Leading higher education

Higher Education Leadership and Management Survey (HELMs)
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About the Leadership Foundation

The Leadership Foundation is a membership organisation that delivers leadership development and consultancy advice to higher education institutions in the UK and around the world. The focus of the Leadership Foundation’s work is to improve the management and leadership skills of existing and future leaders of higher education. The services provided include consultancy, leadership development programmes and events, including a major series of events for governors. This work is supported by a highly regarded research and development programme that underpins the leadership development programmes and stimulates innovation.

The Leadership Foundation has a small team of experienced leadership and organisational development professionals drawn from higher education, other parts of the public sector, and also from the private sector. Much of the Leadership Foundation’s work is delivered in partnership with the higher education sector and other partner organisations. www.lfhe.ac.uk
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2014, the Higher Education Leadership and Management Survey (HELMs) was sent to over 7,000 individuals in the UK who had previously had some involvement with the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. The survey was designed in collaboration with Ashridge Business School and the University of the West of England. This report is one of four that analyse the data generated by HELMs. It focuses on the qualitative data relating to respondents’ perspectives on the skills and experience that are necessary to lead in higher education, on the attributes and skills that they look for in their own leaders, and their views around the challenges that lie ahead for higher education institutions (HEIs).

Other major themes that emerged from the HELMs data set include what is expected from leadership, work–life balance, and motivating and developing staff. These are covered by the other reports in this series which comprises:

- Leading higher education
- Motivating and developing leaders
- Leadership and work–life balance
- Governors’ views of their institutions, leadership and governance

Sample and focus

The sample for this report is 969 respondents from HELMs, including 848 staff working at HEIs, 54 working for a higher education agency (or other institution) and 67 governors of HEIs. It is dominated by senior staff and those in professional service roles, but nonetheless broadly reflects the heterogeneity of the sector in terms of institution type, job role and demographic characteristics.

This report presents an analysis of qualitative data collected from HELMs, and draws upon responses to questions that asked specifically about respondents’ perspectives on leadership in higher education: the skills that are required to lead, the challenges that higher education leaders face, and the leadership that they are looking for in the sector. This following is a summary of key themes within the report findings.
Challenges for leadership in higher education

The view of the majority of respondents was that leadership in higher education is facing challenges at sector, institutional and people levels:

- Over three-quarters listed broad challenges facing higher education, associated with a lack of financial (and other) resources, changes in government policy, increasingly competitive markets and the need for a global perspective.

- Close to one-quarter listed challenges faced by their individual institution, including boosting institutional performance, supporting research and developing a positive institutional identity. Professional service respondents and women were relatively more likely to list institutional performance as a challenge; academic respondents and men were relatively more likely list research quality as a challenge.

- Over two-thirds listed challenges that related to the people within institutions, including attracting and keeping high-quality students and staff and working with dysfunctional aspects of higher education culture.

Looking for leadership in higher education

Respondents were looking for a broad range of characteristics in their institutional leaders and line managers:

- Over half (65%) emphasised the need for top leaders to have the right personal characteristics. These characteristics included assertiveness, competence, relatedness and morality. They also expected top leaders to have a passion for higher education.

- A quarter (24%) emphasised the need for top leaders to relate to people in the right ways. These respondents emphasised the importance of consideration, collaboration and equality rather than a top-down, managerial approach to leadership.

- A minority (11%) emphasised the need for top leaders to represent the group that they are trying to lead. These respondents expected leaders to have a good understanding of their experiences and priorities and to promote their interests within the institution and sector more broadly.

- Different groups of respondents tended to emphasise different leadership characteristics in top leaders. In particular, governor respondents were most likely to emphasise the importance of relating in the right ways, while professional service respondents in HEIs were most likely to emphasise the importance of having the right personal characteristics.

- The same leadership characteristics emerged when respondents rated their line managers. However, in contrast to top leaders, respondents were relatively more concerned that their line managers relate in the right ways (44%), and relatively less concerned that they have the right personal characteristics (48%).
Leading higher education

Leadership skills for higher education

The majority of respondents (66%) stated that the higher education context requires leadership skills and attributes that differ (at least in part) from those that are required in other sectors.

- Men and respondents who had never worked outside higher education were especially likely to say that effective leadership in higher education required skills and attributes that differed from those required in other sectors (women and those who had worked outside higher education were more likely to say that the requisite skills and attributes did not differ across sectors).

- Respondents who stated that unique skills were required for effective leadership in higher education justified their perspective by pointing to the unique structure of higher education institutions (as diverse institutions that face competing private and public sector demands) or the unique nature of the people who work within them (especially academics, who were seen as unusually independent, expert and uncooperative).

- To lead effectively in this context, respondents stated that leaders need to have particular personal skills and attributes (notably, people skills, patience and an ability to drive change), a capacity to wield collaborative influence and a deep understanding of the higher education sector; beyond this, it was important that they had academic credibility.

- Professional services staff and men were more likely to emphasise the importance of particular personal skills than academics (who emphasised collaborative leadership) or women (who emphasised a deep understanding of the sector). Individuals who had only worked within the higher education sector were more likely to emphasise academic credibility than those who had worked outside the sector.

- Respondents suggested that leadership in higher education could be improved with better HR processes, the appointment of staff from outside the sector, better structures for leadership development, a focus on the mission of higher education and better management of diversity.
Conclusions

The analysis of HELMs adds to our understanding of the expectations for leadership in two main ways. First, and not surprisingly, respondents perceived the higher education sector as facing a number of major challenges. Second, they had clear ideas about what they expected from their leaders, and specifically the skills and attributes that are required to effectively lead HEIs through these challenges. Most importantly respondents were looking for the following.

- **Leaders with the right personal skills and attributes.** This included having the assertiveness and competence to drive change, tempered by the social and moral concerns that help to deliver socially good outcomes. These personal skills and attributes were seen to differ somewhat from those that are required for leadership in other sectors. In particular, the capacity to drive change, to be patient but tenacious and to be good with people were seen as particularly important in higher education.

- **Leaders able to relate to others in the right way.** By this, they meant taking a consultative and collaborative — bottom-up — approach to leadership, rather than an authoritative, top-down approach. Respondents were more likely to expect this style of relating from their line managers, with whom they interact frequently, than institutional leaders. This consultative approach aligns with respondents’ perceptions of HEIs as having relatively flat management structures.

- **Leaders able to represent those they are seeking to lead.** In other words, respondents expected their leaders to manage upwards and outwards, standing up for their constituents and championing their cause. Being able to do this was seen to require a deep understanding of the higher education sector and belief in its social mission. For some respondents, especially those who had never worked outside higher education, it required academic credibility.

While there was a great deal of consistency in the above themes, reliable differences emerged between groups of respondents. Respondents’ gender, job role and cross-sector experience were reflected in the expression of different concerns. In particular, men were more likely to say that higher education required unique leadership skills and attributes than women; professional services staff were more concerned that a leader had the right skills and attributes, while academic staff were more concerned that a leader had the right way of relating; those with cross-sector experience saw fewer differences between higher education and other sectors than those without (the latter groups placed more importance on a leader’s academic credibility).

The findings suggest that leadership in higher education could be improved through a range of institutional structures, particularly the creation of transparent HR processes that do a better job of fostering diversity, a greater openness to cross-sector leadership expertise, and the deeper internalisation of the mission of higher education.
The Leadership Foundation commissioned the Higher Education Leadership and Management Survey (HELMs). The aims were to investigate current (and emerging) issues and challenges for leaders of higher education in the UK; build evidence to inform the development of the Foundation’s strategy, programmes and events, and create a baseline of information about the leaders whom we engage with and which could be followed up with further surveys.

The survey was designed in collaboration with Ashridge Business School and the University of the West of England. Given the slightly different leadership contexts for those employed by universities, university governors, students and those working in other higher education organisations, four survey questionnaires were designed with a combination of standard questions (drawn from the Ashridge Management Index) and specific questions tailored to the different groups of respondents. The survey included a number of closed questions (i.e., those that require respondents to use a specified response scale) about a broad range of topics related to leadership and management in higher education institutions. The survey additionally provided many opportunities for respondents to give explanations for their responses or to share related thoughts.

Between April and May 2014, the Leadership Foundation sent 7,375 emails to people who had engaged with the Foundation in some way over the previous 10 years with an invitation to visit the HELMs site and complete the survey. There were 848 responses to the institutional survey, 67 for the governors survey, 54 for the higher education agencies survey and one for the student survey. In total, then, the response rate was 13% (970 from 7,375). Ashridge Business School (the survey hosts) provided the raw survey data in SPSS. The in-depth analysis and production of this series of reports were undertaken by experts in leadership research and qualitative analysis (Kim Peters, Michelle Ryan and David Greatbatch).

More detail about the background to HELMs and the methods of the original survey can be found in Appendix 1.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SURVEY
THIS REPORT:
SAMPLE AND METHODOLOGY

The sample for this report consists of 969 individuals who responded to the online Higher Education Leadership and Management Survey (HELMs) in 2014. Respondents included 848 individuals who worked for an HEI, 54 individuals who worked for a higher education agency (or other, non-specified, agency) and 67 individuals who belonged to an HEI’s board of governors. In the remainder of the report, we will refer to these groups of respondents as HEI, agency and governor respondents, respectively. For the most part, this sample consisted of senior individuals who assumed leadership positions within their institutions or the higher education sector more generally.

