THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Exploring the impact of organisational and environmental factors on the behaviour of English universities

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by

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The thesis explores how environmental and organisational factors impact the organisational behaviour of English universities. Drawing on post-war higher education literature the organisational characteristics of universities and the environmental pressures they have been subject to over the last fifty years are described. A case study of an English university covering the same period was undertaken to illustrate how the organisational and environmental changes faced by the sector affected a particular organisation and how the way it responded to external pressures changed during that time. The case study was analysed according to a theoretical framework, drawn from Neo-Institutionalism and Resource Dependency theory, which seeks to understand how the internal and external contexts of organisations interact and influence the way in which they respond to pressure to change.

The results of the literature review and case study demonstrated that, as institutional organisations, universities are primarily concerned with achieving legitimacy (rather than maximising resources) and that for cultural and structural reasons they are inherently resistant to changing their strategies and behaviours. The case study results indicated that traditional universities are likely to be prompted to change when compelled to respond to external/environmental pressures. When faced with significant environmental pressure they may begin to adopt behaviours associated with productionOrganisations which challenge and erode academic autonomy and the traditional university model of ‘academic self-government’, but can result in improved performance in terms of revenue generation and institutional outcomes in Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) reviews and research selectivity exercises.

The results of the case study informed the development of a model that can be used to plot the organisational-type/level of environmental dependence of organisations and predict the behavioral traits that they are likely to adopt.
List of Tables and Figures

Tables

Table 1.1: Characteristics of production and institutional organisations 21
Table 2.1: Chain of Evidence 33
Table 2.2: Characteristics of interview participants 34
Table 3.1: Changes in the Higher Education Student Population 1960s-2000s 45
Table 3.2: Subjects undertaken by University/HE Students 45
Table 4.1: Statistical Information Relating to the CSU 1960-2009 62
Table 4.2: CSU Financial Indicators 1960/61 – 2008/09 79
Table 4.3: Change in Sources of Revenue 2001/2 to 2009/10 82
Table 4.4: Teaching Quality Scores for the CSU 1996 to 2001 87
Table 4.5: 1992-2008 RAE Outcomes for CSU 90
Table 5.1: Undergraduate intakes to Interview Respondents Departments 98
Table 5.2: Staff with research outputs by year 105
Table 6.1: Number of Staff Leaving and Joining the CSU, 1982-1984 Annual Reports 119
Table 6.2: Standing, merged, discontinued and new subject areas at the CSU 121
Table 6.3: CSU HEROBC, NIT and HEIF Allocations 2000-2008 131
Table 6.4: CSU WP allocations 2000-2008 133
Table 7.1: Summary of RDT and N-IT Behaviours 152

Figures

Figure 1.1: Model of Organizational Type and Environmental Dependence 21
Figure 4.1: Growth in Student Numbers at CSU 1960-2009 73
Figure 4.2: Campus Plan 1927 74
Figure 4.3: Campus in 2009 with Original Boundaries 74
Figure 7.1: CSU position on the Organisational Type and Environmental Dependence Model 147
# Contents

**Introduction**  
i. Introducing the Research  
ii. Research Questions  
iii. Structure of the Thesis  

**Chapter 1: Situating the Research within Higher Education Studies and Organisational Research**  
i. Literature on Higher Education  
ii. Employing Organisational Theory in a Study of Higher Education  
iii. Theoretical Framework for the Case Study  
iv. Conclusions  

**Chapter 2: Research Design and Methods**  
i. The Researcher  
ii. Research Design  
iii. Methods  
iv. The Research Process  
v. Robustness of the Case Study  
vi. Ethical Issues  
vii. Limitations of the Research  

**Chapter 3: The Environmental and Organisational Context of Universities 1960-2010**  
i. The Higher Education Environment  
ii. The Organisational Characteristics of Universities  
iii. Using the Contextual Information to Answer the Research Questions  

**Chapter 4: Profile of a University**  
i. Overview  
ii. The Organisational Characteristics of the CSU  
iii. The Impact of Expansion, Funding Cuts and Regulation  
iv. Summary of Findings  

**Chapter 5: Teaching and Research at the Case Study University**  
i. Teaching at the CSU  
ii. Research at the CSU  
iii. Summary of Findings  

**Chapter 6: Case Study University Response to Critical Incidents**  
i. 1981 Funding Cuts  
ii. Departmental Closures and Restructuring  
iii. Special Funding Initiatives  
iv. Summary of Findings  

**Chapter 7: Analysis of the Case Study**  
i. How Independent is the CSU from its Environment and did its Level of Dependency Change Over Time?  
ii. Where is the CSU Situated on the Institutional-Production Organisational Continuum and did its Position Change Over Time?  
iii. Did Environmental and/or Organisational Factors Prompt the CSU to Change its Behaviour?  
iv. What Behaviours did the CSU Adopt in Response to the Pressures to Change and the Critical Incidents Identified in the Case Study?  
v. Results of the Analysis of the Case Study  

**Chapter 8: Findings and Conclusions**  
i. What are the Environmental Pressures on Universities?  
ii. How have the Organisational Cultures and Structures of Universities Changed over the Last Fifty Years?  
iii. To What Extent is the Organisational Behaviour of Universities Driven by Environmental and/or Organisational Factors?  
iv. Implications of the Research  

**Postscript**  

**Bibliography**  

**Case Study References**
Introduction

i. Introducing the Research

...the relationship between higher education and the state has changed, along with the overall structure, governance and administration of higher education, its resource base and its scale...

Henkel, 2000, p x

As Henkel indicates, the last fifty years have been a period of significant change in higher education (HE) in England. The thesis seeks to examine the changes that have occurred and to consider how they have impacted universities. Rather than focusing, as much of the HE literature does, on how government policy has affected the range and nature of HE provision during this period, a broader array of environmental and organisational factors will be explored and their impact on universities, as a distinctive organisational form, will be considered. In particular the issue of whether universities behaviour is driven by external (environmental) pressures or occurs as a result of internal (organisational) forces will be considered.

An analysis of the environmental factors impacting universities from 1960-2010 will be provided and a description of how traditional academic cultures and governance structures have been challenged and eroded during this period will then be given. A theoretical framework based on two strands of organisational theory, neo-institutionalism and resource dependence theory, will be developed. A case study of a medium-sized ‘traditional’¹ university established in the 1920s will be presented and the behaviours demonstrated by that organisation will be analysed within the context of the neo-institutional/resource dependence framework.

The analysis of the case study will explore the extent to which the environment of a particular organisation and its responses to it evolved during the latter half of the 20th century/beginning of 21st century. The case study will show how the organisational behaviour of the university changed in response to specific external pressures and how, in doing so, it became more effective at responding to its environment. This analysis will be of

¹ ‘Traditional’ universities are defined here as the group of 37 that existed prior to 1980 (Kogan, 1984 pp62-65). The grouping is broadly consistent with the set of universities that is commonly referred to as ‘pre-1992’.
particular interest given the current environmental uncertainty within the HE sector as it suggests that the strategies and behaviours which universities adopt will depend on their particular organisational histories.

An overview of the research questions and the structure of the thesis is given here.

ii. Research Questions

The purpose of the thesis is to understand the impact of environmental and organisational factors on the behaviour of English universities. In this section, three research questions that address different aspects of the central question will be identified along with a brief description of how they will be addressed within the thesis.

RQ1: What are the external pressures on universities?

The first research question sets out to establish the environmental context in which universities in England have operated during the last fifty years. As the Henkel quote included above indicates, the HE environment in England has changed dramatically in recent decades in terms of scale, finances and the relationship between universities and the state.

A review of primary and secondary sources will be undertaken in order to identify the major changes that occurred within the HE environment and to show how these increased the level of external pressure on universities. The case study will in turn show how these sector-level pressures impacted a particular organisation and explore whether they were welcome (consistent with what the university was doing or wanted to do) or represented an undesirable external attempt to control its behaviour.

RQ2: How have organisational cultures and governance structures of universities changed over the last fifty years?

The second research question seeks to understand the changes that have occurred in terms of the internal culture and governance structures of universities over the last fifty years. As the quote included at the top indicates, in addition to the transformations that have
occurred in the external HE environment, the sector has witnessed a number of significant changes in terms of the internal structures and governance of universities.

Although the literature considering the organisational context of universities is more limited, a review of some key texts that describe the type of structures and cultures that were prevalent in universities at the beginning of the period covered by the thesis will be undertaken. Details of how those structures and cultures came to be challenged and eroded will also be provided. The case study will illustrate whether the academic culture and governance structures of a particular university were consistent with those described in the literature review.

**RQ3: To what extent is the organisational behaviour of universities driven by environmental and/or organisational factors?**

The third research question seeks to understand the extent to which the organisational behaviour of a university is impacted by environmental/external and organisational/internal factors.

In order to address this question a theoretical framework based on two strands of organisational theory will be developed. Resource dependence theory (RDT) focuses on the way in which organisations respond to the environment within which they operate, whereas neo-institutional theorists (N-IT) argue that the behaviour of organisations, such as universities, is driven by powerful ‘institutional’ forces. These two approaches will be combined to produce a set of analytical questions that will be used to analyse the findings of the case study.

The case study will include details of a number of critical incidents that occurred and will identify a number of explicit attempts by external bodies to control the University during the 1980s-2000s. The RDT/N-IT analysis questions will be used to determine the nature of the pressure on the university in these incidents (whether it was predominantly internal or external) and whether the behaviours it adopted in response to them conformed to those predicted by RDT (economically or technically rational) or N-IT (seeking to preserve/enhance legitimacy). The results of the analysis of the case study will show what prompted the university to change and how what behaviours it adopted in doing so.
Central Research Question: To what extent do organisational and/or environmental factors impact the behaviour of English universities?

The results of the review of primary and secondary sources will answer RQs 1 and 2 by providing the general environmental and organisational context within which English universities have been operating in over the last fifty years.

The results of the case study will show the effects of environmental and organisational pressures on a specific university, and how it responded to those (answering RQ3). The use of the N-IT/RDT framework to analyse the case study provides a mechanism for considering how the results of the single case may be applicable to the organisational behaviour of other organisations within the higher education sector.

iii. Structure of the Thesis

In the first chapter a review of the two strands of literature (HE and organisational theory) that are relevant to the thesis will be presented along with an explanation of how this work will contribute to each of these. The RDT/N-IT theoretical framework will also be developed here and a number of questions which will be used to analyse the case study later on will be presented.

In the second chapter details of the research design and the methods used to undertake the literature review that provides the context for the thesis and the case study which provides the empirical component will be presented. The literature review element (context chapter) was compiled using historical analysis approach, drawing on primary and secondary sources to provide a narrative of the key higher education trends affecting universities over the last fifty years. In the case study a range of methods including archival analysis, semi-structured interviews and critical incident technique were employed in order to describe a single university and how responded to the external pressures identified in the context chapter. Consideration will also be given in chapter 2 to the ethical implications of conducting organisational research in one’s place of work and to the limitations of the study.

In the third chapter the results of the review of primary and secondary sources described above will be given, providing the environmental and organisational context of the HE sector
throughout the period 1960-2010. Key themes such as the expansion of the HE sector, changes in state funding and the increased regulation of teaching and research activity will be explored along with a description of the distinctive organisational characteristics of traditional English universities.

The results of the case study will be presented in the following three chapters. Chapter 4 includes a profile of the university showing how it grew and changed over the fifty-year period. In chapter 5 the way in which the university’s core activities (teaching and research) evolved is described and in chapter 6 the organisational response to a number of critical incidents is presented.

In chapter 7 the results of the case study will be analysed using the RDT/N-IT framework developed in the first chapter.

In chapter 8 the three research questions will be explored and the findings of the thesis will be presented. The responses to RQs 1 and 2 will be drawn from the source material presented in chapter 3 as well as relevant findings from the case study. The response to RQ 3 will be drawn from the analysis undertaken in chapter 7.
Chapter 1: Situating the Research within Higher Education Studies and Organisational Research

The research presented in this thesis emerges from two distinct but complementary academic disciplines; higher education (HE) studies and organisational research. In this chapter, the relevance of the work to the higher education studies and organisational research fields will be explained and the theoretical framework that underpins the empirical component of the thesis will be developed.

English universities are private organisations that are self-governing and have historically enjoyed a significant degree of autonomy. HE literature over the last fifty years has documented an increase in pressure on universities from external sources, particularly in the form of state intervention. A central concern of this thesis is to understand how these external pressures impact the behaviour of English universities and to explore the extent to which traditional university structures and cultures have acted as a means of resistance to external pressure for change.

The first half of this chapter gives an overview of the relevant areas of HE literature and describes how the research presented in this thesis will contribute to it.

i Literature on Higher Education

Review of Relevant Higher Education Literature

The literature on Higher Education (HE) is multi-dimensional, covering a wide range of academic disciplines including pedagogical studies, historical analysis, policy research, sociology, social psychology, management studies and social policy (see Higher Education and Higher Education Quarterly). This study draws on two strands from within HE literature; historical analysis of the relationship between universities and the state (Berdahl 1959, Carswell 1985, Salter and Tapper 1994, Kogan and Hanney 2000, Tapper 2007 and Shattock 2008) and literature concerned with university governance and culture (Halsey and Trow 1971, Eustace and Moodie 1974, Henkel 2000 and Paradeise et al 2009). In this section
these two strands of HE literature will be reviewed and an explanation of how this work contributes to the field will be given.

The literature describing the evolution of the relationship between universities and the state over the last fifty years will be used in chapter 3 to show how the HE environment changed during the period 1960-2010. Berdahl’s *British Universities and the State*, (1959) provides an overview of the evolution of this relationship dating from the foundation of the ancient universities up to the start of the period covered by the thesis. The period 1960 to 1980 is covered by Carswell’s *Government and the Universities in Britain*, (1985) with the later decades being covered in *The State and Higher Education* (Salter and Tapper, 1994), *Reforming Higher Education* (Kogan and Hanney, 2000) and *The Governance of British Higher Education: The Struggle for Policy Control* (Tapper, 2007). These accounts show how higher education in England evolved from being a small elite sector with generous state funding and limited external controls to a mass system with decreasing public funding, costs transferring to students, increased diversity and greater state intervention. The analysis presented in chapter 3 will show how during this period universities went from being relatively independent of the environment in which they operated (autonomous, well resourced and limited state intervention) to becoming increasingly penetrated and controlled by it (as a result of expansion, decreasing resources and increased regulation).

