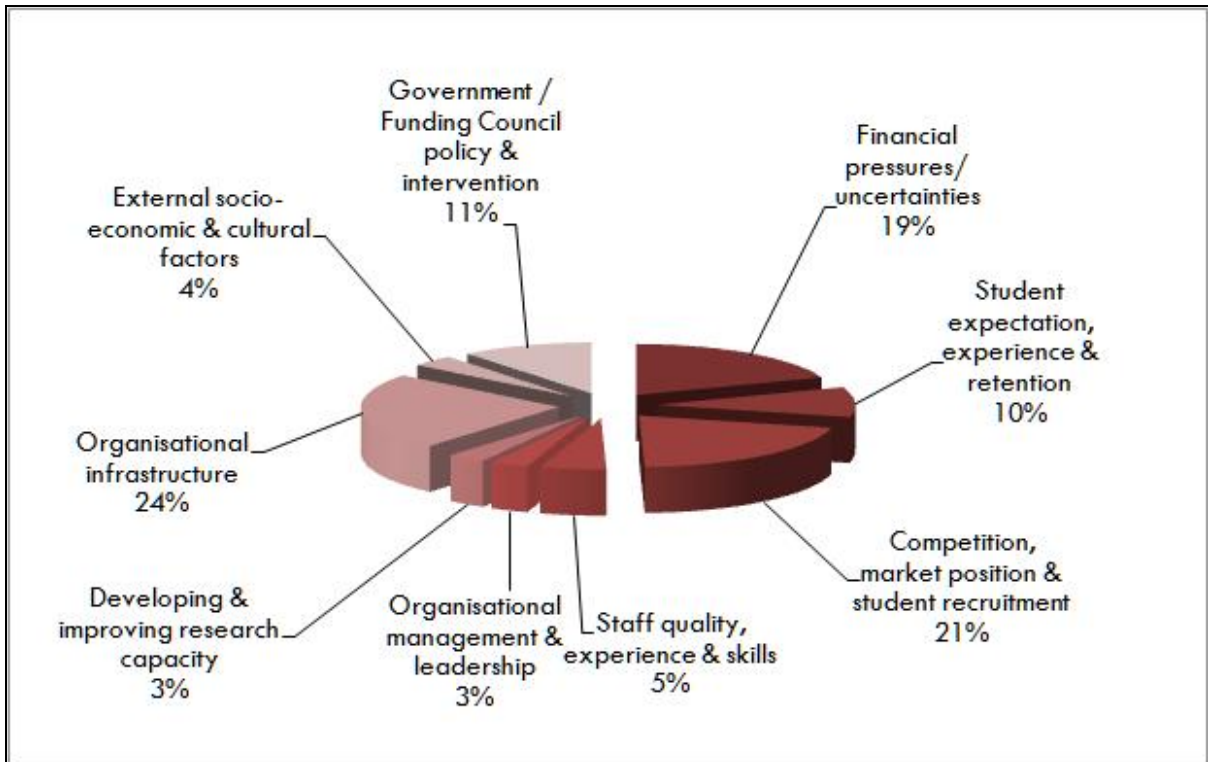
Interestingly, however, when it comes to identifying the reasons institutions continue to face these pressures the majority chose to cite 'external factors beyond their control' as the principal factor. Aside from an understandable temptation to look beyond the institution's own walls when identifying causal factors, this finding may point to a need within institutions for improved *scenario planning* - a technique useful for identifying and preparing for potential external changes, trends and influences. Similarly, the 17% of respondents who had identified, but under-estimated, the impact of the most pressing challenges they face perhaps suggests some flaws in institutional risk management measures.

The overwhelming majority of institutions favour an annual process of strategy review which, on one level, may seem appropriate given that only 11% of respondents pointed to issues coming to light since the last round of strategic planning as being the major causal factor. However, the high level of infrastructural challenges faced by institutions and alluded to throughout the results does, perhaps, suggest that these well-established annual strategy updates processes often achieve far more on paper than in practice.