We provide further details about the characteristics of the sample in Appendix 2. Broadly, the sample was dominated by senior staff (92% reported leadership responsibilities; 42% of academic staff were professors and 71% of professional service staff were managers or directors), those aged over 50 (47%) and almost 60% of respondents were women. However, the sample reflected the heterogeneity of the sector in terms of institution, job role, and demographic characteristics.

This report provides an in-depth analysis of perspectives on leadership in higher education: the skills that are required to lead, the challenges that leaders in higher education face, and the leadership that respondents seek in the sector. Responses from the following sets of questions are included in this report.

Survey questions
Higher education leadership challenges
In the first set of questions that explored challenges for leaders in the higher education sector, respondents were asked the following questions:

- **Leadership challenges:** I think the three most significant challenges for the leadership of UK higher education over the next few years (in order of priority) will be:

- **Leadership challenges elaboration:** If you have any further comments about the challenges for the leadership of UK HEIs over the next few years, please note these below.

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1 For further details please refer to Appendix 1.
2 This sub-set of respondents is the subject of Report 1 and Report 2 in the HELMs series. For those who want further information about the characteristics of this sub-sets, see HELMs report: Motivating and developing leaders.
Looking for leadership
In the second set of questions, respondents were asked about perceptions of their own leaders:

- **What are you ideally looking for in terms of leadership from the (other) senior leaders and managers in your institution?**

For governors this question was slightly modified to refer to the senior leaders of their institution.

HEI and agency respondents were also asked to respond to the following question:

- **What are you ideally looking for in terms of leadership from your immediate supervisor / line manager?**

Effective leadership in higher education
In the final set of questions, respondents were asked about the skills that they think are required for leadership in higher education:

- **Higher education leadership skills:** Do you think there are specific leadership skills and attributes required to lead within an HEI — or lead an HEI (compared to leading (in) organisations in other sectors)?

- **Higher education leadership improvement:** Is there anything that, in your view, would improve sector-level leadership within higher education?

Analytic approach
Levels of engagement with the open questions in HELMs were generally very high (typically between one-third and two-thirds of the sample). For this report, these responses were subjected to thematic content analysis.

In line with the recommendations of Braun and Clarke3, the thematic coding involved an initial familiarisation stage, where the first author read the data to become familiar with its content. This stage was used to identify important thematic ideas and concepts that appeared in the data and that mapped onto existing literature on leadership and the higher education context. The first author then coded respondent comments according to these themes. This coding was then reviewed, and themes were refined or discarded as necessary. The final codes were subject to chi-squared analysis to assess differences in the prevalence of themes amongst different groups of respondents.

In this report, we describe the major themes that emerged in respondents’ answers. In most cases, we illustrate themes with three quotes that capture the ideas at the core of the theme, except where this introduced redundancy or where more quotes were required to convey the breadth of the theme. In each case, the number of respondents who provided commentary for a particular question is indicated, and should be kept in mind when considering the prevalence of the themes.
CONTEXT: UNDERSTANDING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The nature of leadership, and the underpinning of its effective enactment, continues to excite debate among practitioners and researchers, and disappointment that years of endeavour have not yet delivered the recipe for effective leadership. Some would say that this reflects the questionable assumptions that drive much leadership research — a tendency to see ordinary behaviour as extraordinary when done by those in leadership positions⁴. Others would say rather that this reflects the tendency for researchers to focus on the individual leader in isolation from the groups that they lead, to underestimate the role of the social context in determining which characteristics and behaviours are most effective⁵. According to this latter perspective, there is no recipe for effective leadership, and understanding how to lead requires a deep understanding of the context within which a leader is situated.

The broader context for leadership in the UK higher education sector has been one of rapid and extensive change⁶. Changes in government policy around the funding of research and student fees, along with changes in public attitudes towards tertiary education (no longer the sole province of the elite few) have led to a massive expansion of the sector and a different understanding of its purpose⁷. Higher education is increasingly regarded as a commodity, rather than a social good⁸, and HEIs are expected to compete in the global marketplace⁹. As Bolden et al¹⁰ describe, these changes have created tensions within HEIs that on one hand need to succeed as a business, and on the other, hold true to the mission of higher education (knowledge production and transmission).

It is the aim of this report to find out how individuals understand effective leadership in this higher education context. We do, nonetheless, expect that individuals will refer to at least some of the core ideas in the existing leadership literature. There are two reasons for this expectation. First, some of these ideas are likely to be part of a lay understanding of
leadership that is generally shared among the members of Western societies. Second, most of the respondents in this project have undergone some formal leadership training and consequently will have been exposed to at least some of the core theoretical ideas (see the HELMs Motivating and developing leaders report).

In particular, we can expect that respondents will explain effective leadership in the following ways: (1) as a consequence of an individual leader’s personal attributes, (2) as a consequence of a leader’s behaviours and (3) as a consequence of the position that a leader occupies vis-à-vis the group that he or she seeks to lead. The first, attribute-based, explanation maps onto one of the earliest perspectives in leadership research — the so-called Great Man theory. According to this perspective, the capacity to be an effective leader differs between individuals\(^\text{11}\). Those individuals who have the necessary attributes will be effective and those individuals who do not, will not. This perspective fell from favour with evidence that personality attributes were poor predictors of leadership performance\(^\text{12}\). However, assumptions that individual attributes are important for leadership success are still very prominent in lay understandings of leadership\(^\text{13}\).

The second, behaviour-based, explanation maps onto many contemporary leadership perspectives, including ideas of transactional leadership\(^\text{14}\) and leader–member exchange\(^\text{15}\). These behavioural perspectives have distinguished between a leader’s task-related behaviours (such as creating structures and setting deadlines) and follower-related behaviours (such as treating others considerately\(^\text{16}\). There is a large body of research that has shown that leaders who treat their followers considerately are more effective\(^\text{17}\). The third, group-based, explanation maps onto a more recent research perspective that broadens the perspective to the group as a whole\(^\text{18}\). This viewpoint argues that leadership is, at heart, a group process, and that consequently a leader’s effectiveness will be affected by a leader’s positioning with respect to the group that he or she is trying to lead. Supporting this claim, research has shown that leaders who are seen to represent their group (by embodying the group and championing it) are more effective than leaders who do not represent their group in these ways\(^\text{19}\).

In sum, it is likely that respondents will understand effective leadership in the higher education sector as a function of the attributes of the leader, their behaviours towards their followers, and their positioning with respect to their group. However, as we suggested earlier in this section, there is evidence that what makes effective leadership is to some extent situationally determined. Therefore, while we may find some consistencies in respondents’ understandings of effective leadership, we are likely also to observe systematic differences as a function of who respondents are (for instance, their role within higher education or gender).

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\(^{11}\) See, for example, Stogdill (1948).

\(^{12}\) For a meta-analysis, see Judge, Bono, Ilies & Gerhardt (2002).

\(^{13}\) Epitropaki & Martin (2004); Schyns (2006)

\(^{14}\) Bass & Avolio (2004)

\(^{15}\) Graen & Uhl-Bien (1995)

\(^{16}\) See, for example, Fleishman (1953)

\(^{17}\) Harris et al (2005); Judge et al (2004)

\(^{18}\) Haslam et al (2011); Yammarino et al (2012)

\(^{19}\) Hogg (2001); Platow & van Knippenberg (2001)
CHALLENGES FOR LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The first empirical section of the report covers respondents’ responses to two questions concerning the significant challenges for the leadership of higher education in the UK. The first question asked respondents to list what they see as the three most significant challenges; the second question provided respondents with the opportunity to elaborate on these challenges.

While all respondent groups received these questions, they were framed slightly differently for governor respondents, who were asked about the leadership of their institution (rather than of UK higher education in general). As there were no significant differences in responses between respondent groups, we present the results from the HEI, agency and governor respondents together. Figure 1 summarises the major themes that emerged in response to these questions.

Figure 1: Major themes in the challenges faced by leadership in higher education
Significant leadership challenges
A total of 716 respondents (74% of the sample) shared their thoughts on the challenges facing higher education leadership. Response rates were high across all respondent groups, including 601 (or 71%) of HEI respondents, 48 (or 89%) of agency respondents and 67 (or 100%) of governor respondents.

We used thematic coding of respondent statements to extract the key challenges that respondents identified. This thematic coding extracted the same broad categories (institution, sector and people), as summarised above. The coding also extracted several sub-themes within each category.

Theme 1: Challenges associated with the higher education context
A total of 543 respondents (76% of the sample) listed challenges associated with the higher education context. These challenges mapped onto four sub-themes: (1) financial issues, (2) policy issues, (3) competitive markets and (4) global perspective. There were no significant differences in the prevalence of these themes as a function of respondent characteristics.

Financial issues were mentioned as a key challenges by 356 respondents (66% of the sample). Indicative quotes are provided below.

“Working out how to balance the books effectively while retaining its drive to improve.” (Respondent 491)

“Providing sound financial management and control without choking off dynamism and creativity.” (Respondent 653)

“Managing the changing and challenging financial environment.” (Respondent 246)

“Financial sustainability partly through increasing student numbers and partly by ensuring resources and processes are optimised.” (Respondent 1009)

“Finance with the changes in student recruitment rules and government policy regarding funding.” (Respondent 549).

Challenges associated with politically driven change and policy were raised by 77 respondents (14% of the sample). Indicative quotes are provided below.