The emphasis in the literature described above is on the top-down forces which have impacted the governance of English universities over the last fifty years. The literature covering the internal structures of universities is less comprehensive but a number of key texts from the early and latter stages of the period covered by the thesis are of relevance. In *The British Academics* and *Power and Authority in British Universities* Halsey and Trow (1971) and Moodie and Eustace (1974) describe the traditional governance structures that were the norm in English universities until the 1970s and explain some of the emerging pressures on them to change. The results of their analysis are drawn on in the second half of chapter 3, along with more recent accounts of how management structures evolved in the subsequent decades (Van Vught 1995 and Henkel 2000), to show how the governance structures within universities became more managerial and how traditional academic cultures were challenged over the period.

In reviewing the literature on the HE environment and on the organisational characteristics of universities a number of distinctive features are apparent. First, compared to other
strands of social and educational policy the literature on higher education (though not the works referred to above) is frequently unempirical and often polemical in nature. For example books such as *McDonaldization of Higher Education* (Hayes and Wynyard, 2002), *Perestroika in the Universities* (Kedourie, 1989), *University to Uni* (Stevens, 2004) and *The Assault on Universities* (Bailey and Freeman eds, 2011) appear to be largely based on the observations of the writers rather than on a thorough review of the existing literature or the results of an empirical investigation. Although the writers of these works are clearly very knowledgeable about universities, the analyses they produce does not conform to the standard format of academic publications. The aim of this thesis is to undertake a thorough analysis of the relevant literature (in chapter 3) and to consider those findings alongside the results of a methodologically robust case study (chapters 4-7).

The second distinctive feature of HE literature is that, with a few exceptions, it has tended to be descriptive, with relatively little use made of relevant social science or organisational theory. While providing a useful narrative of the key historical developments within English higher education, writers such as Berdahl, Carswell, Kogan and Hanney, and Moodie and Eustace do not present the reader with a theoretical framework with which to interpret the events they describe or to relate them to broader trends in the social sciences. The aim here is to emulate works such as Salter and Tapper’s *the State and Higher Education* (1994) and Gornitzka’s 1991 study of the impact of government policy on HE organisations, both of which combined the results of empirical research with relevant theory enabling the results to be viewed within the context of broader historical, organisational and political trends.

The final distinctive aspect of the HE literature is that the focus has predominantly been on the impact of state intervention in higher education. Much of the literature describes how, during the period in question, universities have increasingly been constrained by state action and asserts that their autonomy has been eroded (Tapper 2007). The focus on top-down policy pressures on universities has meant that less attention has been paid to bottom-up organisationally driven forces which have had a stabilising influence on the sector during a period of significant political change. According to Brown “whilst it is certainly true that the extent of government intervention in the universities has increased, they retain a significant degree of autonomy” (2009i, p 316). He argues that much of the literature on the governance of HE overstates the effect of external pressures on universities and that in some cases, for example the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), universities have
themselves been complicit in bringing about these pressures. In the analysis undertaken here both the top-down and bottom-up pressures impacting universities will be considered.

While most of the research referred to above focuses either on the implications of organisational or environmental (mostly state) forces on universities, a small number of authors have considered the inter-play of both the top-down and bottom-up pressures operating within higher education. Shattock (2008) explores the increasingly interventionist nature of government policy and concludes that in the post-war period higher education went from being self-governed to being state-governed and in a study of organisational change in European Universities Gornitzka et al conclude that:

...though national government policies and programmes stimulate, force or reflect organisational changes in universities and colleges, the nature of these changes is determined more by organisational characteristics than by the nature and intentions of the policies and programmes in question.

Gornitzka et al, 1999, p77

The aim of the thesis is to contribute to this particular strand within higher education literature in order to better understand the effect of external/environmental pressures on universities, to see how they respond to these pressures and how they adapt their behaviour as a result of them.

Use of HE Literature within The thesis

Relevant information from the two strands of higher education literature referred to above along with some original source material will presented in the context chapter (chapter 3) and will contribute to the answers to the first two research questions:

RQ1: What are the external pressures on universities?

RQ2: How have organisational cultures and governance structures of universities changed over the last fifty years?

The literature on the relationship between HE and the state will provide the explanation of the external/environmental pressures on universities over the period, and the organisational
literature will be used to describe what the traditional academic cultures and structures were and how they were challenged over the period.

ii Employing Organisational Theory in a Study of Higher Education

Organisational theory is “a field of study that investigates the impact that individuals, groups and structure have on behaviour within organisations” (Robbins and Judge, 2007, p9). The analysis of the case study presented in the thesis will draw on two strands of organisational theory; resource dependence (RDT) and neo-institutionalism (N-IT). While RDT focuses on environmental factors to explain organisational behaviour, N-IT seeks to explain change (or non-change) in the behaviour of certain types of organisations by focusing on the internal structures and cultures of the organisation.

Rather than seeking to test the argument that either environmental or organisational factors are the more important determinant of organisational behaviour in universities, this work assumes that both factors may be significant and seeks to understand the interplay between them within the higher education context.

In the following sections an overview of the RDT and N-IT perspectives will be presented and an explanation of how they will be combined to form the theoretical framework for the analysis of the organisational behaviour of the Case Study University (CSU) in chapter 7 will be provided.

Resource Dependence Theory

RDT is underpinned by the assumption that organisations do not exist in vacuums and that they have the ability to act flexibly and adapt to the environment in which they operate. RDT was first proposed by Pfeffer and Salancik in The External Control of Organisations. In this book, they described two of the key themes of RDT as being; the importance of the environment on the behaviour of organisations and the ability of organisations to adopt various strategies in order to limit their resource dependence (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978 and 2003).
The first of these themes, the importance of environmental factors is central to the RDT approach. The main argument here is that organisations need resources in order to survive and that they are dependent on their environment for those resources. In order for organisations to survive they have to be responsive to their environment. In order to be successful they need to find ways to minimise their dependence on environmental factors and maximise their resources.

The second theme relates to the way in which organisations react when they are constrained by their environment. According to RDT, organisations have the ability to adopt particular strategies that enable them to minimise their resource dependence and enhance their autonomy. In The External Control of Organisations (1978) a range of organisational responses to environmental pressures are proposed including compliance, adaptation or avoidance. These will be described in more detail the section below, where the combined RDT/N-IT theoretical framework is developed.

In summary, RDT provides a theoretical framework which provides a rationale for what the purpose of organisations is, an explanation of why organisations change their behaviour and a description of the ways in which organisations are able to respond to changes in their environment.

**Neo-Institutional Theory**

Neo-institutional theory (N-IT) focuses on the importance of the social structures and cultural characteristics of organisations in determining their behaviour rather than on external/ environmental pressures. A distinction is made between organisations, “collectivities oriented to the pursuit of relatively specific goals” (Scott 2007, p28), and institutions, which are defined as “multifaceted, durable social structures made up of symbolic elements, social activities, and material resources. Institutions exhibit distinctive properties: They are relatively resistant to change” (Scott, 2008, p 48). The distinction between different types of organisations made here is important because N-IT is only concerned with explaining the characteristics and behaviours of institutional-organisations, unlike RDT which makes no attempt to distinguish between different types of organisations. The definitions of the terms organisation and institution presented here will be used in the thesis in order to distinguish institutional-organisations (a detailed definition of these is given below) from other types of organisations.
Where RDT argues for an economic rationale for organisational behaviour N-IT proposes that institutional behaviour is driven by taken for granted assumptions about what constitutes appropriate and acceptable conduct based on the cultural norms and social structures of the organisation (Scott, 2007). Oliver describes the difference in approaches of RDT and N-IT as follows:

According to institutional theory, firms make normatively rational choices that are shaped by the social context of the firm, whereas the resource-based view suggests that firms make economically rational choices that are shaped by the economic context of the firm"

Oliver, 1997, p700

N-IT theorists argue that the normatively rational choices made within institutional organisations tend to be driven by a desire to maximize the legitimacy (rather than the economic efficiency) of the organisation. They also argue that in order to achieve legitimacy, institutions will adopt cultural approaches and organisational forms that are consistent with other institutions they identify with and perceive as having legitimacy (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, Scott 2007). Scott and Meyer (1991) argue that institutional organisations exist within societal sectors, which they define as being collections of organisations operating in the same domain and which have similar functions, customers, funding sources and competitors. According to them, organisational characteristics including cultures, structures and behaviours, tend to be common across institutional societal sectors and legitimacy is achieved through conformity to the particular rules and cultures operating within the sector.

DiMaggio and Powell describe the process by which organisations within a particular sector become more homogeneous as institutional isomorphism. According to them, there are a number of different types of isomorphic forces which they categorize as normative, coercive and mimetic (1983). Normative isomorphism occurs in highly professionalised institutions and is driven by the training and socialisation of individuals in a particular profession and the existence of networks and groupings which exist across organisational boundaries and encourage particular behaviours and structures to spread across organisations. Coercive isomorphism results from external pressure being applied to an organisation, for example the introduction of new legislation or regulatory requirements, which compel an organisation to alter its behaviour in some way. Mimetic isomorphism occurs when an
organisation faces difficulty or uncertainty and elects to adopt the behaviours of other organisations which are perceived to be successful at addressing the circumstances faced (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

While Powell and DiMaggio’s theories about institutional isomorphism explain what prompts institutional-organisations to adapt their behaviour in given circumstances, another key feature of N-IT is the argument that institutions are generally stable and resistant to change (DiMaggio and Powell 1991 p4, Zucker 1991 p102, Oliver 1991 p151). One explanation for institutional-organisations resistance to change, is that they tend to be complex organisations, both in terms of their composition and the purposes they serve, making reform more complicated to achieve (Matthews, 1986). Another reason given is that they are frequently populated by relatively powerful groups of employees whose loyalty may be divided between the organisation they work for and the professional affiliations they have outside that organisation. These external loyalties may make them resistant to organisational change which they perceive to be a conflict with the interests of their professional grouping (Henkel, 2000). A further reason why institutional-organisations tend to be resistant to change is that they are more likely to have devolved and dispersed decision-making structures (Kogan and Kogan, 1984) which mean that a large number of people have to be involved in, and agree to, changes taking place. According to Matthews:

...there are inherent reasons why it should be more difficult to make changes where other people’s consent is needed than where they can be made by individual fiat.

Previous arrangements have to be undone, possibly arrangements that were arrived at after long bargaining with many people. Trust has to be recreated.

Matthews, 1986, p913

It has been argued that the tendency of institutional-organisations to be resistant to change is one of the reasons why they and their ways of doing things are stable and endure for long periods without being overly affected by political whims or short term circumstances (March and Olson, 1989). Kerr notes that 70 out of 85 institutions he identified that were founded prior to 1520 and still in existence in the 1980s were universities... “these seventy universities however are still in the same locations with some of the same buildings with professors and students doing much the same things and with the same governance carried on in much the same ways” (1982, p152).
N-IT provides an alternative account to RDT of what prompts organisations to either change their behaviour, or to resist pressures to change. N-IT argues that institutional-organisations with stable values, interests, structures and resources tend to resist pressure to change and when they do change their behaviour are more likely to be prompted to do so in response to the isomorphic pressures described above rather than for economically rational reasons.

**Combining Resource Dependence and Neo-Institutional Theory**

Although RDT and NI-T emerge from two distinct strands of organisational theory, a number of writers have demonstrated that there is congruence between them and have argued that organisational analysis is most effective when elements from relevant approaches are considered together (Scott and Davis 2007, Hall and Taylor 1996 and Oliver 1991). In the next section, the common and divergent assumptions underpinning RDT and N-IT will be considered and a number of analytical questions drawing on complementary aspects of the two approaches will be presented. These questions will underpin the analysis of the case study in chapter 7, providing a theoretical framework for the exploration of the impact of environmental and organisational factors on the behaviour of the case study university (CSU).

RDT and N-IT share a number of common assumptions including, the importance of the context in which an organisation operates (albeit with different focus on the external and internal environments), the view that organisational choice is constrained by external pressures and that, in order to survive, organisations have to respond to the pressures they face (Oliver 1991). Where the approaches diverge is in the relative importance each places on environmental and organisational factors in terms of what prompts organisations to act and the behaviours they adopt when they respond to pressure to change. By considering the impact of both factors in a given context it may be possible to more accurately understand why organisations behave in the way they do in a given set of circumstances.

This combined RD/N-IT approach has been used in a number of empirical studies that seek to explain organisational behaviour in a diverse range of environments and organisational types. For example, Hessels and Terjessen’s (2010) study of Dutch SME import and export decision making, Sherer and Lee’s (2002) study of change in large law firms and Gornitzka et al’s (1999) study of the impact of government policy on European universities. These studies explored the importance of organisational and environmental factors in prompting
organisational change and sought to explain the behaviours exhibited by organisations in response to pressure to change. This is the approach that will be adopted in the analysis of the case study presented in chapters 4-6.

iii Theoretical Framework for the Case Study

In this section elements of N-IT and RDT theory will be combined in order to develop a set of questions that will be used to analyse the case study and provide the answer to the third research question:

RQ3 To what extent is the behaviour of universities driven by environmental and/or organisational factors?

In order to assess the impact of organisational and environmental factors on the behaviour of universities consideration will be given to the following points:

- The extent to which an organisation is independent of its environment and able to act autonomously (as opposed to being constrained e.g. by its finances, its ability to determine its own priorities and/or excessive state regulation).
- The characteristics of the organisation in question e.g. does it seek to maximise its resources or seek to achieve non-commercial objectives such as legitimacy.
- Whether changes in the behaviour of the organisation arise in response to environmental pressures or because of changing priorities within the organisation.
- When an organisation acts does its response conform to the behaviours predicted by RDT or N-IT?

These four points have been developed into the analysis questions below.

Analysis Question 1: How independent is the organisation from its environment and did its level of dependency change over time?

The first strand of the combined RD/N-IT approach to be considered here will be the extent to which an organisation is dependent or independent of its environment. Scott argues that when undertaking an analysis of organisational behaviour it is important to consider “whether organisations are self-sufficient, relatively self acting, insulated forms or are highly context-dependent, substantially constituted, influenced and penetrated by their
environment”, (Scott, 2008, p122). The implication here is that the environment is an important factor in determining organisational behaviour and that an organisation will be less restricted if it is not heavily dependent on or influenced by its environment.