**Q1. Which of the following most closely describes your principal area of work?**



**Q2. What are the main challenges faced by your organisation today?**



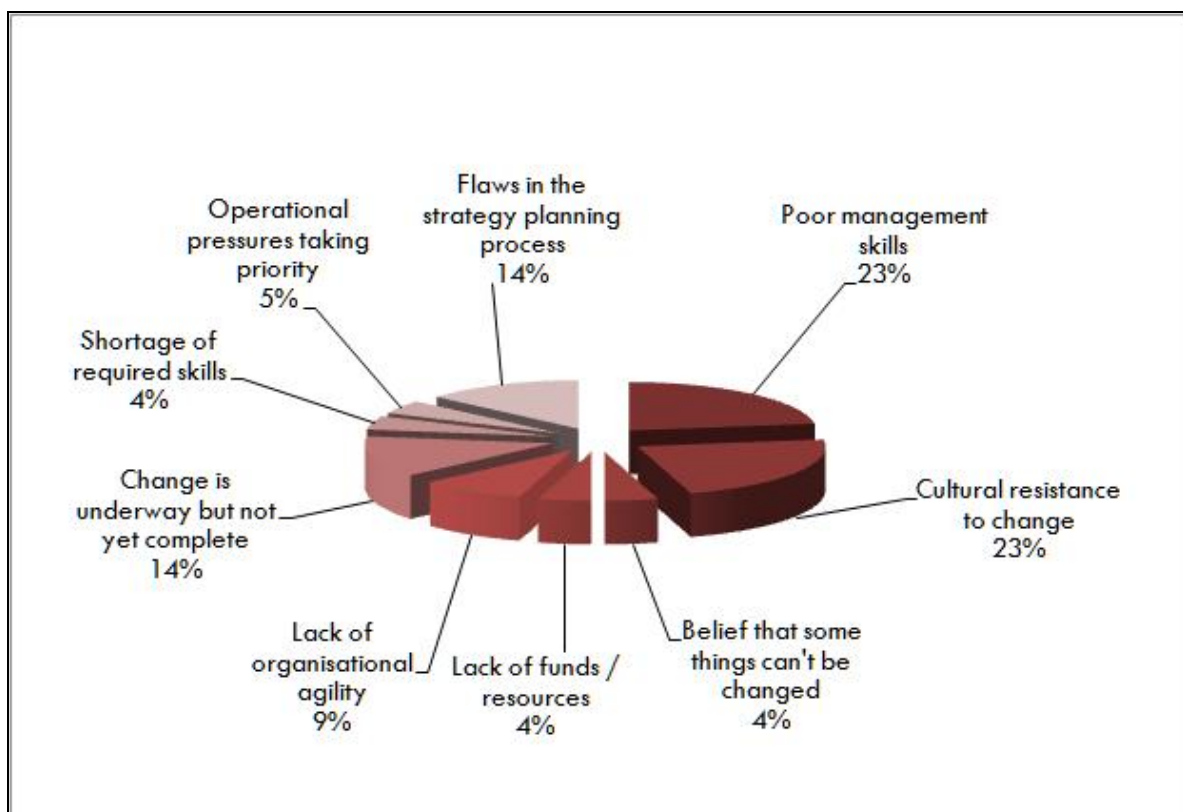
**Q3. What do you feel needlessly wastes most time, effort and energy within your organisation?**

Reason	Percentage cited
Lack of standardised/efficient processes	15%
External legislation & regulation	14%
Poor internal communication & collaboration	11%
Problems with IT infrastructure	9%
Poor quality of and access to information	8%
Decision-making processes	7%
Skills gaps amongst staff	7%
Bureaucracy/administration	6%
Resistance to change	4%
Poor leadership & strategic planning	4%
Meetings	4%
Gold-plating & quality assurance	3%
Poor performance/lack of professionalism from staff	3%
Dealing with external partners	1%
Poor system implementation	1%
Cultural divide between academic & support staff	1%
Consultants	1%
Travel between sites	1%

**Q4a. Consider the answers you have provided to questions 2 and 3. Why do you feel you still face these issues, despite previous iterations of your strategy planning process?**

Reason	Percentage cited
Issue(s) result of external factors beyond our control	25%
Issue(s) recognised but potential impact under-estimated	17%
We do not have the resources to address the issue(s)	15%
Issue(s) only emerged since last strategic planning cycle	11%
Other (see Q4b, below, for breakdown)	11%
Staff with the right knowledge to identify/address the issue(s) not included in the strategic planning process	9%
We took a conscious risk management-based decision to accept the issue(s) and potential impact	5%
No access to information required to inform us of the potential issue(s) during last strategic planning cycle	4%
Contingency measures included in our strategic plan have since proved inadequate	2%
We have been unable to instigate contingency measures included in our strategic plan	1%

**Q4b. Of those who chose 'other' to Question 4 the following reasons were given:**



**Q5. How regularly do you update and/or renew your strategic plans?**