“The shakeout as the ‘fraud’ of the student loan system causes the government to reduce its level of true spending (currently disguised but as a significant number of loans prove to be irrecoverable, likely to prove unacceptable) will lead to amalgamation of institutions.” (Respondent 1008)

“The Scottish political situation – independence or remaining within the UK.” (Respondent 1009)

“Decentralisation and autonomy from the Ministry of HE.” (Respondent 47).

“Political threat – General Election and the use of education as a ‘political football’.” (Respondent 116).
Challenges associated with the competitive market environment were mentioned by 72 respondents (13% of the sample). Indicative quotes are provided below.

“Securing a strong competitive position in an increasingly challenging environment as a consequence of both dramatic funding changes and increasing competition.” (Respondent 57)

“Getting to grips with the increasingly competitive global and national environment for universities with the associated revenue uncertainty.” (Respondent 543)

“Competition in the sector for students between institutions and resulting uncertainty for forecasting and capacity planning.” (Respondent 779)

“Ensuring that the organisation is customer-focused (which requires ensuring that support services actually support rather than hinder, eg providing seamless IT services).” (Respondent 293).

Finally, issues related to a global perspective were mentioned by 38 respondents (4% of the sample). Indicative quotes are provided below.

“The need to attract international students is leading to a changing student population – there are advantages to this, but also significant challenges.” (Respondent 365)

“Retaining the position of the organisation in an increasing global market.” (Respondent 84)

“Global economies’ effects on resources for University.” (Respondent 112)

“Becoming global – internationalisation in student recruitment.” (Respondent 130).

**Theme 2: Challenges at the institutional level**

A total of 169 respondents (24% of the sample) listed challenges that related to their individual institution. This theme was made up of a diversity of responses that reflected three sub-themes: (1) performance, (2) research and (3) identity.

We analysed differences in the distribution of these sub-themes as a function of respondent characteristic using chi-square tests. Significant (or near-significant) differences emerged among HEI respondents who occupied different job roles, and between men and women. These differences are summarised in Table 1, which provides the percentage of respondents who mentioned each of the three institutional challenge sub-themes as a function of respondent characteristic. This suggests that HEI respondents in professional service roles were relatively more likely to see institutional performance as a challenge; HEI respondents in academic and academic leadership roles were relatively more likely to see research as a challenge. In a similar way, women were relatively more likely to see performance as a challenge, and men were relatively more likely to see research as a challenge.

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20 Percentages add to 100% in each row. Chi-square analyses related to each respondent characteristic are listed in grey type alongside the relevant characteristic. Tests with p-values <.05 indicate that there is a significant difference in the distribution of sub-themes as a function of respondent characteristic. Tests with p-values >.05 but <.10 point to potential differences, and should be interpreted more cautiously.
The most prevalent sub-theme related to challenges around the HEI’s performance (mentioned by 88 respondents, or 52% of responses within this theme). We provide indicative quotes below.

“Sustaining league table position.” (Respondent 725)

“Retaining standards whilst achieving numbers of students.” (Respondent 82)

“Remaining in the top 200 universities in important league tables.” (Respondent 54)

“Maintain standards in research and teaching.” (Respondent 316).

The next most prevalent sub-theme related to challenges associated with research. This sub-theme captured the responses of 46 respondents (27% of respondents within this theme). Indicative quotes are provided below.

“Retaining and recruiting high-quality research staff who can enhance the research reputation of the institution.” (Respondent 594)

“Growing research capacity and capability.” (Respondent 33)

“Development of a research culture.” (Respondent 446)

“Building a good reputation for research.” (Respondent 434).
The final sub-theme related to institutional identity challenges. Thirty-five respondents (21% of responses within this theme) were categorised within this sub-theme. Indicative quotes are provided below.

“Image and brand promotion linked to internal cultural shift.” (Respondent 156)

“Developing reputation of university.” (Respondent 215)

“Continuing to build international profile and status.” (Respondent 287)

“Identifying and communicating why students should come and study at our institution, what is our uniqueness?” (Respondent 483)

“Remaining focused on who we are as an institution (ie, not trying to do too much and ending up achieving little).” (Respondent 787).

Theme 3: Challenges with people
A total of 494 respondents (69% of the sample) mentioned challenges that related to people. These challenges could be further classified into three sub-themes: (1) students, (2) staff and (3) culture. The distribution of these sub-themes did not vary significantly as a function of any of the key respondent characteristics.

The most frequent sub-theme was that related to issues with students. These challenges were mentioned by 286 respondents (58% of those within this theme). Indicative quotes are provided below.

“The need to attract international students is leading to a changing student population – there are advantages to this, but also significant challenges. Maintaining the quality of teaching in the face of ‘efficiency cuts.’” (Respondent 365)

“Student recruitment in a competitive environment / lifting of student numbers cap / international recruitment” (Respondent 81)

“Meeting the ever-changing expectations of future students, particularly now there is more transparency on results (technology, employability, staff–student ratio, degree results, etc).” (Respondent 346)

“Growing the income by widening participation in a region with low aspirations and poor schools. Improving teaching quality to ensure [value for money] for all students” (Respondent 1007)

“Attracting and absorbing greater student numbers.” (Respondent 1008).
The second most frequent sub-theme was that related to staff challenges, mentioned by 190 respondents (38% of those within this theme). Indicative quotes are provided below.

“The governing body needs more understanding of the day-to-day job most lecturers do.” (Respondent 623)

“Supporting staff and keeping morale up in a time of austerity and cuts. Learning to motivate and engage staff who are coping with heavy workloads and stress.” (Respondent 1005)

“Staff and staffing, real commitment to equality and diversity beyond the basics.” (Respondent 664)

“Listening to staff; considering their development and salary agreements; empowering and motivating staff.” (Respondent 359)

“Effectively tackling low morale among staff throughout the institution.” (Respondent 6)

“Reconnecting with staff who are alienated from the marketised environment of English HE, in which the most senior staff are now overpaid and too many academics do not have their views heard nor properly represented in institutional governance.” (Respondent 1006)

“Attracting world-class academic staff and students, particularly in light of changes to immigration policy and law.” (Respondent 640).

The final sub-theme is that related to institutional culture, with 18 responses (4% of responses in this theme) falling within this sub-theme. Indicative quotes are provided below.

“Development of a research culture.” (Respondent 446)

“Having to operate on a more commercial footing without the staff culture to support it.” (Respondent 161)

“Shifting the culture from one where currently many are disengaged (but senior management do not even realise that this is the case on the ground) and many do not respect the judgement of the senior team.” (Respondent 349)

“Creating a high-performance culture (including managing under-performance).” (Respondent 1004).

Summary
Respondents’ comments align with previous analyses on the changing nature of higher education in the UK. In particular, respondents spoke about the increasing challenges associated with changes in government policy and the competition for limited resources in a global marketplace. Their comments also spoke to the consequences that these broader changes have had for the institution and its staff, including the loss of institutional identity, high levels of staff stress and low morale. Together, these comments point to substantial challenges facing leaders in higher education, who may be relying on the efforts of an overloaded and demoralised workforce to ensure that their institutions succeed in an increasingly competitive sector.
Leadership challenges elaboration

One hundred and thirty-one respondents (14% of the sample) took the opportunity to further elaborate on their thoughts around leadership challenges in the UK higher education sector. Among this number were 101 HEI respondents, 14 agency respondents and 16 governor respondents.

We used the coding scheme above, and found evidence for challenges associated with people, the higher education sector and the institution. However, in addition to this, 45 respondents (35% of those who responded to this question) took the opportunity to reflect on their own institution’s leadership team more closely (and, for the most part, critically). Indicative quotes are provided below.

“This is a large organisation and so communication is a challenge. Need to listen to second tier managers more – not just tokenism.” (Respondent 508)

“There is still a prevalent old boys network, which makes the organisation look very old fashioned compared to other sectors.” (Respondent 799)

“The governing body has relinquished too much power to the senior executive.” (Respondent 1016)

“More ‘management’ is not the solution for demoralised academic staff. Deans who bully will not achieve results. Being constantly told our ‘jobs are on the line’ does not help morale.” (Respondent 132)

“Leaders need to begin to pull together with those they lead, not separate, in order to move an institution forward during a period of change in HE. Over the past few years I have seen a slow withdrawal from consultation with staff, and failure to tackle basic problems with infrastructure.” (Respondent 752)

“Institutional leaders should beware when it is apparent to staff that their personal career ambitions take precedence over, and are achieved at the cost of, the wellbeing of the institution.” (Respondent 725)

“I feel there is a serious disconnect between the senior executive and the rest of the institution, which is almost toxic. Communication is poor and there is a lack of trust and shared vision. Steps need to be taken to re-engage staff at all levels.” (Respondent 203)

“I fear that they may actually be a significant part of the problem, currently micromanaging on an unbelievable scale.” (Respondent 456).

Forty-seven respondents (37% of those who provided elaborated responses) mentioned issues related to people. Indicative quotes are provided below.

“They perhaps ought to be looking at improving diversity at senior levels but I doubt they see that as a priority.” (Respondent 49)

“Tackling poor performance.” (Respondent 388)

“Poor pay for academics in an incredibly demanding job – they want super heroes, good at teaching, research, administration, management, grant applications, PR, business/enterprise.” (Respondent 704)

“Meeting the needs of a new generation of students who are paying higher tuition fees and are more technologically advanced.” (Respondent 235).
Thirty-four respondents (27% of respondents who provided elaborated responses) mentioned challenges around the higher education sector. Indicative quotes are provided below.