The approach adopted in the analysis of the case study will be to assume that organisations exist at some point on a continuum of high dependence to relative independence of their environment, and that this can change over time. The level of dependence could be influenced by a range of factors that are necessary to the successful operation of the organisation including finance, raw materials, staffing (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978), government policy or external regulation and cultural expectations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). In chapter 7 the level of environmental dependence/independence of the CSU throughout the period 1960-2010 will be assessed.

Analysis Question 2: Where is the CSU situated on the institutional-production organisational continuum and did its position change over time?

The second strand to be considered here is the classification of the organisation. A number of writers on organisational theory stress the importance of understanding the different characteristics of organisations (Thompson 1967 and Lawrence and Lorsch 1969). While RDT writers have tended to ignore the issue of organisational diversity some N-IT writers have argued that certain characteristics of an organisation are important in determining the extent to which it will come under pressure to change its behaviour and that these characteristics will influence the way in which it responds to those pressures (Meyer and Rowan 1991 and Scott 2008). Meyer and Rowan propose that:

...one can conceive of a continuum along which organisations can be ordered. At one end are production organisations under strong output controls.... At the other end are institutionalized organisations whose success depends on the confidence and stability achieved by isomorphism with institutional rules.

Meyer and Rowan 1991, p55

Meyer and Rowan do not provide detailed definitions of production and institutional-organisations however a set of characteristics drawn from their article and other organisational theorists is presented in table 1.1.
Table 1.1: Characteristics of production and institutional organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Production-organisations</th>
<th>Institutional-organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
<td>out-put focused (Meyer and Rowan, 1991)</td>
<td>Multiple and/or ambiguous objectives (Meyer and Rowan, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Success measured by</strong></td>
<td>Economic criteria (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978)</td>
<td>Legitimacy (Meyer and Rowan, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Managers (Scott 2008)</td>
<td>Professionals (Scott 2008)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis of the case study will include an evaluation of the organisational characteristics of the CSU and an assessment of where it is situated on the organisational continuum.

The first two analysis questions will be used in chapter 7 to determine the level of environmental dependence and the organisational characteristics of the CSU, and the results will be plotted on the model included in figure 1. This information will provide the context for the analysis of the organisational behaviour demonstrated by the CSU over the period and will be used to determine whether there was a relationship between the way the CSU behaved and its organisational/environmental context.

**Figure 1: Model of Organisational Type and Environmental Dependence**
Analysis Question 3: Did environmental and/or organisation factors prompt the CSU to change its behaviour?

The third analysis question emerging from the RD/N-IT framework is whether environmental and/or organisational factors provide the impetus for organisations to change their behaviour (or not). According to RDT, organisations change their behaviour in response to environmental pressures (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) whereas N-IT suggests that organisational change will either be resisted or will occur when an institution is subject to isomorphic institutional pressures (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). The analysis of the case study will show whether changes in the behaviour of the CSU occurred in response to environmental pressures or as a result of institutional forces.

Analysis Question 4: What behaviours did the organisation adopt in response to the pressures to change and critical incidents identified in the case study?

The final analysis question seeks to test whether the organisational response of the CSU to the critical incidents and the developments in teaching and research conformed to the behaviours predicted by RDT and/or N-IT.

Both RDT and N-IT predict that when an organisation is constrained, for example, because it has limited resources or because of state interference, it will be forced to comply with external attempts to control it. In the case of N-IT this is referred to as coercive isomorphism (Di Maggio and Powell, 1983) and in RDT it is described as acquiescence (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978).

According to RDT if organisations are not overly constrained/resource dependent they can adopt a range of economically rational behaviours with a view to optimising their resources. For example they may elect to adapt their products or services in order to make them more appealing to their target audience or they may attempt to exert control over their environment, for example, by investing in marketing in order to influence the perception of the organisation and/or its out-puts.

In contrast, N-IT theorists (Di Maggio and Powell 1983 and Meyer and Rowan 2006) argue that when institutional-organisations are not constrained they will either be resistant to change and seek to maintain the status quo or, if they do change, it will be by imitating other organisations that are perceived to have a greater degree of legitimacy (normative or mimetic isomorphism).
The analysis of the case study will include an evaluation of whether the CSU behaviours described in chapters 5 and 6 conform to the RDT or N-IT behaviours described here.

iv. Conclusions

Contribution of the thesis to the Literature on HE

The information presented in the context and analysis chapters of the thesis will contribute to the higher education literature in a number of ways. First, it will provide an overview of the environmental and organisational factors impacting universities between 1960-2010. The length of time covered is significant because much of the literature on higher education focuses on relatively short periods of significant change and by adopting a longer view these changes can be examined within broader historical trends (Pierson, 2004). Much of the writing on higher education policy gives the impression that the HE system is in great turmoil. Writing in the 1950s Berdahl refers to ‘crisis’ within the system (p85), Salter and Tapper refer to the 1980s as a period of ‘hectic activity’ (p ix) and ‘seismic change’ (p196), in the 1990s Neave and Van Vught liken the fate of universities to that of Prometheus and in the 2000s Hays and Wynward describe how universities are in the process of being ‘McDonaldized’. Yet despite the significant changes within HE over the last fifty years, universities have both adapted and retained many of their essential characteristics (Van Vught, 1995) and Kerr warns that “we should treat with caution the overblown rhetoric and defective current judgments of many of our scholars studying higher education when they are under stress” (1982, pvi). By adopting a longer term view it is possible to examine the various HE reforms within the context of broader historical perspectives and to see whether the effects anticipated at the time by some authors turned out to be as cataclysmic for universities as they supposed they would be.

Second, a case study of a university will be presented showing how the general trends in higher education over the last fifty years described in the literature affected a specific institution. As referred to in the previous section some writings on HE have been criticized for the lack of empirical evidence and use of supporting literature in their analysis of higher

2 Prometheus was a Titan and a champion of human-kind known for his craftiness and intelligence. After stealing fire from Zeus and giving it to man he was punished by being tied down while a great eagle ate his internal organs.
education policy and organisational reform. The aim here will be to contribute to knowledge of HE both by referring to the existing body of literature and by conducting an original piece of research on the impact of external and organisational pressures on a university.

Third, it has been argued that there has been more focus in higher education literature on the external factors which impact institutions (Brown, 2009ii). In this study equal attention will be paid to the external/environmental and internal/organisational contexts within which the case study university operated. The theoretical framework developed in the second part of this chapter will combine two perspectives from organisational studies, one of which concentrates on the internal/organisational and the other on the external/environmental factors which drive organisational behaviour. The aim here is to develop a deeper understanding of the interplay between the two factors within the higher education context.

Finally, much of the literature on higher education referred to above is descriptive, providing accounts of how the sector was at a particular point in time or how it changed over time. The case study presented in this thesis will be underpinned by a theoretical framework which will provide a means of defining the type of organisation being studied and the environment within which it operates as well as characterising the behaviour it demonstrates.

**Contribution of the thesis to Organisational Theory**

The thesis will contribute to organisational theory in a number of ways. First, the analysis questions presented here provide a framework for analysing environmental and organisational contexts and behaviours that could be replicated in other studies. Second, if the case study shows that the organisational type and environmental dependence model is legitimate, it would provide a mechanism for predicting how certain types of organisation are likely to behave depending on their environmental and institutional contexts. In addition to being of value to organisational theorists the model may be of interest to the variety of HE providers operating in the sector as it enters a further period of change in 2012. Finally, the work will contribute to the niche area of organisational theory that combines the RDT and N-IT perspectives.
Chapter 2: Research Design and Methods

This chapter will begin with a brief introduction of the researcher and the rationale for undertaking the study. This will be followed by a description of the research design and the methods used to gather and analyse the data for the literature review and in the empirical component of the thesis. Consideration will also be given to the practical and ethical issues encountered during the project and to the limitations of the study.

i. The Researcher

I am a university administrator with experience of working in a range of support and managerial roles. At the time I started the EdD I was working for the senior management team of the university that became the subject of the case study presented here. My role there included assisting with institutional planning and budgeting, supporting a range of operational committees and monitoring the correspondence between the university and external bodies such as the funding council and Universities UK.

In order to be effective in that position I was required to have both a good knowledge of the higher education environment and the ability to get things done within the institution, which required an understanding of the internal cultures and decision-making structures of the university. The decision to undertake a thesis looking at the environmental and organisational context of universities was driven by a desire to reflect on the complex and sometimes conflicting organisational pressures I encountered in my work.

My position within the organisation was beneficial in a number of ways in undertaking this research. Having worked there for nine years I was trusted to undertake the research without misusing the sensitive material I came across in interviews and the archive material. Also, my familiarity with the organisation meant that I was able to gain access to the individuals and archive material I required more quickly than if I had been studying a place I was not familiar with.

After completing the initial stage of collecting case study material I obtained a job at another, very different, university and completed the literature review and analysis of the case study material once I had started there. Moving away from the organisation I was
studying and experiencing the culture and structures of another university helped give me a better sense of perspective on both the case study and the relevance of the findings to other institutions.

ii. Research Design

The research project was driven by “a logic of design... a strategy to be preferred when circumstances and research problems are appropriate rather than an ideological commitment to be followed whatever the circumstances” (Platt, 1992, p46). Rather than assuming from the outset that a particular methodology would be adopted, the research design and methods emerged during the research process, in response to the demands of the research questions and according to what was feasible within the time and resource constraints of the project.

In this section explanations will be given of how the research questions evolved and why an historical analysis of trends in HE was undertaken. Following that a description of the case study research design used in the empirical component of the thesis will be given.

Setting the Research Questions

At the outset of the research project the intention was to analyse the impact of government policy on a specific university. At an early stage in the collection of case study material it became clear that rather than being a passive actor, that had simply had to respond to increasingly interventionist government policy over the period, the organisational response to external pressures had included a range of behaviours including resistance, avoidance and defiance. In common with many writers on higher education I had placed too much emphasis on the importance of external/environmental factors and had not considered the extent to which universities are autonomous institutions that are able to mediate or even ignore external pressures (Brown, 2009i and ii).

The identification of evidence of the organisational forces countering the external pressures on the university led to a re-examination of the literature on higher education and a search for a theoretical perspective which could help to explain the impact of both internal and external pressures on the organisational behaviour of the university. This iterative approach to the development of the theory underpinning the research is consistent with the case
study research design, which should allow theory to emerge from the data (Hartley, 2007). The change in approach also meant that the original research questions had to be revised (the focus had previously just been on environmental/governmental factors) which led to the development of the RQs that were presented in the introduction to the thesis (which assume that environmental and organisational factors may both be relevant).

**Context Chapter – Literature Review and Historical Analysis**

Once the research questions and theoretical framework for the analysis of the case study had been revisited it was necessary to look again at the HE literature in order to explore whether there were any distinctive organisational characteristics that would explain the resistance that had been observed during the initial data collection for the case study. It was at this stage that the literature on the internal structures and cultures of universities (Moodie and Eustace 1974, Henkel 2000 etc) was identified and brought within the scope of the thesis.

Given the bias towards the external pressures on universities in the HE literature (Brown 2009i and ii) it was deemed necessary to provide a chapter prior to the case study that set out the internal and external contexts of the university sector. The approach adopted was to undertake an historical analysis (Storey, 1999) of primary and secondary sources relating to the environmental and organisational higher education contexts and to describe the changes and trends that had occurred between the 1960s and 2000s.

Secondary evidence was taken from the HE literature referred to in chapter 1 (Kogan and Hanney 1999, Salter and Tapper 1994 etc) and the primary sources included government policy documents, HEFCE guidance, UGC and HESA statistics and the reports of public enquiries into HE. A key concern in historical research is ensuring the reliability of source material (Shafer, 1969). While all source material has the potential for some weakness or bias it was felt that the official nature of the primary sources and the academic robustness of the secondary sources that were used in the analysis were less open to criticism than other, more subjective sources, such as diaries, newspapers or unattributed accounts that are sometimes used in historical analyses.

The sources were annotated, arranged by theme and then compiled into a narrative describing key trends in the HE environment (expansion, funding and regulation), the distinctive organisational characteristics of universities (devolved, academic self-
governance) and the impact of New Public Management (NPM) ideas and practices within the sector. The resulting chapter was included prior to the case study because rather than being a critical literature review it was considered to be an integral part of the empirical component of the research (providing the context for the case study).

**Case Study Research Design**

A case study research design was adopted for the main part of the empirical study within the thesis:

*Case study research consists of a detailed investigation, often with data collected over a period of time, of phenomena, within their context. The aim is to provide an analysis of the context and processes which illuminate the theoretical issues being studied.*

Hartley, 2007, p323

This approach was adopted because of both the nature of the enquiry and the context in which the data required to answer the research questions would be found. According to Yin “case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon with some real-life context” (1994, p1). The purpose of the case study was to seek to understand how external and internal forces had impacted the organisational behaviour of a university. The approach adopted was to identify a single case and explore in detail how its context and behaviour had changed over time by talking to current and former employees and reviewing relevant documentation.

The case study research design used here is consistent with the approach adopted in many educational, policy and organisational research projects (Heck 2004, Hartley 2007 and Gornitzka, 2000). Heck argues that this type of research design is particularly appropriate for research “where the concern is with the interplay between cultural contexts and policy activity, change over time” (2004, p195). The objectives of the case study were entirely consistent with this definition i.e. to understand the cultural and organisational context of the case and to consider the policy and broader environmental context in which it was operating and to examine how these factors influenced its behaviour over time.
An important feature of the case study approach identified by Heck is that it can cover an extended period of time. This was significant for the study presented here because it sought to explore whether the relative importance of environmental and organisational factors in determining the organisational behaviour of the university changed over time. According to Pierson “much that is important about the social world is likely to remain concealed if our inquiries are grounded, as they too often are, in efforts to examine only one moment in time” (2004, p167). The major changes in the HE sector in the 20th century started around the time of the Robbins report in the early 1960s and it was therefore important that both the review of the HE context (chapter 3) and the case study (chapters 4-6) started at this point.