“We need to understand where we are positioned in the international market, particularly in renewing and refreshing our PGT offering.” (Respondent 50)

“They need to understand the golden days are gone and that change is and will come and they can either get ahead of the game and learn from other sectors or fail and become redundant / taken over / bankrupt etc.” (Respondent 587)

“Recognising genuine income-generating opportunities, finding the right partners for future resilience.” (Respondent 696).

Finally, only two respondents mentioned issues that related to the institution (particularly the notion of a strong and distinctive identity and brand). These comments are provided below.

“This university urgently needs to give itself a distinct, instantly recognisable profile in the HE sector. It needs to stop talking like one of the big boys and act like one instead. So many ships have sailed, ie providing online and flexible learning, joining the MOOC movement – there’s not much left. Our leadership successfully saw off an ugly and potentially bloody merger – now it needs to stand strong.” (Respondent 98)

“It’s my opinion that as a sector, institutions need to become more distinctive in order to compete and differentiate. So, whilst I see mergers going on to create larger institutions I think that should only occur (or be visible) at the back-end (finance, HR, student support etc). If you can merge back-end functions whilst creating more distinctive brands on the front-end, I think it will create increased security for those units.” (Respondent 2023).

**Summary**

The themes that emerged from these elaborated comments largely reflect those discussed in the previous section. Additionally, however, a minority of the sample took the opportunity to provide critical commentary on their own institution’s leadership. Many of these comments referenced perceptions that top leaders were autocratic, controlling and disconnected. Criticism of this kind of leadership style aligns directly with respondents’ appreciation of consultative and collaborative leadership styles (discussed in detail in the next section).
LOOKING FOR LEADERSHIP

In the second set of questions, respondents were asked to reflect on what they were looking for in terms of leadership from the leaders of their institution, or in the case of governor respondents, the chair of their governing body. HEI and agency respondents were additionally asked to reflect on what they were looking for in terms of leadership from their immediate supervisor or line manager.

We will describe respondents’ statements about the leadership that they are looking for from the leaders at the top of the institution. Figure 2 summarises the major themes to emerge in terms of what respondents are looking for in their leaders.

Figure 2: Major themes in what respondents are looking for in leaders

Looking for leadership at the top

A total of 703 respondents (73% of the sample) provided their thoughts on the leadership that they were looking for at the top of their institution, whether this was an HEI, an agency or a board. Response rates were high across all respondent groups, including 70% of HEI respondents, 81% of agency respondents and 93% of governor respondents.

Thematic coding of these responses extracted three main themes: (1) having the right personal characteristics, (2) relating in the right ways and (3) representing the group. Chi-square analyses revealed significant differences in the prevalence of these themes as a function of respondent group and job role. These thematic prevalences are summarised in Table 2, which shows that HEI and agency respondents were comparatively more likely to mention that top leaders need to have the right personal characteristics, while governor respondents were comparatively more likely to mention the importance of relating in the right ways. Among HEI respondents, there was evidence that while professional service staff emphasised the importance of the right personal characteristics, academics and academic leaders were more likely to emphasise the importance of relating in the right ways.
Table 2: Perceptions of leadership in HEIs as a function of respondent characteristic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent characteristic</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents by response type</th>
<th>Unique</th>
<th>Generic</th>
<th>Mixture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sector role (no significant differences)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEI respondents (N=760)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic (N=274)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional services (N=416)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic leadership (N=322)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education agency respondents (N=47)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>81</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor respondents (N=67)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender ((\chi^2(1)=5.51, p=.019))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (N=355)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (N=507)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (no significant differences)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 years and younger (N=131)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 to 50 years (N=294)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 and older (N=430)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked outside higher education ((\chi^2(1)=3.97, p=.046))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (N=460)</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (N=345)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme 1: Having the right personal characteristics

A total of 446 respondents (65% of those responding to this question) emphasised the importance of a leader’s personal qualities. In order to understand what skills and attributes were seen as key to effective leadership at the top of the institution, agency or board, we extracted the core content words. These core content words fell within five major content categories:

1. Agency characteristics: the attributes of clarity (N=188), vision (N=132), direction (N=118), decision-making (N=94), strength (N=36), consistency (N=32), confidence (N=14), planning (N=12), visibility (N=12), determination (N=3)
(2) Relational characteristics: the attributes of communication (N=105), openness (N=36), listening (N=24), political (N=8), empathy (N=7), humility (N=4)

(3) Morality characteristics: the attributes of fairness (N=55), transparency (N=41), integrity (N=36), honesty (N=24), ethics (N=1), equality (N=21), genuineness (N=8), courage (N=8)

(4) Competence characteristics: the attributes of understanding (N=38), expertise/experience (N=20), knowledge (N=14), creativity (N=10), intelligence (N=7), articulateness (N=4)

(5) Motivation characteristics: the attributes of commitment (N=23), inspiration (N=19), passion (N=5), enthusiasm (N=5).

To give greater context to these themes, we provide indicative quotes below.

“Vision, clarity of communication, political awareness, an interest in HE scholarship and research beyond anecdote and the [Times Higher].” (Respondent 1053)

“Clarity of vision, confidence, transparency, integrity, excellent communication with all areas of the HEI, fairness and deep understanding of the academic environment / external environment.” (Respondent 1026)


“Transparency; fairness; vision; consistency; inspiration.” (Respondent 619)

“Integrity, intellect, common sense, kindness.” (Respondent 320)

“Good communication skills, able to motivate and good strategic views.” (Respondent 77)


**Theme 2: Relating in the right ways**

The second most frequent theme was relating to others in the right ways. This theme captures 160 responses (24% of responses to this question). Indicative quotes are provided below.

“Inclusiveness, ensuring that all members have the opportunity to contribute in the knowledge that they will be paid attention to.” (Respondent 1051)

“Consensus-building, testing ideas and proposals informally before board meetings, then bringing members together to identify critical challenge points.” (Respondent 1052)
“Working as a team rather than competing with each other... An understanding that when they make decisions or request that things are done for them, it has a big impact on many people’s work and there is an opportunity cost.” (Respondent 240)

“To listen to and take into consideration the views of academics and professional service staff when adopting institution-wide initiatives and to understand that not all academic programmes fit the classic three-year degree pattern of delivery.” (Respondent 572)

“People who listen, take the time with staff, show empathy and actually care about the professionals under them actually doing the work.” (Respondent 791).

Theme 3: Representing the group
The final theme was representing the group. Seventy-six respondents (11% of those responding to this question) referred to the importance of leaders engaging in representation. Indicative quotes are provided below.

Some knowledge / understanding of / sensitivity to how things are on the ground, and of how this could be supported in the context of the university’s overall goals. Less arrogance. (Respondent 288)

In-depth understanding of the needs of the sector. (Respondent 822)

Strong commitment to institution and its goals and readiness to spend the necessary time to achieve that. (Respondent 1001)

A passion for the role of higher and further education in developing a fairer and more prosperous society which values the social, cultural and sporting environments in developing students to achieve their very best and what they wish to achieve. (Respondent 1050)

Someone who understands the problems faced by the people at the bottom and is prepared to make tough decisions and take on management of failing individuals. (Respondent 243)

People prepared to stand up for what is right for everyone and not just themselves. (Respondent 456).

Summary
Respondents were looking for leaders who had the right personal attributes. This finding aligns with research showing that although most academic work has shifted from such Great Man approaches to leadership, they are still very much a part of lay understandings of leadership. The particular attributes that were emphasised fitted into four major domains: assertiveness, competence, relatedness and morality. Together, they perhaps point to respondents’ desires to have in their leaders a person with the strength and skill to drive change, accompanied by the social and moral concerns to ensure it can deliver socially good outcomes.

Respondents were also looking for leaders who were able to relate to others in the right way. By this, they meant taking a consultative and collaborative — bottom-up — approach to leadership, rather than one that is authoritative and top-down. This theme aligns strongly with research in the behavioural tradition, which has shown that leaders who can treat their followers in considerate ways, and thereby build trusting relationships, are generally more effective. This leadership style is also associated with higher levels of follower job satisfaction and workplace wellbeing.
A smaller number of respondents were looking for leaders who would represent those they are seeking to lead. In other words, they expected their leaders to manage upwards and outwards, standing up for their constituents and championing their cause.

Finally, in line with the claim that what makes leadership effective is strongly influenced by the social context, there was evidence of systematic differences between different groups of respondents. In particular, governors were relatively less concerned that their top leaders had the right personal characteristics than HEI or agency staff were, and relatively more concerned that these leaders had the right way of relating. Among HEI staff, professional services staff were relatively more concerned that their top leaders had the right personal characteristics than academics or academic leadership; these latter groups were relatively more concerned about the leaders' relational style.

Looking for leadership from line managers
A total of 599 respondents (62% of the sample of HEI and agency respondents) took the opportunity to share their thoughts on what they were looking for in terms of leadership from their supervisor or line manager. This consisted of 563 (67%) HEI respondents and 36 (67%) agency respondents.

We again coded responses in terms of the extent to which they reflected on personal characteristics, ways of relating to others and representation of the group. There were no significant differences in terms of the distribution of these responses as a function of respondent characteristics.

Theme 1: Having the right personal characteristics
Two hundred and seventy-two respondents (48% of responses that could be categorised) shared comments that related to having the right characteristics. Indicative quotes are provided below.