The selection of the university to be examined in the case study was driven by the research design requirements (it had to be a university established prior to the Robbins report) and by practical considerations (the researcher was working for the university and had access to the necessary individuals and archival material).

iii. Methods

Evidence used in case studies can come from a range of sources including documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artifacts (Yin, 1994, p78). The evidence drawn together in the case study presented here included documents relating to the university’s response to particular government policies, archival records and official statistics showing how it grew and changed over the period and a series of semi-structured interviews with current and former managers and academics who had been at the university during the period under consideration.

Yin argues that there are three over-riding principles that are important to data collection in case studies; use of multiple sources of evidence, employment of a case study database and the existence of a chain of evidence linking the questions to the data collected and the conclusions. In this section a description of each of the methods used to gather the data will be presented along with descriptions of how they conformed with Yin’s principles of data collection.
Historical Analysis of Organisational Documents

Full access was given to the organisational archive of the university and material from a wide range of sources was collected including; formal minutes of organisational governing bodies, publicly available Annual Reports and Accounts, an official history of the institution, internal university statistics, the Vice Chancellor’s files, policy documentation and correspondence from external bodies. Rowlinson (2007) stresses the importance of the collection and analysis of documentation in organisational research in providing actual accounts from the time, enabling the researcher to determine whether contemporary and retrospective perspective of events are consistent.

This element of the research posed a number of challenges. First, most of the documentation that was collected was neither sorted or catalogued. This meant that a significant amount of time was spent going through files and boxes of documentation that was not necessarily chronological, alphabetical or organised according to identifiable themes.

A second issue, common in the analysis of all historical documentation, was determining the extent to which the information that was collected was an accurate record of events that had occurred. In order to ensure the validity of the information gathered from the archive it was triangulated, either with documents from other sources or using the responses of the research participants. A significant proportion of the quotes used in the analysis were taken from documents that were minuted and confirmed at the time, suggesting that at least a number of people involved would have accepted the version of events presented.

A third issue encountered during the document collection was that the files contained a significant amount of sensitive material relating to individuals. As a member of staff working for senior managers at the university I was trusted with confidential matters and I applied the same degree of discretion to the information I came across during my research as I did in my job.

Once all the documentary evidence had been collected key elements were transcribed, coded according to themes relating to the research questions and added to a research database.
Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are a frequently adopted method in educational case study research (Heck, 2004 and Cohen et al, 2000) and were an essential element within the study presented here. A number of individuals were identified who had been at the institution for a significant amount of the period covered by the case study. Some of these individuals were academics who had remained in academic roles, some were senior administrators and one was an academic who had moved into a senior management role. Further details of the criteria for selecting the participants and the process that was followed are included in the following section. The purpose of the interviews was to gather information about the University, to help in the formulation of the theoretical framework and to provide contextual information to triangulate with the other data collected (Cohen et al, 2000).

The approach adopted in the interviews was to try “to see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee, and to understand how and why they have come to have this particular perspective” (King, 2007, p11). A schedule was drawn up for each of the interviews to enable the participants to prepare, however these were not slavishly adhered to and if the discussion turned in other directions that were relevant to the research these were followed, before returning to the pre-planned questions. The results provided a rich set of data giving the professional and personal perspectives of a group of individuals with detailed knowledge of the organisation.

Each of the interviews was transcribed by the researcher, coded according to themes relating to the research questions and entered onto the research database.

Critical Incident Technique

Following the first round of interviews and collection of archival material a number of significant incidents in the University’s history were identified. These were explored in a second round of interviews and archival analysis according to critical incident technique (CIT). CIT is generally used within organisational research to identify factors that impact managerial and employee performance (Flanagan, 1954). The technique was adapted in this study and used to identify how environmental and organisational factors had influenced the organisational response to real or perceived external pressures.

Data for the CIT analysis were gathered by re-interviewing two of the respondents who had detailed knowledge of the critical incidents to explore their explanations and thoughts as to
the way in which the university had responded. This involved explaining the CIT, identifying
the incident, probing the respondent to find out what happened, why it happened, and what
the consequences were (Chell, 2007). Further archival material was requested which
provided contemporary documentary evidence of the incidents under consideration.

The results of the CIT interviews and the corresponding documentary evidence were
transcribed, coded and added to the research database.

**Statistical Information**

A significant amount of statistical information relating to the staffing, student numbers,
research, teaching quality and financial performance of the institution was obtained from
the university’s Annual Reports, statistical publications and HESA, QAA and RAE websites.
All this information was consolidated into a single database covering the fifty years of the
case study.

**The Research Database and Chain of Evidence**

The research database was set up using an Excel spreadsheet and a coding structure was
devised and adapted as the case study progressed. As described above the data from the
archival material and interviews were transcribed, coded and then added to the database so
that they could be retrieved according to themes that were relevant to the research and
analysis questions. The coding structure therefore ensured that there was a clear chain of
evidence between the research questions, the data collection and the analysis and
conclusions, which is illustrated in table 2.1.
### Table 2.1: Chain of Evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data From</th>
<th>Analysis/Conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: What are the external pressures on universities?</td>
<td>Primary and secondary HE sources (ch3).</td>
<td>HE sources show what the general trends in the sector were. Case study shows how these impacted the Case Study University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case study response to external pressures (ch4).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: How have organisational cultures and governance structures of universities changed over the last fifty years?</td>
<td>Primary and secondary HE sources (ch3).</td>
<td>HE sources show what the general trends in the sector were. Case study shows how the cultures and governance structures of a particular institution changed over the period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description of case study governance structures (ch4) and academic culture (ch5).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3: To what extent is organisational behaviour of universities driven by environmental and organisational factors?</td>
<td>Case study data describing the organisational characteristics of the university (ch4).</td>
<td>Case study analysed according to the analysis questions developed in ch1:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case study data describing the level of environmental dependence of the university (finances, external regulation, student market etc) (ch4).</td>
<td>1: How independent is the university from its environment and did its level of dependency change over time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case study data describing critical incidents (ch6) and the way the university responded to pressure on its teaching and research (5).</td>
<td>2: Where is the university situated on the institutional-production organisational continuum and did its position change over time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3: Did environmental and/or organisational factors prompt the university to change its behaviour during the period covered?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4: What behaviours did the organisation adopt in response to the pressures to change and critical incidents identified in the case study?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

iv. The Research Process

After gaining approval to undertake the research by a senior officer of the university the researcher was given access to the individuals and information necessary to undertake the case study. The archival and documentary evidence was gathered in two phases (summer 2009 and summer-autumn 2011).

The interviews were also undertaken in two stages (August 2009 and August 2011). Two criteria were used in the selection of the interview participants; length of service and the nature of the role/s they had undertaken. In order to find out how research and teaching had evolved it was necessary to identify academics who had worked at the University for most of the period under consideration, which by definition meant the pool of candidates was small. Three academics who had worked at the institution for most of the period (two had started in the 1960s and one in the 1970s) were identified. All were senior academics.
and therefore in addition to their roles as academics had, at one time or another, occupied leadership positions within the institution (Head of Department, Senate member, member of senior committees). One of the academic participants had, in his later career, occupied senior, predominantly administrative roles. In addition to the academic participants two senior administrative officers agreed to answer questions about management processes employed within the institution (one of these was a relative new-comer and the other had been at the institution since the 1980s and was able to provide insights into how management structures had changed). A summary of the characteristics of the respondents is provided in the table included below.

Table 2.2: Characteristics of interview participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Reference</th>
<th>Period at CSI</th>
<th>Predominantly Departmental Academic Role</th>
<th>Central Senior Management Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RP1 (pilot)</td>
<td>Since 1980s</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP2</td>
<td>Since 1960s</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP3</td>
<td>Since 1960s</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP4 (2 interviews)</td>
<td>Since 1970s</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP5 (2 interviews)</td>
<td>Since 1980s</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP6</td>
<td>Since 2004</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Different interview schedules were devised for the academic and administrative participants and a hybrid of the two was prepared for the participant who had occupied both academic and administrative roles. A pilot interview was conducted with an academic with long service at the University (though not covering the whole period). As a result of the pilot slight amendments were made to the interview schedule. The results of the pilot interview were of relevance to the research project and so were included in the analysis along with the other seven interviews.

Once the interviews had been completed, I transcribed each of them and sent them to the interview participants, giving them the opportunity to amend or delete any parts of them. Three of the participants corrected grammatical and typographical errors and the others confirmed that they were happy for the transcripts to be used as they were.
Once all the data had been collected and added to the research database the three data chapters were planned out and written up. Three of the interview participants agreed to review the case study chapters and their comments were incorporated in the final version.

The evidence from the case study was analysed according to the resource dependence/neo-institutional theoretical framework developed in chapter 1. The four analysis questions presented there were used to determine which organisational type the university could be classified as, how its level of environmental dependence varied over the fifty years, whether internal and/or external pressures had driven the organisational approach to learning and teaching and in the critical incidents and finally whether the behaviours it demonstrated during those incidents were consistent with those predicted by resource dependence or neo-institutional theory (see the chain of evidence described above).

v. Robustness of the Case Study

The robustness of the case study can be assessed according to the evaluative criteria Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

The creditability criteria requires that the participants in the research are able to confirm the legitimacy of the results. This was achieved by giving the participants the opportunity to read the transcripts of their interviews and by getting three of the interview participants to review the case study chapters. No major amendments were requested and none of the participants raised concerns about the way in which the data have been presented.

Although the results of a single case study are clearly not generalisable, efforts were made to ensure the transferability of both the case study design and the results. The case study design and methods have been documented and the literature review, interview schedules and research database would be made available to other researchers considering undertaking a similar study of another institution. The use of the theoretical framework (including the organisational type and environmental dependence model) could also be used in other research to test whether the results of this study are applicable in other contexts.
The concept of dependability seeks to replace the criteria of reliability that is applied in quantitative research i.e. the requirement that the findings of a research project are consistent and could be repeated if the study was undertaken again. Whereas quantitative reliability can not be achieved in such a study\(^3\) Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that dependability can be established via a process of ‘inquiry audit’ (p317-8) whereby the process and the results of the data collection are evaluated by a third party. While it was not possible to engage someone to undertake such an audit in order to verify the dependability of the case study the data collection processes are described here and the data were gathered and recorded in such a way as to make such an audit possible.

The final criteria of confirmability seeks to ensure that the data and results of the study are not unduly influenced by the subjective perspective of the researcher and can be achieved by checking that the results may be corroborated. This has been attempted in a number of ways within this study. First, by using multiple data sources within the case study, the results were able to be triangulated, individual’s views that could not be verified were not included. Second, although it was not feasible to get an academic colleague to conduct an audit of the data and the findings, a number of elements of the work were reviewed by knowledgeable contacts who were asked to identify any instances of bias or distortion in the work\(^4\).

vi. Ethical Issues

The department has a robust ethical approval process for doctoral theses which sets out the principles of ethical research and requires students to consider the implications of their study and obtain informed consent prior to undertaking fieldwork. A proforma addressing these issues was completed and approved by the supervisor and the ethics committee and a letter confirming the approval of case study by the Registrar of the subject university was submitted.

\(^3\) The case study was conducted at a particular point of time by a researcher with specific knowledge of the institution with access to particular information and individuals that would not necessarily be available if someone else tried to replicate the study.

\(^4\) An academic from the field of organisational research was asked to review the literature review and theoretical framework, academics and senior administrators from other institutions were asked to give their views on the relevance of the organisational type/environmental dependence model and three of the interview participants had the opportunity to comment on the case study itself.
The most significant ethical considerations in the study arose because the fieldwork was being undertaken within the organisation the researcher worked for. Care was given in the design of the research to minimise some of the potential ethical issues that can affect social scientists conducting research in this way. Coghlan and Brannick identify issues such as the ability of the researcher to negotiate access, ensuring the confidentiality of information provided, ensuring informed consent of participants is gained, building trust that the events and people will not be misinterpreted, potential for power relations of colleagues to impact on the research project and the potential politically sensitive implications of the research findings (2005, p78 – 79).

A number of these potential ethical issues were avoided because of my role within the organisation. As a relatively junior staff member who had worked closely with senior management and senior academic colleagues, I had access to confidential material in my day to day work. The senior officer who signed off on the research project and those who contributed to it trusted that the individuals and institution would not be misrepresented or exploited in the research and that only archival evidence and personal accounts that were relevant to the case study would be referred to. The potential issue of power-relations between me and the interview respondents was also not a major concern because of the very senior nature of those contributing to the study (it was not possible for me to exert any influence over them or their careers).

A further potential ethical issue in this type of research might arise if the researcher, as a member of staff, attempted to evaluate/judge the performance of the institution/individuals working at the institution. This was not an issue in the case study because the performance of the university was not the focus of interest, rather the institution was used as an example of how environmental factors affected an organisation and to explore the validity of the RD/N-IT theoretical framework developed in chapter 1 (Yin, 1994, p24). The research questions and case study were devised in a way that avoided making value judgments about the performance of the organisation or whether it was or wasn’t effectively managed. The objective was rather to explore whether the organisational behaviour of the university conformed to the behaviours and responses predicted within the RD/N-IT model.

A final issue that was potentially ethically challenging was how to present the findings of the case study. Although care was taken to avoid including any sensitive material I felt that in order to focus on the issues rather than the institution, and to make it more difficult to
identify the individuals who had taken part in the interviews, it would be better to anonymise both the institution and the individual’s responses. One of the interview participants who reviewed the case study chapters said that it would be possible for someone who was familiar with the institution to identify individuals from their comments. This was to some extent unavoidable (as it is in all studies that include case studies of anonymised universities – see Henkel 2000 and Gornitzka, 2000) however the risk of this causing harm to individuals\textsuperscript{5} was mitigated by giving them the opportunity to edit their interviews and by having participants review the finished chapters.

vii. **Limitations of the Research**

Flyvbjerg identifies a number of criticisms or misunderstandings of case study research including; the lack of generalisability of the findings from a single case, the fact that this type of study is more likely to generate a hypothesis rather than provide evidence to test one and that they have a tendency to confirm the researcher’s preconceived notions (2006, p221).

Although these concerns are all applicable to the case study presented here care was taken to address them in the design and execution of the research project. For example, while the results are not generalisable in themselves, by introducing the organisational type/environmental dependence model (figure 1.1, page 21) it is possible to plot the organisational and environmental characteristics of other HE organisations and compare them to the case study (as has been attempted in the post-script to the thesis) in order to assess the applicability of the findings across the sector. The model and RDT/N-IT framework were also designed to address the second concern identified above in that the results of the case study could be plotted against it/used to test the model rather than simply being descriptive and generating a hypothesis relating to the specific case. Finally, as referred to in the Research Design section above, while the initial stage of the research assumed that the organisational behaviour of universities was driven by external/environmental factors the results of the case study challenged this assumption and pointed to the importance of internal/organisational forces. This led to the research questions being reformulated, an additional literature review being undertaken and to a second stage of data collection. So, rather than confirming the researchers preconceived

\textsuperscript{5} In fact a number of the interview participants were close to or had retired and weren’t concerned if what they said was attributed to them.
notions the initial results of the case study actually challenged them and led the research in an unanticipated direction.

A further limitation of the work is that, in common with many doctoral studies, the scope of the research project was necessarily limited because of the position of the researcher and by the resources available. Bassey describes how practical considerations such as these limit the availability of options to researchers in the construction of research projects. He reports that he has examined over a hundred masters and doctoral theses, mostly undertaken by educational professionals working full time and studying on a part time basis. He describes how every one of these has been a study of a singularity rather than general events; “this being virtually the only form of research open to people who are working at it part-time and with very limited resources” (Bassey, 1999, pg 5).

Despite these limitations, and as described above, every effort has been made to ensure that the study presented here is meaningful and was carried out in an appropriate and robust manner and answered the research questions that had been set.

In the following chapter the environmental and organisational context of English universities will be described.
Chapter 3 – The Environmental and Organisational Context of Universities 1960-2010

Introduction

In order to evaluate the impact of environmental and organisational factors on the behaviour of English universities it is necessary to understand the broader context in which they operate. In the first section of this chapter an overview of the higher education environment during the period 1960-2010 will be presented. In the second section the distinctive organisational traits of traditional English universities will be described.

The information presented in this chapter provides the context for the case study that will be presented in chapters 4 to 6 and also provides the answers to the first two research questions:

RQ1: What are the external pressures on universities?

RQ2: How have organisational cultures and governance structures of universities changed over the last fifty years?

At the end of the chapter a brief overview will be given of how the information presented here will used to address these questions in the final chapter of the thesis.

i. The Higher Education Environment 1960-2010

According to Pfeffer and Salancik “organisations are constrained and affected by their environments and they act to attempt to manage resource dependencies” (2003, pxxiii). In order to understand the behaviour of organisations it is therefore necessary to consider the environment in which they operate. In this section an overview of some of the major changes that have occurred in the English higher education environment over the last fifty years will be presented including; the expansion of the higher education sector, the changing pattern of funding for universities and the increase in regulatory and accountability requirements for universities.
**Expansion**

The first environmental factor to be considered is the significant expansion of the higher education sector that took place between 1960 and 2010. The effects that the resulting increase in student numbers, and the new forms of higher education that were introduced, had on universities will also be explored.

Trow (1972) identified three stages in the expansion of national higher education systems. He argued that countries in which under 15% of the eligible cohort attended university can be categorised as having ‘elite’ higher education systems. As the elite institutions in such systems expand and newer non-elite institutions enter into the sector the proportion of the eligible cohort able to undertake higher education increases and the sector becomes what he described as a ‘mass’ system. As the HE system continues to grow and the sector becomes more diverse the participation rate may approach 50%, and what Trow describes as a ‘universal’ system of higher education. Writing in the early 1970s, he argued that the US higher education system was on the verge of becoming a universal system and wrote a number of works suggesting ways in which this transition was impacting universities and the education system more broadly (1972 and 1973). His observations of what happened to higher education in the USA in the middle of the twentieth century (more diverse students and forms of HE, changes in teaching and research and pressure on organisational finances) were equally relevant to the transition that took place in the English higher education system in the second half of the century.

In Britain in the early 1960s the higher education was, to use Trow’s categorization, an ‘elite’ system. In total 216,000 students were undertaking higher education courses in 1962 (8% of the eligible cohort), half of these students attended universities and half went to teacher training and further education colleges. As the post-war grammar school system began to mature and the size of the cohort of 17 and 18 year olds increased with the baby-boomer generation the demand for university places from qualified school leavers began to exceed the supply of places and the government came under increasing pressure from teachers, parents and school leavers to expand the number of university places (Boyle, 1979 p7, Carswell, 1985 p26). Seven ‘new’ universities were established in the late 1950s and early 1960s in order to meet the increased demand and in 1961 the government established a Committee on Higher Education (known as the Robbins Review) which was tasked with

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6 Robbins Report, p16
7 Sussex, York, UEA, Lancaster, Essex, Kent and Warwick
reviewing the pattern of higher education in Great Britain and making recommendations on the future development of the sector (Committee of Higher Education, 1963 p1).

The Committee reported in 1963 and advocated the principle that all individuals with the ability to benefit from higher education should have the opportunity to take up a place. It recommended that the number of higher education places should increase to 560,000 by 1980. The report proposed that this expansion should be achieved by growing the established universities and colleges and the seven newly created institutions, so that universities could accommodate 346,000 of these, 60% of the HE cohort (Committee on Higher Education, 1963, pp265-277).

In the event, by 1979 the number of university students had increased in line with the Robbins recommendations (to circa 352,000) and the average number of students at each university had increased from 3,552 in 1955 (UGC 1955, p11) to 6,640 (Kogan 1984 p62-65). However, the growth was not consistent across the sector, for example the full time student numbers at Cambridge grew from 7,934 to 10,490 (+24%) over this period whereas at the institution included in the case study they went up from 727 to 5070 (600%). The effects of this level of expansion on an individual institution are explored in chapters 4 to 6.

In addition to an increase in university places, non-university HE participation had also increased in line with Robbins’ recommendations so that in total circa 17% of the eligible cohort were undertaking some form of higher education by 1980. By this stage therefore, British higher education had become what Trow defined as a ‘mass’ system.

The Conservative Government in the 1980s set new projections for the expansion of HE, stating that numbers should increase to 842,000 by the 1990s (18.5% of the eligible cohort), (DoESS, 1987). A radical and controversial programme to rationalise the higher education sector was embarked upon in 1991 with the abolition of the binary divide between universities and polytechnics and the merger of many teacher and nurse training colleges with universities. The reclassification and merger of many higher education providers meant that by the mid 1990s most HE students were being taught in ‘universities’. It also meant that, as an organisational form, universities went from being a small and distinctive organisational-type represented by the 37 universities that existed prior to the 1980s

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8 Estimate of headcount based on full time equivalent numbers included in Kogan 1984, p62-5.
9 Robbins Report p66
(referred to as the ‘traditional’ universities in the thesis) to incorporating a much broader range of organisations with quite different cultures and structures.

Student numbers continued to expand throughout the 1990s and by 1997 student numbers had risen to almost £1.5M\(^\text{10}\) (35% of the eligible cohort). The new Labour Government announced ambitious targets to increase student numbers yet further with the aspiration that 50% of the eligible cohort should undertake some form of higher education. By 2009/10 2.5M\(^\text{11}\) students (47% of the eligible cohort) were undertaking HE studies at 161 universities and colleges across Britain and the government supported the establishment of yet more universities and colleges with degree awarding powers (Ferlie, 2009). By the end of the Labour Government period, the higher education system had reached a similar stage of expansion that the USA had in the mid-1970s and, according to Trow’s classification, was on the brink of becoming a ‘universal’ system.

Over the last half century British\(^\text{12}\) higher education was therefore transformed from an elite to an almost universal system, with the number of universities and colleges increasing fivefold, student numbers increasing eleven-fold and the average number of students attending institutions increasing from 3,552 to 15,203 (HESA 2009-10).

In the 1970s Trow argued that rapid expansion in student numbers and the resulting increase and diversification of HE provision resulted in a significant increase in the environmental pressures facing universities:

> In every advanced society the problems of higher education are problems associated with growth. Growth poses a variety of problems for the education systems that experience it and for the societies that support them. These problems arise in every part of higher education – in its finance, in its government and administration: in its recruitment and selection of students: in its curriculum and forms of instruction: in its recruitment, training and socialization of staff – growth has its impact on every form of activity and manifestation of higher education.

Abstract, Trow, 1973

\(^{10}\) HESA student numbers 1996-97

\(^{11}\) HESA student numbers 2009/10 and BIS report on participation rate

\(^{12}\) NB The thesis focuses on English universities however data from this time were not always at that level.
The impact of HE expansion on the finances, governance and academic culture of institutions will be considered in more detail later on in this chapter. Evidence of the impact of expansion on the diversity of the student population and the type of higher education provision being offered will be provided here.

As higher education systems expand the type of students entering them inevitably becomes more diverse. The student population is no longer composed of just small cohort of 18-21 year olds who achieve high A level grades, but is broadened to include individuals with lower levels of attainment, different types of educational background and more mature students, who wouldn’t necessarily have had the opportunity to undertake HE when they were younger. Where once demand exceeded the supply of places and universities were able to select the students they wanted, they began to find themselves in a market where they had to compete with other providers in order to attract students. In order to compete in the new HE market, universities began to develop different types of courses, delivered in new ways and started to invest in marketing and student recruitment functions (Molesworth et al, 2010).

Table 3.1 shows how the student population in the UK has changed over the fifty years as the numbers entering higher education increased. Female students have gone from being the minority (31%) to the majority (57%), students with non-A level qualifications made up just 3% of the student population in 1962 and that number had increased to 15% by 2008, the number of international students increased from 2,160 to 406,000 making up 16% of the student population and the number of HE entrants who are mature was 12% by 2008. In chapter 4 information showing how the student population of the case study university changed over the period will be presented and will demonstrate how the diversification of the student population described here affected the student body of a traditional English university.
Table 3.1: Changes in the Higher Education Student Population 1960s-2000s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1960s</th>
<th>End of 2000s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students</td>
<td>216,000</td>
<td>2,493,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Robbins, 1962)</td>
<td>(HESA, 2009-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male:Female</td>
<td>69:31</td>
<td>43:57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1962, Carswell, p172)</td>
<td>(HESA, 2009-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature Students</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(HESA PIs 2008-09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-A Level FT Entrants</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1962, Robbins, p18)</td>
<td>(HESA PIs for young entrants, 2008-09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-UK Students</td>
<td>2,160 (10%)</td>
<td>405,805 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1962, Robbins, p15)</td>
<td>(HESA, 2009-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time Students</td>
<td>9,000 (4%)</td>
<td>861,260 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1962, Robbins, p15)</td>
<td>(HESA, 2009-10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the student population increased and diversified the type of courses being offered also changed. Table 3.2 shows how the proportion of students undertaking Arts, Science, Technical, Medical and Other subjects changed over the last fifty years. Of particular interest is the decline in the proportion of students undertaking Science and Technology courses; the Robbins report recommended that the figures for both these areas should increase to 28% (56% in total) by 1980 (Robbins, p166) however in reality the proportion fell to 14% and 11% respectively. The most significant areas of growth during the last fifty years have been Medical Subjects (largely due to Nursing Colleges being merged with Universities and the courses becoming degree level) and ‘Other’, including Business Studies, which on its own now accounts for 16% of the total HE courses undertaken.

Table 3.2: Subjects undertaken by University/HE Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1962-63*</th>
<th>2009-10**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>All HE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical subjects</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Subjects</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 1962-63 figures come from Robbins Report
**2009-10 figures come from HESA

In addition to the changes in student population and the subject areas being studied there have also been changes in the type of qualification being offered by universities and the ways in which they are delivered. In 1962, 92% of university students were working towards degrees (Robbins, p20). By 2009, 81% of university students were completing degrees while the other 19% were undertaking other types of qualifications including Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) or Certificates (HNCs), Diplomas in Higher Education (DipHE) or Foundation Degrees (HESA, 2009). A further change has been the increase in more flexible modes of
delivery including work-based learning, credit-based provision and part time study (Universities UK, 2010). Table 3.1 shows that the proportion of part time students increased substantially over the period (from 4% to 35% of the HE cohort). The case study presented in chapters 4 to 6 will show that these changing patterns were not just a result of the reclassification of other institutions as ‘universities’ and that the nature of HE provision also began to change within the traditional universities.

As described above, the effects of the expansion on the HE sector and on individual institutions over the last fifty years have been significant. As the HE system has grown dramatically the profile of students and the type of provision on offer has become more diverse. Universities have responded in various ways, including by expanding themselves and by adapting their provision in response to the new environment they face.

**Funding**

The ways in which universities obtain funding has also changed dramatically in recent times. Prior to the WW1 they received funding from a range of sources including endowments, grants from local authorities, church sponsorship, philanthropic donations from wealthy business men, student fees and the state (Berdahl, 1959). The first move towards a national system for funding universities came with the establishment of the University Grants Committee (UGC) an advisory body of the Treasury in 1919. The Committee’s terms of reference were to ‘enquire into the financial needs of university education in the United Kingdom, and to advise the government as to the application of any grants that may be made by parliament towards meeting them’ (UGC terms of reference, quoted in Salter and Tapper, 1994, p105). The UGC was made up predominantly of senior academics chosen to represent their disciplines (Kogan and Hanney, 2004, p181) and the Treasury generally accepted the recommendations it made. The Committee had no powers, was not accountable to Parliament and had no budget, yet it was to remain the body that oversaw the funding of universities until the late 1980s and was generally regarded as an effective ‘buffer’ between the universities and the state (Shattock, 1994).

In the interwar period, government grants accounted for approximately one third of funding received by universities and the UGC and Treasury viewed them as independent institutions (Salter and Tapper 1994, chapter 6 and Carswell, 1985). The proportion of university funding from the state increased following the WW2 and the government began to view universities as a means for reinvigorating the economy, supporting the new welfare state
and enhancing the country’s technological capabilities (Berdahl, 1959, chapter 5), as the following quote shows:

The universities, all privately founded and until recent years largely self-financed, formally governed themselves in splendid isolation from one another and the state; now, however, they have become in effect part of an articulated national system of higher education, each still self-governing but strongly influenced by national policies in many of its decisions regarding curricula, faculty, student body, capital plant, and research, and currently receiving an amount near the national average of three-fourths of its annual income from state funds.