“The vision and knowledge to effectively lead a professional team.” (Respondent 304)

“Strong academic vision, courage in dealing with difficult decisions, positive outlook.” (Respondent 834)

“Sense of direction, sense of focus, clear decision-making, greater collegiality and effective allocation of resources to meet priorities.” (Respondent 703)

“Management experience and solid people skills.” (Respondent 1053)

“Inspiration, encouragement, forgiveness, wisdom, openness to challenge, respect, integrity and clarity about what the priorities are.” (Respondent 1018).
Theme 2: Relating in the right ways
Two hundred and fifty-one respondents (44% of responses that could be categorised) shared comments that related to having the right relationships. Indicative quotes are provided below.

“Trust in my abilities to let me get on with things without micro-managing.” (Respondent 524)

“To help our team work together and to ensure members respect and listen to each other.” (Respondent 153)

“Supportiveness, encouragement to develop both professionally and personally. Recognition for a job well done.” (Respondent 624)

“Supportive and willing to let me develop both as an individual and my role. Take a fair approach to all staff and be active at tackling poor or disruptive performance.” (Respondent 79)

Theme 3: Representing the group
Forty-two respondents (7% of responses that could be categorised) shared comments that related to representation. Indicative quotes are provided below.

“Willing to listen and promote the department when senior managers do not appear to.” (Respondent 433)

“Understanding of what I and my team can contribute to the organisation and a clear sense of valuing that contribution.” (Respondent 255)

“Someone who has a clear understanding of the opportunities for and challenges faced by my School and is able to act as a critical friend when necessary.” (Respondent 328)

“Someone that has the best interests of me, the team and the business.” (Respondent 833).

Summary
While the themes that emerged for line managers were very similar to those that emerged for top leaders, there were two points of difference. First, respondents were relatively more concerned that their line managers were able to relate to others in a consultative and collaborative — bottom-up — way in comparison with top leaders. There was a corresponding reduction in emphasis that their line manager had the right personal characteristics. Second, there was no evidence that the prevalence of these themes varied systematically across any of the respondent groups. This may suggest that the effect of context on what underpins effective leadership is weaker when followers have frequent and in-depth interactions with these leaders. Here, considerate treatment is particularly important. However, when it comes to more distant leaders, followers may be more inclined to look for leaders who embody some particular ideal leadership type.
In the final section, all respondents were asked to respond to two free response questions about their perceptions of the requirements for effective leadership in the higher education sector. They were first asked whether they considered that there were specific leadership skills and attributes that were required to lead within an HEI, or to lead an HEI (when thinking about leading in other sectors). Next, they were asked whether there was anything that would, in their view, improve sector-level leadership within higher education.

In this section, we summarise the responses to each of these questions in turn. The major themes that emerged in respondents' reflections on the unique requirements for higher education leadership are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Major themes in respondents' thoughts about unique requirements for leadership in higher education

What are the unique requirements for leading in HEIs?

Higher education context
Diversity, mission, balancing public–private demands, flat management structure.

Unique people in HEIs
Academic independence, expertise and uncooperativeness, culture.

Skills and attributes
Specific skills and attributes, collaborative influence, sector knowledge, sector credibility.

Skills and attributes for higher education leadership
A total of 874 respondents (90% of the sample) took the opportunity to share their thoughts on the skills and attributes that were required to lead in the higher education sector. Although response rates varied somewhat across respondent groups, they were in all cases high, including 90% of HEI respondents, 87% of higher education agency respondents and 100% of governor respondents.
We used a two-step approach to code respondents’ comments. In step 1, we coded respondents’ agreement with the question’s implication that leadership in the higher education sector required skills that differed from those required for leadership in other sectors. In step 2, we coded the elaborated content of respondents’ comments in terms of the main themes that emerged. We will discuss each of these steps in turn.

Are there unique requirements for leadership in higher education?

Respondents’ comments could be classified into three main categories: yes (there are unique skills); no (the skills are generic); and mixed (unique and generic skills are required). Figure 4 provides a summary of the distribution of these responses. Just over two-thirds of the sample perceived that leadership in the higher education sector requires skills and attributes that differ from those required in other sectors. About one-fifth of the sample took the opposite position, arguing that leadership skills are generic across sectors. Around one in every 10 respondents took an explicitly nuanced approach, stating that leadership in higher education required a mixture of generic and specific leadership skills. It is likely that this is an underestimation of the number of respondents who believe that leadership in the higher education sector requires both generic and specific leadership skills and attributes.

Next, we looked for evidence to indicate whether these perceptions were associated with sample characteristics, including respondent group (‘sector role’ in Table 2), gender, age and experience of working outside higher education. Table 2 summarises the distribution of perceptions as a function of these groups.

We used chi-squared tests to look for significant differences for each of the sample characteristics (statistics indicating significant differences are noted beside relevant characteristics in parentheses). This analysis revealed that respondents’ sector role and age had no impact on their tendency to believe that HEI required specific, generic or a mixture of skills and attributes. There were, however, significant gender and external experience effects. In particular, women were relatively more likely than men to say that leading HEIs required generic or a mix of unique and generic skills and attributes. Unsurprisingly, those who had worked outside higher education were more likely than those who had not to say that leading HEIs required generic skills.

We explored two obvious explanations for the gender difference: the possibility that more women than men had worked outside the higher education sector, and the possibility that women had completed more leadership training activities (and which could be expected to have exposed them to generic leadership theories). However, neither was able to account for the observed gender difference: women and men were equally likely to have worked outside the higher education sector (55% of both genders reported having worked outside HEIs). Additionally, there was no difference in the number of leadership training activities completed by men and women in this sample.
Requirements for leadership in HEIs

A total of 768 respondents (or 87% of those who responded to the question in any form) provided an elaborated justification for their response (i.e., beyond ‘yes’ or ‘no’). This consisted of 88% of unique skills respondents and 66% of the minority who said the skills and attributes were generic.

The latter respondents were highly consistent in their elaboration of why HEI requires generic skills and attributes for leadership. Indicative quotes for these participants are provided below.

“No. My experience in the oil industry of flatter organisations, team-based working and collaborative processes leads me to believe that there [are] a lot of myths about leading in HE that are not real.” (Respondent 267)

“No, I think that general principles of good leadership would be applicable across HEIs and other sectors.” (Respondent 680)

“No. HEIs are a business. They are in the business of developing learning, new knowledge and education / co-education of others. This is what the business is and does. Any senior leader needs to understand the business they are in, but do not need to have come from it or be extremely skilled in it. Senior leaders outside HE move from one sector to another, and as long as they listen to and understand the people and the business, the leadership skills required are the same.” (Respondent 841)

“No, the skills and attributes are the same for all sectors – it is about understanding people and the ability to lead them.” (Respondent 774).
In contrast, there was a great deal of richness and variation in the elaborations that were provided by respondents who argued for unique leadership skills and attributes in HEIs. We consequently coded the major themes that emerged across these respondents. We extracted three major themes. The first two focused on the reasons that unique skills and attributes were required. These reflected uniqueness in terms of (1) the structure of higher education institutions and (2) the people working within them. The third theme consisted of respondents’ specifications of the unique skills and attributes that they thought were required. For each major theme, we extracted a further four sub-themes. We discuss each major theme (and its sub-themes) below.

**Theme 1: The unique structure of HEIs**

Two hundred and twenty respondents justified their claim that unique skills and attributes were required by referring to the structure of HEIs. These justifications could be grouped into four sub-themes: (1) the diversity of HEIs, (2) the mission of HEIs, (3) the need to balance private and public demands and (4) the flat management structure (meaning power is not stratified as much as in other, more hierarchical organisations) of HEIs. There were no significant differences in the frequency of these explanations as a function of respondent role, gender and experience outside the sector.

The most common of structural sub-themes was that related to the diversity of HEIs, with 90 (or 40% of those mentioning structural issues) respondents falling into this category. Indicative comments are provided below.

“*Yes, it’s very different from industry as there are so many different role and different needs to be met working in HEI that it’s not a straightforward leadership technique.*” (Respondent 243)

“*An awareness and acknowledgement that we don’t have one trade – teaching or research. We are all multi-skilled with multiple masters.*” (Respondent 154)

“*The need to work with significantly different and difficult groups.*” (Respondent 523)

“*Understanding the need to balance the interests and needs of a variety of groups – students, academic staff, administrative and other staff.*” (Respondent 1001)

“*Yes. Universities are very complex with multiple sub-divisions, multiple agendas and the academic workforce is professional, creative but not generally corporate.*” (Respondent 646).

The second most common sub-theme related to the distinct mission of HEIs, with 63 (29% of structural respondents) falling into this category.

“*Yes, making money should be less important than educating students so the starting point should be caring about people and the society as a whole.*” (Respondent 245)

“*I think that placing the pursuit and development of knowledge and critical awareness at the centre of leadership as the core aim of HE is important. Unfortunately, much HE management seems to me to be driven by narrow commercial interests rather than pushing the boundaries of learning.*” (Respondent 6)

“*Yes because the raison d’etre of a university is and the ethos of a university should be profoundly different from that of a business.*” (Respondent 551)

“*Yes. Awareness of academic values and integrity rather than profit-motivation, efficiency, short-termism, and running ‘like a business’.*” (Respondent 591).
The third most frequent sub-theme was the need to balance public and private responsibilities. Forty-four (20% of structural respondents) were categorised as falling within this sub-theme.

“Yes – merging business acumen with respect for integrity of knowledge creation / transfer. Maintaining independence of research enquiry when funded by commercial sector.” (Respondent 112)

“Yes: an understanding that HEIs are not there purely to make money but must be run efficiently as ultimately, taxpayers’ money is being spent.” (Respondent 252)

“You need to understand HE, my experience of business people being catapulted into HE to run us like a business – at any level – is a disaster. Whilst we are a business and do need to run like a business, you need to understand the context and how academia is different.” (Respondent 560)

“The ability to recognise that HEIs now operate in a very competitive market and to lead the academic community in a business-like manner whilst at the same time ensuring the core educational values of the university are sustained.” (Respondent 1000)

“Yes: that we are answerable not only for budgets and ‘product’ – research, education, curation – but also for non-fiscal values. We believe in and advocate for the intrinsic value of knowledge and engagement to promote wider understanding of the world around us.” (Respondent 173).

The final sub-theme related to the unique structure of HEIs referred to their flat management structure (23 respondents, or 10% of structural respondents were thus classified). Indicative comments are provided below.

“Power is very distributed and not always in overt ways.” (Respondent 367)

“Academic institutions are often relatively un-hierarchical internally. Leadership roles also tend to shift around, so involve managing people who might previously [have] been managing you (or might be managing you in some other capacity).” (Respondent 95)

“The structure does not allow for punitive measures if somebody is not prepared to do their job properly.” (Respondent 689)

“Possibly requires you to be more comfortable with distributed leadership and less clear lines of accountability / authority.” (Respondent 18)

“Often a much flatter structure / matrix management type approach – some considerable ambiguities ([head of department] could be unit tutor under unit leader and programme leader for whom they have line-management responsibility).” (Respondent 298).

**Theme 2: The unique people in HEIs**

Ninety-two respondents justified their claim that unique leadership skills and attributes were required in HEIs by referring to the uniqueness of the people working in HEIs (who needed to be led). These responses showed substantial diversity that could be coded as falling into four sub-themes: (1) the independence of academics, (2) the expertise of academics, (3) the uncooperativeness of academics and (4) the culture of HEIs. There was no evidence that the distribution of these themes varied with any of the key respondent characteristics.
The most common sub-theme was that related to the independence of academics. This was mentioned by 41 respondents (45% of those who fell within the people theme). Indicative quotes are provided below.

“Ability to build consensus and sense of collective endeavour among highly autonomous and independent-minded individuals.” (Respondent 1004)

“Dealing with academic staff who see themselves as self-employed.” (Respondent 773)

“Yes – the environment is very different – academics are encouraged to be single-minded to promote their careers and speciality.” (Respondent 592)

“The people working within HEIs (esp. academics) don’t necessarily have great loyalty / affinity with their institution – their allegiance is to their discipline, and this can bring problems of motivation.” (Respondent 172)

“Working in the environment of ‘academic freedom’.” (Respondent 417).

The next most common sub-theme was that related to the expertise of academics. This sub-theme was mentioned by 15 respondents (16% of respondents in this theme). Indicative quotes are provided below.

“Yes, respect of the high level of qualification of staff.” (Respondent 1002)

“Leaders need to lead their intellectual equals, which is always tricky, and very few of them have the skills to do it.” (Respondent 427)

“Appreciation of consensus and acknowledgement [of] working with intelligent and independent thinkers.” (Respondent 1003)

“Leading a group of people who are by nature intelligent, inquisitive and questioning brings particular challenges and rewards.” (Respondent 412)

“An ability to take decisions / action in face of perhaps very vocal and articulate objectors. You are likely to be working with very intelligent, creative, critical, opinionated individuals.” (Respondent 17).

An additional 17 respondents (19% of respondents falling within this theme) mentioned the unique culture of HEIs. Indicative quotes are provided below.

“Also, patience in dealing with public sector culture and (lack of) speed at which HE institutions are able to handle change.” (Respondent 452)

“Yes, leadership skills must embrace the very different culture that is HE.” (Respondent 456)

“I think the academic culture of the University means that we operate in a differently demanding environment and that is one of the biggest challenges to balance up.” (Respondent 108)

“Yes, the culture is very different and there are specific skills needed to lead within it. You need to able to bring people along and lead strongly while recognising the culture is consultative.” (Respondent 111).
A final 15 respondents (16% of respondents in this theme) mentioned the lack of cooperation that comes with (some) academics. Indicative quotes are provided below.

“Yes, leading academics is famously difficult, they are trained to argue and find fault with everything.” (Respondent 121)

“Leading academic is like herding cats.” (Respondent 351)

“The need to work with significantly different and difficult groups.” (Respondent 523).

**Theme 3: Specific leadership skills and attributes**

A total of 387 respondents justified their claim that unique leadership skills and attributes were required in HEIs, specifying the characteristics required for effective leadership in HEIs. These could be coded as falling within four sub-themes: (1) specific skills and attributes, (2) the need for collaborative influence, (3) sector knowledge and (4) the need for credibility.

There was evidence that the distribution of these sub-themes varied significantly as a function of respondent characteristic (see Table 3). In particular, among HEI respondents, academic staff were significantly more likely to point to the need to adopt a collaborative approach to leadership that focused on influence than to point to particular skills; professional services staff showed the reverse pattern. There were also gender differences in that men were more likely to point to the importance of particular skills; women, in contrast, were more likely to point to the importance of a deep knowledge of the sector. Finally, there were also significant differences between respondents who had worked outside higher education and those who had not. Those who had worked externally were more likely to point to specific leadership skills; those who had never worked outside higher education were much more likely to emphasise the importance of having credibility.
The most common sub-theme was that relating to the specific skills and attributes required for leading in the higher education sector. One hundred and fifty respondents (23% of respondents in this theme) were categorised as falling within this sub-theme. Indicative quotes are provided below.

“People skills. Ability to do more with less – adaptability and flexibility. Change management / coping mechanisms. Enthusiasm and determination. Persistence and a sense of humour.” (Respondent 271)

“Determination and flexibility. An understanding of changing goalposts within an institution with historically based practices.” (Respondent 829)

“Resilience, flexibility, ability to embrace ambiguity, political skills, willingness and ability to manage people.” (Respondent 651).
We coded the skills and attributes that were listed by these respondents and their frequency. In order of frequency, these include the following skills and attributes: people skills (N=30), patience (N=26), managing and driving change (N=21), flexibility (N=18), tenacity (N=18), having a clear vision (N=14), communication skills (N=12), being decisive (N=12), being creative and innovative (N=10), being open-minded (N=9), coping with ambiguity (N=8), being tolerant (N=8), being intelligent (N=7), having empathy for staff (N=6), having appropriate experience (N=6), being passionate about higher education (N=5), having integrity (N=5), having a sense of humour (N=3) and having humility (N=2).

The next most frequent sub-theme was that relating to the need to exert collaborative influence. One hundred and twenty-five respondents (20% of those within this theme) were categorised as falling within this sub-theme. Indicative quotes are provided below.

“HEIs are extremely complex organisations and most things have to be achieved by influence or persuasion, not by control or command.” (Respondent 372)

“Yes. Collegiality. The HE sector does not work well with hierarchical styles, power vested too much in individuals. ‘Line management’ is a phrase that wasn’t heard in universities until a decade ago, and it still does not sit well with most academics.” (Respondent 65)

“Yes. I am used to a strong command and control process that is not appropriate to HE. I do think that HE gets bogged down in the idea of academic autonomy when some things are straightforward management issues. I do not think HE has got this right yet but I equally would not want to see debate and innovation overly restricted.” (Respondent 537)

“Yes, the most important being to be able to build consensus – HEIs are generally collegiate bodies. A command and control management ethos rarely works.” (Respondent 480).

Eighty-four respondents (13% of those within this theme) were classified as emphasising the importance of having a good understanding of the higher education context. Indicative quotes are provided below.

“Excellent knowledge of national and international agendas influencing HEIs.” (Respondent 54)

“Understanding of the way academia works (sounds obvious, but senior managers in administration who haven’t been academics don’t have this, and it shows); understanding of time pressures on staff.” (Respondent 75)

“I think that the main additional factor required is a very solid understanding of research processes, protocols and changing policy climate re education. The other aspects – people management and brand management / PR and keeping the client (ie students) satisfied etc are common to many other professional leadership roles.” (Respondent 122)

“An understanding of the role that universities can play in society is important – otherwise you might assume you’re leading any kind of a business.” (Respondent 269).
Finally, 28 respondents (4% of those within this theme) emphasised the importance of academic credibility for those wishing to lead within an HEI.

*Academic credibility. Ability to lead intelligent and very able workforce.*  
(Respondent 807)

*I think academic credibility in terms of research and teaching is necessary to lead within a HEI or to lead a HEI.* (Respondent 553)

*You have to be a successful scholar in your own right.* (Respondent 682)

*Yes – academic credentials and recent experience of research and teaching. All too often those who are in institutional leadership roles forget their academic origins and don’t know what it is like to teach / undertake research as circumstances change.* (Respondent 168).

**Summary**

This section aligns with evidence that effective leadership is, to some extent, associated with different behaviours in different social contexts. In particular, the majority of respondents expressed the view that the skills and attributes that were needed for leaders in higher education differed somewhat from those that are required for leadership in other sectors. In justifying this response, respondents pointed to the unique structure of HEIs and their unique people. The structure of HEIs was seen to present challenges because they contain a diversity of perspectives and goals within an unusually flat management structure. The people within HEIs were seen to present challenges because they were perceived as being unusually independent, with high levels of expertise and as unwilling to cooperate. In the face of these challenges, respondents emphasised the need for leaders to have a capacity to drive change, to be patient but tenacious and to be good with people.