Berdahl, 1959, p2

During the period in which Berdahl made this observation universities were reliant on the government for funding however the funding they received would be considered generous by today’s standards; in 1962-63 institutions received on average £12,727\(^{13}\) per student, adjusted for inflation, compared to between £2,662 for Arts and Social Science students and £5,425 for Science students in 2009 (HEFCE 09/08). So although universities were heavily dependent on the government for resources they had a significant degree of influence over the body responsible for advising the Treasury on their funding (the UGC) and the state funding they received was generous. At this stage therefore, the level of external pressure on universities in terms of resourcing and state interference was relatively low.

The Robbins report assumed that state funding and the unit of resource received by institutions for teaching students would remain roughly the same as the number of students grew through the 1960s and 1970s (Robbins, p201). While this was the case in the 1960s the economic down-turn of the 1970s resulted in a strain on public finances and a period of greater uncertainty in universities. By the 1970s the proportion of university revenue from state funding had increased to an all-time high of around 70% (Salter and Tapper 1994, p221) and they had therefore become much more environmentally dependent, in particular in terms of state funding.

The Conservative government which came to power in 1979 departed from the post-war consensus on the funding of universities and became much more directive in terms of HE

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\(^{13}\) Robbins, p200, FT unit of resource in 1962 was £777 adjusted for inflation using \(\text{http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/historic-inflation-calculator}\)
policy (Kogan and Hanney, 2000). While wanting the number of students to continue growing the government reduced the unit of resource for teaching by nearly 50% in the period 1980 to 1999 (Greenaway and Haynes, p157), so although the total grant to universities increased, institutions were receiving significantly less money for teaching each student. Other changes in the funding arrangements brought in by this government were the introduction of variable tuition fees for international students and the introduction of greater selective funding for research (Kogan and Hanney, 2000).

By the mid 1990s it was widely acknowledged that universities were facing a crisis in funding and a cross-party review was established, chaired by Sir Ron Dearing. The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (1997) recommended that student numbers should be increased to circa 45% of the eligible cohort, that the unit of resource should be increased and that students should contribute towards the cost of their higher education. Student fees of £1000 were introduced in 1998 and the cap on the rate universities could charge was increased to £3000 in 2004. By 2008 roughly half of university funding was derived from government sources (36% teaching grant and 16% in research grants and contracts). The other half was made up of tuition fees and educational contracts (27%), ‘other’ income (19%) and endowments (2%), (HESA, 2008). As a result of these changes in their funding arrangements universities were able to generate additional revenue (charging higher tuition fees) and became less reliant on direct government funding. The nature of the external pressures they had to respond to therefore had changed and the student market became an increasingly important factor.

This trend is set to continue as in 2012 the proportion of HEFCE funding universities receive will be further reduced as the government withdraws state funding for Arts and Social Science higher education and the cap on tuition fees will be lifted to £9,000 (BIS, 2011).

It is interesting to note that the level of state funding universities receive does not necessarily correspond to the level of government intervention/interference in higher education. According to Tapper in the post-war period “economic power did not automatically translate into policy control” (2007, p227). As stated above, in the post-Robbins period, state funding of universities reached an all time high yet central direction of the sector was relatively light touch, with government leaving the oversight of HE to the UGC. As will be described in the following section the reduction in the state-provided unit of resource in the 1980s and 1990s coincided with a significant increase in the amount of
external control and regulation of universities, a trend that seems unlikely to abate post-2012. In terms of the external pressures faced by universities this represents something of a double whammy; increased market pressures as a result of the new fee regime as well as continued government-driven regulation. In the following section increased regulatory and accountability requirements impacting universities will be considered.

**Regulation**

As referred to above, when the UGC was first established it advised the Treasury on the level of funding universities should received but it, and the institutions that reported to it, were not directly accountable for how that money was spent (Carswell, 1985). As the level of funding received by universities began to grow significantly so too did the pressure for them to account for the funding they received. During the 1960s and 1970s the pressure for universities to account for their public funding increased and the government began to question the effectiveness of the UGC as the vehicle for steering higher education (Salter and Tapper, 1994).

Parliament and the Public Accounts Committee became increasingly critical of universities and the UGC during the 1970s and 1980s and in 1989 the UGC was abolished and replaced by new Funding Councils for England, Wales and Scotland (Shatlock 1994). Amongst other things the new Funding Councils were responsible for ensuring that universities were financially accountable and for quality assuring the academic provision of institutions. Greater financial accountability was achieved by introducing increasingly complicated annual reporting on student numbers, research activity, staffing and income and expenditure which were used to drive future funding allocations and were published to ensure transparency (Shatlock, 1994 ch6). A further attempt to regulate the activities of universities came with the introduction of the research selectivity exercise in 1986, which was established in order to monitor the quality of the research being produced by universities and to enable the targeting of funding at the best research departments. The final form of externally imposed regulation to be considered here is the introduction of the higher education quality assurance regime. Following the introduction of formalised sector-wide quality assurance arrangements with the Academic Audit Unit in 1990 and the Higher Education Quality Council (HEDC) in 1992 the Quality Assurance Agency was established in 1997 and given responsibility for providing universities with guidance on how to maintain academic standards and quality and for periodically reviewing institutions to ensure that standards were being maintained (QAA website).
Together these measures were designed to introduce greater financial and academic accountability within universities and had the effect of significantly increasing the reporting and compliance functions within institutions. Specialist administrative units were established at most institutions with responsibility for compiling statistical information, reports to the funding councils and QAA and to assist academics in the preparation of research returns (Warner and Palfreyman, 2000). Institutions also had to invest in IT infrastructure (student records, Human Resources and Finance systems) to ensure that all the requisite information was being collected and stored and could be reported on.

The impact of the QAA requirements on academics was also significant as, often for the first time, they were required to ensure that their courses adhered to regulations and guidelines imposed by their institutions and advocated by an external body (the QAA). In addition to the practical implications of the quality assurance regime Henkel refers to the cultural implications for academics; “Quality Assurance policies...imposed external assessment upon them...[they] represented an attack on academic assumptions of self-regulation (2000, p111). She goes on to describe the practical and cultural impact of the research selectivity agenda on academics:

*The RAE was one of a number of developments that converted research from a matter of individual professional responsibility to one of collective interest to institutions and departments. It triggered substantial changes in the management of the research function in universities and in academic culture.*

Henkel, 2000 p116

The regulatory requirements described here resulted in a significant increase in the level of external pressure on universities and academics in the latter part of the twentieth century, affecting both the administration and the academic activity and culture within institutions. The impact of these external pressures on the case study university will be described in chapters 4 and 5.

Having considered the external higher education context here in the following section the internal/organisational context of traditional universities will be described.
ii The Organisational Characteristics of Universities

As referred to in chapter 1, Scott and Meyer argue that “organisations are embedded in larger systems of relations” which they describe as societal sectors and that organisational traits tend to be common across these sectors, rather than being specific to individual organisations (1991, p137). Neo-institutional theorists argue that it is these traits, rather than their environmental context, that determine the behaviour of organisations. The specific societal sector being considered in this thesis is the group of traditional English universities that were established prior to the 1980s. These universities have a number of distinctive organisational characteristics that have been explored by some HE writers (Gornitzka 1999, Kezar 2003 and Van Vught, 1995) and will be described here. The purpose is to describe the internal context within which the case study university is situated and to provide the answer to the second research question:

**RQ2**: How have organisational cultures and governance structures of universities changed over the last fifty years?

Drawing on the results of a surveys of British universities and academics undertaken by Halsey and Trow (1971) and Moodie and Eustace (1974) details of the academic culture and governance structures which were the norm in the 1960s and 1970s will be described. Following on from that details will be provided of how these cultures and structures came under pressure during the 1980s and how, in response, the governance structures of universities began to evolve.

The organisational characteristics of the case study university and details of how its governance structures evolved over the period will be explored in chapter 4. In the analysis chapter (7) the extent to which the organisational characteristics of this university conform to Meyer and Rowan’s definition of institutional vs production-organisational types (see table 1.1) will be assessed and the results of this analysis will feed into the theoretical framework, providing the answer to the third research question:

**RQ3**: To what extent is the behaviour of universities driven by environmental and organisational factors?
**Academic Governance and Culture**

Moodie and Eustace conducted a detailed survey of the governance arrangements of British Universities in the 1970s. They described the standard structure as being a governing body (generally called Court or Council) with legal and financial responsibility for university delegating power for academic matters to Senate and the day-to-day administration of the university to a Vice Chancellor (generally a former academic) who was supported by the ‘bureaucracy’ or ‘administration’. They state that “no Vice Chancellor has absolute powers over any person or event in his university” (1974, p129) and describe how in reality most decision-making took place within Senate or academic departments. They found that:

...a university is not a simple hierarchical type of organisation. What one finds, on the contrary, is an untidy diffusion of responsibility and a proliferation of centers of initiative and decision-making which are related to one another in ways which are not neatly bureaucratic. There is no direct and comprehensive chain of command, and the notion of an order being issued from one person to another is generally felt to be alien to the way in which British universities should govern their affairs.

Moodie and Eustace, 1974, p21

They described the way in which universities were run as ‘academic self-government’ (1974, p58), with the academic community, and in particular the professoriate, holding the balance of power in institutions, both via leadership of their departments and by their membership of decision-making bodies such as Senate. Halsey and Trow concur that the most powerful group within universities was the academics and the most influential body at that time was the Senate:

*In practice the effective ruling body of all the modern universities is the Senate and this is, in every case, a committee of academic persons dominated by professorial heads of departments.*

Halsey and Trow, 1971, p111

Van Vught argues that these devolved and professionally dominated governance structures are a result of what he describes as the “authority of the academic professional experts”
(1995, p202). Essentially, because the academic professionals are the only ones who are qualified to make decisions about the fundamental business of universities (the creation and dissemination of knowledge) the organisational structures were established with these groups in authority (even over purely administrative matters such as finances and support functions). This tradition of academic self-governance is also consistent with deeply embedded concepts of academic freedom and professional autonomy. According to Moodie and Eustace, academic freedom extends beyond the concept that academics should be able to teach and conduct research without fear of external interference or control (Altbach, 2001, p206) and encompasses the way in which in which members of the university should interact with each other:

> Academic freedom, if only in the sense of mutual respect for the integrity of each subject organisation, is thus a principle relevant to the relations within the university and not only to a university’s attempts to protect itself from external pressures.

Moodie and Eustace, 1974, p61

A further distinctive trait of these universities identified by Moodie and Eustace is the fact that most of their members (academics and students) did not have a strong sense of the organisation as a whole and that the most powerful figure for many of them was their head of department “...the subject-department is the university...everything else is no more than a supportive service or a practical convenience.” (1974, p60). They described how professorial staff within departments were responsible for obtaining resources from the ‘centre’ and determining how they would be distributed within the area. They also described how the professors and departmental Heads influenced organisational decision-making informally via personal networks and relationships with senior central figures and formally via participation on institution-wide committees and bodies such as Senate.

Drawing these characteristics together Van Vught makes the following observation about universities:

> Their fundamental characteristics (the autonomy of the professional experts, the organisational fragmentation, and the diffusion of the decision-making power) may to a large extent explain the miraculous adaptability and historical persistence of higher education institutions.
The organisational characteristics of universities described here conform to the institutional-organisational type defined by Meyer and Rowan in chapter 1; organisations with multiple, non-financial objectives that are professionally dominated and have devolved decision-making structures. This observation may appear to be self-evident to anyone working within universities (they often describe themselves as ‘institutions’ and rarely as ‘organisations’). However, it is significant when one considers how the cultures and organisational characteristics of universities have evolved over the last fifty years within the context of Meyer and Rowan’s organisational continuum (which supposes that over time it is possible that an ‘institution’ might become less institutional).

The next section details the pressures universities faced to reform their governance structures by adopting what Meyer and Rowan (1991) define as production-organisational characteristics (to become more output focused, managerial and to adopt a more economically rational approach to decision making, see table 1.1 chapter 1). Details of how accepted cultural concepts such as the liberal ideal of higher education and academic autonomy were challenged and eroded within the sector will also be provided.

**Pressures on Traditional Cultures and Governance Structures of Universities**

By the early 1980s the traditional cultures and structures of universities came under increasing pressure, both externally and from within. External pressure came in the form of public sector reforms that sought to reduce professional autonomy and make services funded by the state, including universities, more efficient by introducing private sector management techniques. The increasing emphasis placed by the government on the role of higher education in supporting the economy challenged academic autonomy and the traditional liberal view that the purpose of higher education was the pursuit of knowledge. Internal pressure to change arose in response to the need for universities to start making difficult decisions in the context of reduced funding, the expansion of student numbers and the need for individual academics and departments to conform to centrally defined standards in responses to the increasingly complex administrative and regulatory requirements they faced.
The Conservative government in the 1980s began to reform public service delivery by introducing private sector-inspired managerial techniques in a process which is described as New Public Management (NPM) reform (Hood and Peters, 2004). Dunleavy et al (2005) identify the key characteristics of NPM as being; disaggregation (the splitting down of large public bodies into smaller, locally managed cost centres), competition (the introduction of the purchaser provider split and quasi-markets) and incentivisation (use of performance indicators and performance-based resource allocation). The Jarratt Report, which was published in 1985, concluded that the management structures and systems employed within universities were no longer effective and recommended reforming them in ways that were consistent with the NPM approach including increasing the power of Vice Chancellors, adopting the use of performance indicators, introducing transparent and performance-related resource allocation models and greater use of evidence-based decision-making and planning of activity (Jarratt 1985, Ferlie and Andresani 2009). Over time many of the management structures and techniques proposed by Jarratt were adopted and became the norm within the sector (Shattock, 2003) and at many universities the freedom of academics was curtailed as management became more prescriptive and their activities were increasingly monitored and evaluated according to managerial rather than academic criteria.

As well as seeking to reform the governance structures of universities, during this period, the government challenged the traditional academic view of the purpose of universities by expecting them to deliver teaching and undertake research that would contribute to the success of the national economy:

[governments] basic principle is that education is an economic resource which should be organised in a way that maximises its contribution to Britain’s industrial development...Once it is assumed that education’s primary goal is to serve the economy, all else is then subordinated to that goal. As an educational principle, the disinterested pursuit of knowledge is devalued.