**Higher education leadership improvement**

A total of 695 respondents (72% of the sample) provided their view on what would improve sector-level leadership within higher education. Response rates were high among all respondent groups, including 70% of HEI respondents, 89% of higher education agency respondents and 84% of governor respondents.

Almost two-thirds of responses to this question were coded as falling within one of five major themes: HR processes (N=122; 28%), looking externally (N=104, 24%), supporting structures (N=86, 20%), the mission of higher education (N= 44, 10%) and diversity (N=73, 17%). These themes are summarised in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Major themes in what respondents think would improve leadership in HEIs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What would improve leadership in HEIs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better HR structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better leadership development structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External people &amp; ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalisation of the mission of HE.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The distribution of these themes as a function of respondent characteristics is summarised in Table 4. Chi-squared analysis revealed that there were significant differences in the presence of these themes as a function of HEI respondent job role, gender and experiences outside the higher education sector. In the case of HEI respondents’ job role, professional services staff were much more likely to suggest that the higher education sector needs to look externally; academic staff were in contrast much more likely to point to the mission of higher education and its diversity. A similar pattern was evidence for gender, in that men were more likely to mention looking externally and women were more likely to mention issues around diversity. Finally, external experience appeared to affect respondents’ tendencies to mention HR and looking externally. In particular, those who had worked outside higher education emphasised looking externally; those who have only ever worked within higher education emphasised better HR processes.

Table 4: Perceptions of leadership improvements as a function of respondent characteristic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent characteristic</th>
<th>Prevalence of response themes in respondent groups (as percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector role (no significant differences)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEI respondents (N=255)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic (N=109)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(χ²(4)=20.44, p&lt;.001)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional services (N=127)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(χ²(4)=17.08, p=.002)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic leadership (N=312)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(χ²(4)=12.38, p=.015)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education agency respondents (N=21)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor respondents (N=23)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (χ²(8)=20.41, p=.009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (N=166)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (N=256)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked outside higher education (χ²(1)=7.07, p=.008)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (N=215)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (N=395)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We provide examples of quotes that fell within each of these themes below.

**Theme 1: Better HR processes**

“Training the people at the top. Choosing leaders for their leadership qualities rather than for their academic achievements. Getting more women in the top positions.” (Respondent 250)

“Selection of leaders is based on criteria around leadership skills, rather than personal preferences and research ‘fame.’” (Respondent 559)

“Not simply asking for academic volunteers to lead when there are no other options, advertising and identifying those that truly want to lead!” (Respondent 371)

“More training for academic colleagues acting as managers in skills such as market intelligence, statistical interpretation and recruitment strategies.” (Respondent 391)

“More sophisticated selection processes. Then better matching of the skills and experiences of particular members of the governing team to the various aspects and demands of the governing role.” (Respondent 100122).

**Theme 2: External people and ideas**

“More movement of leaders into higher education from other sectors. Leadership in HEIs seems confined to a relatively narrow community.” (Respondent 1000)

“More commercial experience (eg outside the sector).” (Respondent 531)

“Learning more from outside – bringing challenge and breadth to our thinking.” (Respondent 130)

“Helpful to have alternative perspectives, developed by a period of management in an environment different from higher education.” (Respondent 163).

While the vast majority of comments in this theme mentioned the utility of sourcing people and ideas from outside higher education, a few respondents expressed contradictory perspectives:

“Less of the government’s market ideology; let the academic leaders lead the sector.” (Respondent 72)

“Ensuring that senior academic leadership positions are held exclusively by individuals with serious academic credentials.” (Respondent 546).

**Theme 3: Leadership development structures**

“More structured systems of career development / alternative pathways to leadership and improved support to get women into leadership roles.” (Respondent 806)

“More focus on supporting middle management to develop leadership skills.” (Respondent 750)

“Management development opportunities earlier on in an academic’s life. More academics wanting to be managers and organisational leaders.” (Respondent 1003)

“Improving the perceived ‘value’ of good leadership and management. In my experience, many academics view these roles as either unnecessary or things done by those who have somehow failed at a research career.” (Respondent 498)

“A greater sense of succession planning, with mapped-out career progression and professional development schemes in institutions.” (Respondent 1004).
Theme 4: The mission of higher education

“Valuing public sector and academic leadership instead of internalising the view that the private sector is better and has all the answers. It has some but not all.” (Respondent 97)

“Not treating it like any other business – it needs more flexibility than that.” (Respondent 154)

“Lobbying more explicitly for our values: that, while balancing the books is important, as a sector we stand for and excel at creativity, connections, and furthering human knowledge. We would be immeasurably poorer without the word of our HE institutions, in ways that have nothing to do with GDP.” (Respondent 173)

“Having top-level managers with a sense of values and some memory of what it's like to be a lecturer. They are too led by money and status.” (Respondent 266).

Theme 5: Diversity

“This does not apply to my particular institution but in the sector as a whole it does appear to be quite elitist at the very top.” (Respondent 509)

“The emphasis on professorial status for recruitment to senior positions. Many of these managers are experts in their fields but that does not necessarily mean they are good leaders.” (Respondent 752)

“Quite a lot, but at the end of the day the first criteria for advancement is the academic CV; that is not always a good thing.” (Respondent 5)

“More gender equality for a start, less nepotism. More professionalisation of jobs that do not need an academic to do it.” (Respondent 704)

“More diversity. How many vice-chancellors are middle-aged, white UK males? I think this would bring a broader range of views to leadership, and I hope it would move us away from the macho 24/7 managerial culture which has been developing in recent times.” (Respondent 843).

Summary

Respondents perceived that leadership in higher education could be improved through a range of institutional structures, particularly the creation of transparent HR processes that do a better job of fostering diversity, a greater openness to cross-sector leadership expertise and the deeper internalisation of the mission of higher education.
The thematic analysis presented in this report reveals a remarkable convergence in perceptions of leadership challenges and desirable leader attributes across the higher education sector. The different demographic and structural groups that made up the sample were, on average, more likely to agree than to disagree (although there were some interesting areas of divergence). It is, of course, important to be mindful of the fact that respondents had all participated in a previous Leadership Foundation programme, and that this shared educational background may explain some of the observed consensus. Nonetheless, the conclusions and recommendations emerging from this analysis do highlights themes that are likely to have broad relevance to any individuals and institutions that are seeking to improve sector leadership.

Leveraging challenge for change
The higher education sector is perceived to present its leaders with a number of substantial challenges. These challenges exist at the level of the sector (diminishing resources, sector changes and global competition), institutions (performance, research capability and institutional identity) and the people within them (attracting and retaining high quality students and staff). These challenges have been well documented in the higher education literature, and present real threats to the long-term viability of existing leadership strategies — if not individuals HEIs.

However, the fact that this sample had a good understanding of these challenges does highlight a point of leverage for sector leaders who are seeking to enact change. In particular, it has been argued that one of the major reasons that many change initiatives fail is that leaders are not able to convince organisational members of the need for change. Leaders who are able to link their proposed change initiatives to the challenges that emerged in this report are likely to find that their suggestions are more readily accepted and embraced. All else being equal, this increases the likelihood that their initiatives will be successful.

Understanding effective leadership
Respondents explained effective leadership in the higher education sector by referring to three ideas that are core to the existing leadership literature: the ideas that effective leadership results from a particular constellation of individual attributes, a particular style of relating to others and a leader’s capacity to represent the group that they are trying to lead. Here too, there was a reasonable degree of commonality in these ideas across the sample. Consequently, members of higher education institutions who are seeking to improve others’ perceptions of their leadership would do well to attend to these ideas.
Respondents were most likely to say that they were looking for the right personal attributes and skills in leaders who are at the top of their institution. These attributes included having the assertiveness and competence to drive change, tempered by the social and moral concerns that help to deliver socially good outcomes. Although the emphasis on the former agentic attributes — assertiveness and competence — is not surprising, the emphasis on the latter communal attributes — warmth and morality — is perhaps more so. That is, there is a general assumption that in task related settings, like organisations, people’s perceptions of others are primarily based on agentic attributes that relate directly to task performance. This analysis, therefore, suggests that this assumption is not warranted. It is not enough for leaders in higher education institutions to exhibit competence in the execution of their leadership tasks; they also need to publically demonstrate an awareness of and orientation towards the moral dimensions and responsibilities of their role.

When it came to evaluating line managers, respondents were more likely to say that they were looking for the right style of relating than the right personal attributes. This style of relating consisted of a consultative and collaborative bottom-up approach, which respondents explicitly contrasted from an authoritative, top-down approach. This finding aligns with the large body of research that has shown that leaders who treat their followers considerately are generally more effective than leaders who are less considerate. The strong emphasis on consultative approaches to leadership in this sample may relate to the relatively flat management structure in HEIs, which mean that in this sector leaders depend on interpersonal influence to a greater extent than in more traditional corporations. It is clearly important that HEIs ensure that leadership training includes sufficient emphasis on the behaviours that allow leaders to exert influence on other organisational members.

Supporting external leaders

While a number of respondents discussed the benefits that may come from recruiting leaders from more commercial contexts, the above findings are particularly relevant for these external leaders. That is, these findings suggest that leadership behaviours that are effective in other contexts may not be effective in this one. HEIs need to be aware that leaders who have no previous experience in the higher education sector may need particular support as they transition into it.

The requirement that leaders are seen to represent those they are seeking to lead is also particularly important for external leaders. These leaders need to show that they have a deep understanding of the higher education sector and have a strong belief in its social mission. Where leaders are trying to influence academic staff, and those who have never worked outside higher education, they need to establish some academic credibility.

Improving leadership structures

Respondents felt that leadership within the sector could be enhanced by improving a range of institutional structures and initiatives. This included a focus on the creation of transparent HR processes that do a better job of fostering diversity, a greater openness to cross-sector leadership expertise, and the deeper internalisation of the mission of higher education. In the face of the challenges that face HEIs, it is imperative that institutions make active efforts to foster the leadership skills that are required now, and in the future, and that they look to do this for internal staff and those with cross-sector expertise.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1: BACKGROUND TO HELMs

The Leadership Foundation commissioned the Higher Education Leadership and Management Survey (HELMs). The survey aims were as follows.

- Discover the key current (and emerging) issues and challenges for leaders in higher education in the UK.
- Produce a report and analysis of findings which can help leaders and future leaders in UK higher education as they reflect on leadership, governance, management/strategic issues.
- Build evidence to inform the development of the Leadership Foundation’s strategy, programmes and events.
- Create a baseline of information about the leaders whom we engage with that can be followed up with future surveys (approximately every two years).

Methodological approach

A project group was set up, comprising Helen Goreham and Dr Mark Pegg from the Leadership Foundation, Dr Fiona Dent and Viki Holton from Ashridge and Professor Richard Bolden of the University of the West of England. This group collaboratively designed, refined and published the survey as described below.

The questions from the 2013 Ashridge Management Index (AMI) were taken as the starting point for developing the new survey – it was decided that developing HELMs out of an existing, large-scale survey would allow some comparison between responses to HELMs and to the AMI, and encourage some to engage with leadership and management issues that are broader than the higher education context. The AMI questions were amended to take into account the different context of higher education, with some sections added and others removed or changed to ensure they were appropriate and relevant for those working in the higher education sector.

An ‘identifier’ question was placed at the beginning of the survey, which asked respondents to identify as ‘working in an HEI or higher education college’, being a governor in an HEI, ‘a student at an HEI’ or from ‘an HE agency or other organisation’. The Leadership Foundation was interested in the views of the different communities represented on its database about leadership and the culture within HEIs for example, but in terms of asking about line management, communication with the senior leadership team etc, some questions would need to be reworded if they were to be appropriate for these different groups. Hence, three shorter versions of the survey were created to ensure higher education governors, students and those working in higher education agencies had the opportunity to answer questions that were directly relevant to their roles. Those who identified as being employed within an
HEI would be directed to the (main) institutional survey questions, and the others would be automatically linked through to the relevant sub-survey. A summary of the surveys created is as follows:

- **Institutional survey** – for those working in an institution in any role. The survey had eight sections, and took 15–20 minutes to complete. Section titles were: Your role and responsibilities; Your views about higher education; Experiences within your own institution; Learning and development; Motivation; Developing future leaders; Personal and equal opportunities information; Project follow-on.

- **Governors survey** – for governors in HEIs. This comprised seven sections and took 10–15 minutes to complete. The section titles were the same as those for the institutional survey except for the exclusion of Motivation. The questions remained the same where possible, although in some cases slight adjustments were made to ensure appropriateness, and a number of questions were removed altogether.

- **Higher education agency/other organisation survey** – for those employed within agency bodies or institutions, or working in the higher education sector but not in an institution. This comprised eight sections, where ‘Experiences within your own institution’ was replaced by ‘Perspectives on leadership’. Otherwise, the sections were the same as for the main survey, although questions differed slightly as with the other sub-surveys).

- **Survey for students** – for students currently based within an institution. The survey sections were the same as for the HE agency survey and it took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

The first draft of each survey was uploaded to Qualtrics by the Ashridge team and sent to a pilot group. The group included 20 individuals representing a range of different UK HEIs, academic and professional roles and different levels of leadership (for example a vice-chancellor, a number of professors, an organisational development manager) as well as individuals from each of the organisations / institutions represented in the project group who had not so far been involved in designing the questions.

Feedback from the pilot group led to a number of changes to the questions and layout of the surveys and the resulting final versions were uploaded to the Qualtrics website, hosted by Ashridge.

The Leadership Foundation emailed people who have engaged with the Foundation in some way over the last 10 years (ie, through programmes, events, consultancy etc) and for whom an active email address was held. This sample was invited to visit the HELMs site on Qualtrics and to complete the survey. A total of 7,375 contacts (from the existing Leadership Foundation database) were emailed between April and May 2014. To encourage individuals to complete a survey, all those who included their email address on the final page were entered into a prize draw to win an iPad Mini26.
HELMs responses
There were 848 responses to the institutional survey, 67 for the governors survey, 54 for the higher education agencies survey and one for the student survey. In total, then, the response rate was 13% (970 from 7,375).

The Ashridge team undertook a high-level analysis of the quantitative findings for each survey that included overall response numbers and percentages for each question.

All qualitative and quantitative data results were captured in SPSS and Excel by Ashridge and passed to the Leadership Foundation to undertake further analysis.

HELMs project outputs
The following pieces of analysis, based on various elements of the HELMs data, and using a range of methods to analyse and describe the quantitative and qualitative data from the institutional, governor and higher education agency surveys were commissioned by the Leadership Foundation:

- **Leading higher education** *(Dr Kim Peters and Professor Michelle Ryan)*
- **Motivating and developing leaders in higher education** *(Dr Kim Peters and Professor Michelle Ryan)*
- **Leadership and work–life balance** *(Professor Michelle Ryan and Dr Kim Peters)*
- **Governors’ views of their institutions, leadership and governance** *(Professor David Greatbatch)*

Given that there was only one response from a student, and this would not have been enough to draw any broader conclusions about the student perspective, the Foundation did not include this one response in any of the analyses and instead focused on the institutional, governors’ and higher education agency / other organisation surveys when analysing and describing the findings from HELMs27.
APPENDIX 2: MORE DETAIL ON THE SURVEY SAMPLE

Institution and institutional tenure
Almost half of HEI respondents (N=390) and all but five governor respondents provided the name of their institution. (Only seven agency respondents provided the name of their agency, so we do not provide further information for this group of respondents).

There was evidence of wide institutional coverage. One hundred and thirty-four unique institutions were named by HEI respondents.

As can be seen in Figure A.1 below, a sizeable proportion of the sample had worked for their institution for five or more years. However, there were differences between the respondent sub-groups. In particular, while HEI and agency staff were most likely to have worked more than 10 years, governors were unlikely to have belonged to their institution’s board for that length of time. Most governors had belonged to their board for between one and five years.

Figure A.1: Distribution of institutional tenure across the sample

Gender and age
The sample had a high representation of women, who made up close to 60% of respondents. However, as Figure A.2 shows, men and women were unequally distributed across the three groups of respondents. While women made up around 63% of HEI respondents, they only made up 25% of governor respondents. Agency respondents were more equally distributed in terms of gender.
More information is provided about the role positions occupied by HEI respondents in Report 1.

While the majority of the sample was over the age of 50, the different respondent groups again had different age profiles. In particular, as can be seen in Figure A.3, although substantial minorities of HEI and agency respondents were younger than 50 years, only two governor respondents were below the age of 50.

### Job roles

HEI respondents were asked to provide further information about their job role within their institution. Just over half of these respondents indicated that they held a role in professional services (52%; see Figure A.4). The number of HEI respondents whose role was academic (7%) or involved academic leadership (13%) was smaller. However, a substantial number of HEI respondents reported holding both academic and academic leadership positions (26%). In contrast, combining professional services and either of the academic roles was rather rare, making up 2% of this respondent group.28
HEI and agency respondents were asked to nominate any additional leadership responsibilities that they had over and above their job role. Additional leadership responsibilities were common. Only 8% of HEI respondents and 28% of agency respondents indicated that they had no additional leadership responsibilities. Further, the majority of respondents who did have additional leadership responsibilities indicated that they had more than one additional responsibility (82% of HEI respondents and 68% of agency respondents with additional responsibilities reported two or more). These figures point to a highly engaged sample of respondents, who are perhaps more willing than most to take leadership responsibilities within their own HEIs.

Table A.1 summarises the most prevalent additional leadership responsibilities for HEI and agency respondents. (Note that percentages exceed 100% because of multiple responsibilities.) Among HEI respondents, line-management, budgetary and committee responsibilities were most common. Among agency respondents, external committee, institutional lead and governor responsibilities were most common.

Table A1: HEI and agency respondents' additional leadership responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership responsibility</th>
<th>HEI respondents (% group)</th>
<th>Agency respondents (% group)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Line manager</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget holder</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional committee</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External higher education committee</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University senior leadership team</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional lead</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kim Peters is Lecturer in Organisational Psychology at the University of Queensland, Australia. Her research focuses on the social consequences of daily conversations and social influence processes (including leadership and role modelling) in social and organisational settings. Her work has been published in leading journals in social psychology and management science, including Psychological Bulletin, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, and Journal of Management.

Michelle Ryan is Professor of Social and Organisational Psychology at the University of Exeter, UK, and (part-time) Professor of Diversity at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands. Her research lies in the nexus of social and organisational psychology, and tends to focus on the under-representation of women (and other minority groups) in the workplace. Michelle works closely with organisations and her research influences both academic theory and organisational practice.
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