Salter and Tapper, 1994, p13

Middlehurst explains how this approach to higher education was at odds with the traditional liberal ideal:

The liberal ideal in its purest form emphasised the intrinsic value of learning as distinct from learning for instrumental and vocational purposes. An economic
ideology that has gained increasing ground since 1945 instead saw education as an economic resource to be deployed to support the country’s industrial development. As such, it was a direct challenge to the hegemony of the liberal ideal.

In addition to the explicit attempts made by government to reform universities, a number of economic, administrative and regulatory factors led to pressures to develop more managerial structures within these organisations.

While in 1974 Moodie and Eustace conceded that managers may be useful, on occasion, in persuading academics to “accept the unpleasant decisions necessitated by the scarcity of money” (1974, p167), by the mid 1980s many universities were in financial crisis and it became increasingly recognised that, within the context of the reductions in funding, limited resources needed to be utilised more effectively (Taylor, 2005). The traditional decentralized decision-making structures of universities were not particularly effective at responding to a climate of reduced funding and as a result some Vice Chancellors and governing bodies attempted to centralise decision-making and resource allocation within their institutions (Kogan, 1984). Where they were successful commentators described a reduction in the authority of traditionally strong academically dominated roles and bodies such as Heads of Department and Senate, a trend that Halsey described as the decline in donnish dominion (1992).

In addition to the financial drivers, further internal pressure on traditional structures arose in universities as the number of students and the regulatory requirements increased. As these pressures mounted academic staff became increasingly reliant on administrative staff to provide support to students, to administer academic programmes and to ensure compliance with externally imposed regulatory requirements and the completion of complex statistical returns. As the administrative burden increased so did the power of professional non-academic staff with responsibility for finance, human resources, quality assurance and planning and budgeting (Kogan and Hanney, 2004, p190).

According to Trow the reduction in funding and increased administrative burden associated with the expansion of student numbers has a further adverse affect in terms of placing extra pressures on academics which divert them away from their core activities:
The new climate makes demands on their time and energy and emotional equilibrium that are quite incompatible with their pursuit of their subjects and the work with their students that is or ought to be the main business of academic men.

Trow, 1972, p 68

As the pressures on the traditional institutional characteristics of universities have increased over the last fifty years the impact on their organisational structures and cultures have been quite different. While the administrative and governance structures of many universities have changed quite significantly over the period, with a shift from the de-centralized, professionally dominated model described by Moodie and Eustace to more centralized and managerial models advocated by Jarratt (Shattock, 2003). The effects on the academic culture have arguably been less significant, with academic freedom and the traditional liberal ideal of higher education, though challenged, remaining prevalent within many traditional universities (Salter and Tapper 1994, Henkel 2000 and West, 2006).

In chapters 4 and 5 data from the case study will show how the governance structures of a university evolved over the period along with how these internal changes and external pressures described above impacted academic culture and teaching and research practice.

iii. Using the Contextual Information to Answer the Research Questions

The purpose of this chapter has been to describe the environmental and organisational context of universities during the period 1960 to 2010. The information presented above provides the context for the case study that will be presented will be combined with results from the case study in the final chapter in order to provide the answers to the first two research questions.

RQ1: What are the external pressures on universities?

In the first section of this chapter a number of significant environmental factors that impacted English universities during the period 1960-2010 were presented.

The most significant environmental factor affecting universities during this period was the expansion of the higher education sector that resulted in the number of students...
undertaking higher education increasing by an order of magnitude. The effects of expansion were far reaching with universities developing new types of academic programmes, supporting a more diverse student body and having to develop new forms of administration in order to cope with the larger numbers.

A further significant external pressure faced by universities over the last fifty years has been the variation in the pattern of funding. Universities received relatively generous state funding in the 1960s and 1970s however by the 1980s the unit of resource for teaching began to fall, funding for research became increasingly competitive and the introduction of tuition fees for international students marked the start in the shift of the cost of higher education from the state to the individual. The changing pattern of funding has required universities to become much more economically efficient, led to more managerial governance of institutions in order to achieve this and to diversify income streams and become more market-oriented.

The final significant external pressure to be considered here is the increased regulatory requirements universities are obliged to conform to including compliance with QAA requirements, participation in Research Assessment Exercises and the provision of statistics and annual reporting to the Funding Council. The effect of these on universities has been a reduction in autonomy, an increase in the administrative burden on academics, and the establishment of administrative offices with specialist knowledge of the external returns and compliance requirements.

RQ2: How have organisational cultures and governance structures within universities changed over the last fifty years?

In the second section of this chapter the distinctive organisational characteristics of universities were described and the importance of concepts such as academic freedom, professional autonomy and the traditional liberal view of the purpose of higher education, which underpin the culture and structures of traditional universities were emphasised. The evidence presented here confirmed that universities conform to Meyer and Rowan’s (1991) institutional-organisation type.

The decentralised and professionally dominated governance structures that were the norm in the 1960s and 1970s were described, as were the ways in which these came under pressure externally from government advocating NPM reforms, and internally, as a result of
resource shortages, the need to respond to regulatory requirements and the growth in the size and complexity of the organisations. In response to these pressures decision-making became more centralised in some institutions, eroding the authority and autonomy of bodies such as the Senate and figures such as the Heads of Department and NPM management techniques were introduced.

The evidence presented here also shows that, during this period the traditional liberal view of the purpose of universities (the disinterested pursuit of knowledge) has been challenged by what Salter and Tapper (1994) describe as the economic ideology of higher education and by increased external pressures on teaching and research. However, despite this evidence it was found that, for many individuals working within universities, the traditional view of their role and the purpose of universities remains dominant.

Despite the structural changes and cultural pressures described here universities have both adapted to their new organisational and environmental context and have retained strong institutional characteristics.

In the following three chapters the results of the case study will be presented.
Chapter 4: Profile of a University

In this chapter data from the case study will be used to describe the governance structures and organisational characteristics of the case study university (CSU) and to show how it responded to the external pressures described in chapter 3 (expansion of the HE sector, changes in funding arrangements and increased regulation).

The information presented in this chapter will be used in the analysis of the following questions in chapter 7:

**Analysis Question 1:** How independent is the CSU from its environment and did its level of dependency change over time?

**Analysis Question 2:** Where is the CSU situated on the institutional-production organisation continuum and did its position change over time?

At the end of the chapter a brief summary of how the data presented here will be used to answer these questions will be given.

i. **Overview**

The CSU is a mid-sized regional university, established in the 1920s. According to its official history it is unique in that it was the only university to be established during the inter-war depression and not to be developed from a pre-existing institution. Despite facing opposition from government and the higher education sector the founding fathers remained committed to the idea and launched their new university. The traditional English University model described in chapter 3 was adopted, new buildings were erected in a suburb of the city that it took its name from and a broad range of arts and science departments were set up (A1). Initially established as a University College (with its students being awarded degrees by the University of London), the institution achieved degree awarding powers and full University status in the 1950s.
By the beginning of the case study period (1960) the university had 20 academic departments in 3 faculties covering Arts, Science and Social Science disciplines. 1660 students were enrolled and it employed 314 academics and 49 administrative staff in senior roles (AR60). In common with many universities the CSU enjoyed a period of generous state funding and significant expansion in the post-Robbins era, with student numbers increasing to 3875 and the number of academics increasing to 639 by 1969 (AR69). Although student numbers continued to grow throughout the 1970s, again in common with a number of other universities, finances became increasingly restricted. In 1981 the funding body announced that the grant to the CSU would be cut by 25% over the following three years (compared to an average of 15% cuts across the sector, Kogan 1984) and a period of economic hardship and considerable reorganisation followed (C1-C10).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the CSU struggled to keep expenditure in line with income and came under repeated pressure from the funding body (initially the UGC and later HEFCE) to restructure both organisationally and in terms of academic focus (C3 and C10). The final decade covered by the case study was categorised by gradually improved financial performance (as tuition fees increased and international numbers grew), further expansion and number of significant new academic developments including the withdrawal from some subject areas, the establishment of new disciplines and the acquisition of a satellite campus (AR05-09).

Table 4.1 provides summary statistics showing how the CSU evolved and expanded during the fifty years covered by the case study.
**Table 4.1: Statistical Information Relating to the CSU 1960-2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early Period</th>
<th>Late Period</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Numbers</strong></td>
<td>1660 in 1960 (AR60)</td>
<td>5457 in 1980 (AR80)</td>
<td>X 13 (since 1960)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3875 in 1969 (AR69)</td>
<td>22370 in 2009 (HESA)</td>
<td>X 6 (since 1969)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International Students</strong></td>
<td>120 (7%) in 1964 (AR64)</td>
<td>1597 (12% of FT population) in 2009 (SSH)</td>
<td>X 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male/Female Student Ratio</strong></td>
<td>72/28 in 1960 (AR60)</td>
<td>46/54 in 2009 (SSH)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part Time Students</strong></td>
<td>71 (4%) in 1960 (AR60)*</td>
<td>8760 (39%) in 2009 (HESA)</td>
<td>X 123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Postgraduate Students</strong></td>
<td>43 (3%) in 1959 (AR59)</td>
<td>3375 (14%) in 2009 (HESA)</td>
<td>X 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sector = 23% (HESA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Staff Numbers</strong></td>
<td>314 in 1963 (AR63)</td>
<td>905 (HESA)</td>
<td>X 3 (since 1960)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>639 in 1969 (AR69)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X 1.5 (since 1969)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student/Staff Ratio (FTE)</strong></td>
<td>7.14 in 1963 6.06 in 1969</td>
<td>17.7 in 2009</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative Staff</strong></td>
<td>49 Administrative/ Managerial in 1969 (AR)</td>
<td>325 Administrative/ Managerial in 2009 (HESA)</td>
<td>X 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revenue</strong></td>
<td>£686k in 1960 (AR60)</td>
<td>£151m in 2009 (HESA)</td>
<td>X 13 (Adjusted for inflation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% Revenue from Government</strong></td>
<td>75% from UGC in 1960 (AR60)</td>
<td>36% from Funding Councils in 2009 (with 39% from fees) (HESA)</td>
<td>-39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit of Resource</strong></td>
<td>£5.3k per student in 1960</td>
<td>£3.3k per student in 2009</td>
<td>-36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(E per FTE from UGC/HEFCE inflation adjusted)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Academic Departments/Schools</strong></td>
<td>20 in 1960 (AR60) 45 in 1981 (AR81)</td>
<td>13 in 1983 (AR83) 24 in 2009 (SSH)</td>
<td>83 students per dept to 932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proportion of Students studying Science</strong></td>
<td>32% Science in 1960 (AR59/60)</td>
<td>27% Science in 2009 (SSH)</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Annual Reports (early period), 2008/09 Student Statistics Handbook, HESA Student, Financial and HR Information

* An interview respondent who checked the case study pointed out that PT numbers were not always accurately recorded until the 1970 when they became eligible for state funding.

** Many of the additional postgraduate numbers were also international.

*** Staff numbers not available in 1960 hence 1963 figure presented here. 2009 figure based on FTE student and staff numbers rather than the total numbers presented at the top of the table.

The information presented in Table 4.1 shows that over the period 1960-2009 the CSU underwent a period of rapid expansion and change. A number of key trends are highlighted here and will be explored in more detail later in this and the other data chapters.
First, the rate of expansion of student numbers (x 13) was not matched by a corresponding increase in the number of academic staff (x 3). The impact of the increase in the student/staff ratio on teaching practice and research activity are considered in the chapter 5.

Second, in common with the rest of the sector (see chapter 3) the student body became much more diverse. In the 1960s the CSUs students were predominantly full time undergraduate British males but by the end of the case study there was a greater mixture of full time and part time, male and female, with 12% of the full time student body coming from outside the EU and a higher proportion of postgraduates. Further details of how the student body changed and the impact that this had on teaching practice are provided in chapter 5.

Third, while the number of academic staff increased threefold the number of administrative/managerial staff increased at twice that rate. These numbers reflect the increased complexity of running a larger institution, pressure on academic time leading to a transference of administrative functions to dedicated staff and the increased need for specialist administrative roles to ensure that the University is compliant with external pressures e.g. government regulation, and the need to respond to the student market. These themes will be addressed in section 2 of this chapter which relates to the structure and governance of the CSU.

Fourth, the variation in the number of academic departments/schools over the period demonstrates that the CSU went through a number of stages of restructuring over the fifty year period. Details of some of these academic structure changes will be provided in chapter 6 along with evidence of what prompted the CSU to change (or not) its academic profile.

Finally, although the total revenue increased in line with student numbers the proportion of funding the CSU received from the government for teaching decreased dramatically (from 75% in 1960 to 36% in 2009). This reflects the broader trends in HE funding discussed in chapter 3 that the transfer of costs to the individual and attempts by universities to develop alternative revenue streams. The financial performance of the CSU will be presented in section 4 of this chapter.
ii. The Organisational Characteristics of the CSU

In this section evidence from a variety of sources from the case study will be used to describe the organisational traits of the CSU and to show how its culture and administrative structures changed over the period covered by the case study.

The Governance Structures of the CSU

The governance structures of the CSU conformed to those of the traditional English University described by Moodie and Eustace (1976) in chapter 3. The executive function was carried out by a Council which had a combined membership of lay people (typically local businessmen and councillors, AR59) and members of the university elected by Senate, and was responsible for the financial well-being of the university and for appointing and advising the Vice Chancellor. The Council delegated responsibility for the oversight of academic matters to the Senate, which was made up of representatives of the academic community, typically the professoriate (AR59).

The management of the CSU was undertaken in the devolved way, typical of traditional English universities, with the Vice Chancellor, supported by part-time, fixed-term Pro Vice Chancellors, leading on university matters. Heads of Department (HoD) were largely responsible for the day-to-day administration of their department/subject area. Most of the interview respondents stressed the importance of the role of HoD, and the authority of those who occupied the position, particularly in the early period covered by the case study:

They were quite powerful men I have to say, they were almost overwhelmingly men. They had the kind of authority that professors in these days might dream about but don’t get.

RP4.a

Also in accordance with Moodie and Eustace's description of the traditional English university, decisions regarding resource allocation within the CSU were typically based on historical allocations and there was little transparency or accountability within the organisation about the decisions that were being made:
When Swinnerton-Dyer\textsuperscript{14} was asked how the UGC made decisions about what goes where he said "informed prejudice" and he was quite proud of it being informed, not just prejudice. That's how it worked internally too.

Another respondent stressed how the rank and file members of a department tended to be unaware of the central university decision-making that was affecting them and their department:

...and he would constantly be telling us that he was saving our jobs by talking to these people in suits, who we didn't recognise at all who kept coming to him. And I would go to the odd Senate and faculty meeting that I was on and find out that he had committed the department to do something which I knew nothing about at all.

As described in Chapter 3 during the 1980s universities came under increasing pressure to adopt the private sector inspired management techniques advocated by NPM and the Conservative government of the time. Pressure on the CSU came not only in the form of the external guidance of the Jarratt Report but also from a funding crisis brought about by the UGC's decision in 1981 to significantly reduce the grant made to the institution. That decision precipitated a decrease in revenue which led to the 'central' management of the CSU scrutinising and controlling expenditure to a much greater degree than had been necessary to do before. From that point the CSU began to adopt the more managerial approaches advocated by Jarratt and there are references in the archive material to the challenge this posed to the autonomy of the university and to individual academics:

The Jarratt Committee has asked universities to review their management structures to ensure flexibility in future planning...It is unlikely that in the coming years universities will be left to pursue their traditional goals without external bodies attempting to prescribe their roles and limit their activity by further restricting student numbers and resources...

AR85, Report from Senate

\textsuperscript{14} Chairman of the UGC during the 1980s
...the faculty, like the rest of the University, might have been forgiven if during the past session it concluded that it had been trapped in some Kafkaesque version of the Charge of the Light Brigade, forced unwillingly into the Valley of Death where Reports to the right, Reports to the left volley’d and thunder’d. Internally Patmore II on the range of Academic Activity spoke and Jennings on Finance, Friend on Research Organisation and Funding, McClelland on Continuing Education; from the ramparts and emplacements of the UGC and DES yet heavier ordinance roared, its aims doubtfully certain, its potential for devastation inescapable; Strategy Advice, Jarratt, Green Paper, Circular Letter 12/85, in itself a whole battery...

AR85, Report from Dean of Arts

Although the governance structures remained broadly the same throughout the period of the case study, evidence was found that demonstrated that the approach to managing the organisation changed and that power shifted from academics and departments to the 'centre' during this time. The growth in the importance of the VC and the central administration of the university is illustrated by the significant increase in the number of administrative staff in managerial roles. Table 4.1 shows that this cohort of staff increased six-fold during the period covered by the case study (in comparison to a three-fold increase in academic staff). This additional resource enabled some routine administrative functions (such as student recruitment, admissions, registry functions) to be transferred from academic departments to centralised service units that worked across the university. It also increased the CSU’s capacity for recording and monitoring finance, HR and student related activities and for implementing university-wide policy and processes which gave the senior central managers greater power and control over what was happening in academic departments (IT1).

In tandem with the increased centralised resource dedicated to supporting the CSU’s leaders, the individuals in these roles began to assert themselves more and they began to have more influence over the traditional governance bodies within the University. One interview respondent described how a VC in the second half of the case study period approached Senate:
One example was a determination by [the VC of the time] to make sure that the really hard decisions were made before things got to Senate. He told me he counted the votes he thought he could depend on in Senate because he knew that if he lost a vote in Senate then all sorts of things would fall. He didn’t emasculate Senate, in fact that point about him counting the votes is an acknowledgement that he had got to try to persuade Senate but there was then much greater preparation of the material and the arguments and greater engagement before things got to Senate.

Another change referred to by those who were interviewed was the evolution of the role of the Pro Vice Chancellors (PVC). In the early part of the case study period the CSU had two PVCs who were appointed on a part time, rotating basis. In the middle period the number had been increased to three and, although still rotational, had become full time. By the end of the period the CSU had three full time PVCs, all with academic backgrounds, but now recruited on a permanent basis to dedicated administrative functions (H1). All the PVCs during the final decade of the case study were recruited from senior administrative positions at other universities and interview respondents noted how they had introduced the X way of budgeting or the Y approach to student recruitment target setting within the CSU. One respondent demonstrated how this change was perceived by academic staff:

...the head of department of Electronics, towards the end of his career he became PVC, but he would still be teaching, he’d still be attached to electronics but hived off when he became PVC. Those people were then making decisions on University policy. I doubt the role has changed, the aim was for them to do what they do now, to help make policy, to make decisions. It seems to have become, it’s unfair to say a more professional job because I’m not saying that they didn’t do it professionally, but we will now recruit somebody who is capable of doing that as a job. Rather than it just being a jolly good chap who is good at research and is well known in the country, therefore he should be PVC, whereas in fact he might be awful at making decisions. Now you probably hire somebody don’t you?
The same respondent explained how during the 1980s it was perceived that the new managerial approach had trickled down to departmental level and affected his own Head of Department:

*The head of department at that time was XXX who had in fact been a very scholarly bloke when he first arrived in 1968, he was involved in editing the John Bull pamphlets by Arbuthnot in the early 18th century. I thought that it was a bit unfortunate when he seemed to be dropping that and becoming a man in a suit doing all the managing. But the University was quite happy with that.*

RP3

A further significant change that occurred during the second half of the case study period was an increased focus within the CSU on the external environment, in particular on student recruitment markets (UK and overseas) and on attracting additional revenue from activities other than teaching and research. An Office of External Affairs was created in 1981 (C7) and by the end of the case study period the CSU employed 56 individuals in externally facing, market-oriented roles such as recruitment, marketing and knowledge exchange (more than the entire number of administrators at the CSU at the start of the period, see Table 4.1). In addition to these specific functions, it was also the case that senior administrators, who had historically been appointed on the basis of their academic contribution to the institution, were now expected to share that market focus:

*…and usually people are appointed to universities because they satisfy what is seen as the need of the University at that moment in time…the most senior people are now appointed for the corporate, market competition kind of scenario that I described before…*

RP1

In summary, during the fifty years covered by the case study the CSU’s governance and management structures remained largely the same, conforming to the traditional English university model. However evidence from the case study demonstrated that within those structures power shifted, with the VC and PVCs, supported by an increased central administration becoming more prominent and having greater influence over the academic departments and Senate. A further change noted here was the increased focus of senior
managers and the administration on the external environment, brought about by the changes in state funding and resulting financial pressures the CSU faced in the middle period of the case study.

**Organisational Characteristics of the CSU**

A number of distinctive characteristics emerged from the interviews and the review of archival material that are relevant to the organisational classification of the CSU. These will be presented here.

As described above, the CSU conforms to the traditional English university model. The prevailing culture amongst the academics who participated in the interviews was consistent with the notions of academic freedom and autonomy that are central to this type of university and were described in chapter 3 (Moodie and Eustace, 1976). As one respondent stated:

> You can block [the CSU] with the pre-92s in terms of certain irritation with outside forces, whether its the RAE, HEFCE or QAA. There is still this strong sense of autonomy which goes right the way down to the individual academic.

R4.b

However, although the CSU shared many characteristics with other traditional universities a number of interviews respondents made the point that that it stood out slightly within the sector. An example of this was the fact that it wasn’t a member of any of the official or unofficial groupings within the English HE sector:

> ...it is distinctive in its make up. You'd like to think of it, wouldn't you, as a kind of big civic, but its never quite managed to be a big civic... it didn't become part of the White Rose Group, it hasn't got sufficient science and technological expertise....it isn't in the Russell Group. It wasn't in the 1994 Group. I don’t know what it is in? It’s un-aligned.

R4.b
A further distinctive feature identified by some of the respondents was the geographical isolation of the CSU. This was seen by some as a positive characteristic:

*We are fortunate because of our geographic remoteness. We are the only provider in the city, and there is some comfort in being a monopoly provider and then using the assets of the region, our ports and so on...*

RP1

Respondents also identified a more negative trait which they associated with its unaligned status and geographical isolation, insularity. It was felt that this trait contributed to a lack of awareness of what was happening elsewhere in the sector:

*...that might be a result of another institutional trait of insularity. That is perhaps more pronounced here than elsewhere. We are not always sufficiently aware of the external environment.*

R5.b

A further distinctive trait of the CSU to emerge was its tendency in some situations to be slow to respond to the external environment whether to new opportunities or external pressures. Again, this was viewed as being both a negative and a positive trait by the interview respondents. A number of examples were identified where the organisation had potentially missed opportunities as a result of being slow, or as one document put it ‘action-averse’ (Q1), however the following quote demonstrates that on occasions the slowness to respond was actually intentional and in the best interest of the CSU:

*...one of the consequences of the enforced contraction of the university would be a radical review of its government and management...many of the recommendations contained in the Jarrett Report have been arrived at independently during the last ten years....there was an initial view that some basic aspects of the Jarrett recommendations should be implemented with effect from the beginning of the next session, but it has subsequently been decided to take a more leisurely approach...*

J1, notes from a seminar on the impact of the Jarrett Report, 1985
Another respondent suggested that, whether intentional or unintentional, being slow to respond to external pressures was not necessarily a negative characteristic:

_We are pretty slow, we are not very good at being ahead of the game and anticipating things and I think over the years this has been true so we always tend to be following in the wake...it can have good consequences. If you are slow enough to respond to some politician’s whims by the time you are ready to respond they have gone._

R5.b

Other evidence from the case study was consistent with the point made by Kerr (1982) that one of reasons why institutions such as universities survive and endure is because they have a tendency to be cautious and resist change rather than being highly reactive to immediate environmental pressures:

..._nor were the Faculties nests of defensive reaction: cautious, certainly, but caution is no vice in institutions with so long reaction times as universities..._

AR87

Many of the respondents referred to a distinctive characteristic of the CSU being the emphasis across the institution on supporting students, in contrast to other traditional universities where it was felt that teaching and student support was often of secondary importance to the business of conducting research. Numerous examples of archival material highlighted this student-focus and the word ‘friendly’ was repeatedly used in internal documents, respondents and by external bodies to describe the CSU. This emphasis on student support appeared to emanate from grass roots academia rather than being a top-down agenda:

_The head of the department would be amazed at the amount of time I would spend on teaching matters, at the expense of research._

referring to the 1970s, R2

A further distinctive organisational trait to emerge from the case study appeared, at least superficially, to be at odds with the insularity and slowness described above. This was that the organisation would borrow ideas and approaches from elsewhere in the sector and, on
occasion, develop programmes and approaches that were innovative and copied by other universities. One respondent described this as follows:

\[\text{Perversely the sector does work like that, stealing ideas from other institutions. That's how a lot of new programmes are developed - because someone else is doing it and it's successful so we'll have a go. If you take the case where we were sector-leading, in Internet Computing, within a few years everybody had stolen the idea and the market disappeared. Very rapidly people copied what we were doing.}\]

RP5.b

Another respondent identified a number of distinctive areas of provision that had been launched by the institution which, at the time, were not standard subject areas at traditional universities. This also emphasises another CSU trait which was a focus on the interests and needs of the local area:

\[\text{It's fascinating when you think about Oceanography and Aeronautical Engineering because it shows that the innovation can take very different forms. Some of these examples clearly relate to where [the city] is. It was about embedding the undergraduate disciplines and the research within the local community and that's one way of ensuring some kind of distinctiveness... from about the mid-1990s and onwards, you talk about research in here, is how that theme of finding research which aligns with regional interests is coming back...the Logistics Institute is a very good example...}\]

R4P.b

In summary, a number of distinctive organisational traits emerged from the case study. First, although the CSU was one of the older institutions in the country it was regarded as singular by respondents because of its geographical location and because it was not aligned to any of the sector interest groups. Second, partly attributed to its individuality and isolation it was regarded by respondents as being more insular than other institutions, and as being resistant or slow to change. Third, it was clear that whilst research was viewed as an important activity, the institution gave equal weight to teaching and was more student-focussed than many other ‘old’ universities. Fourth, there were numerous examples of the
CSU adopting innovative programmes, that were explicitly geared towards the local resources and the interests of the local area.

iii. The Impact of Expansion, Funding Cuts and Regulation on the CSU

In this section evidence of the impact of the external pressures facing the higher education sector that were described in chapter 3 on the CSU will be presented.

Expansion

As explained in chapter 3 during the period covered by the case study the English higher education sector was transformed from an elite into a universal system with the proportion of the eligible cohort undertaking some form of higher education increasing from 8% to nearly 47% between 1960 and 2009. Over this half century the CSU student population increased from 1,660 to 22,370 (see table 4.1). Figure 4.1 shows that there was significant growth in student numbers at the CSU in the 1960s, a period of steadier expansion throughout the 1970s-1980s and in the 2000s and that the most dramatic period of expansion occurred in the 1990s, during which time the CSU acquired a satellite campus in a nearby town.

Figure 4.1: Growth in Student Numbers at CSU 1960-2009
Two of the participants who had been involved in the administration of the university for significant periods were asked what had driven the expansion of the CSU. Both gave clear responses that throughout the period covered by the case study there had been an implicit desire within the university to expand. One of them put it like this:

*Don’t all organisations have an inclination to grow? ...it seems to me that when you start with however many undergraduates, 150 something like that, and you look at the plans, at the land that was bought. It must have been at the back of somebody’s mind – growth!*  

RP4.b

One of the founding fathers of the CSU donated a significant portion of land for the new university a number of years before it was actually founded. Figure 4.2 shows the original plot of land that was donated the initial plans to fill the space. In the event, only the buildings marked A, B and C on this plan were completed. However, it is clear from the 1927 plan that the expectation was that the university would become a medium to large institution by the standards of the day. Figure 4.3 shows how the original land was eventually developed and how the CSU was able to continue to expand by acquiring land both to the east and the west of the original campus.

*Figure 4.2: Campus Plan 1927  Figure 4.3: Campus in 2009 with Original Boundaries*

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15 UGC figures quoted in official History of the CSU note that other universities had between 318 (University of Exeter) and 1911 (University of Manchester) students in 1922-23. The 1927 plans suggest that, once fully developed the CSU would be able to accommodate student numbers in excess of 1000 students, in the 7 halls of residence and 6 academic buildings that were anticipated.
At the beginning of the case study period the main buildings on campus were the three that are circled on figure 4.3. The rest of the campus was largely covered with temporary buildings and was somewhat overcrowded, as in the post-war period student numbers had increased tenfold (from 160 to 1660), (A1).

The following excerpt from the CSU’s annual report of 1965 demonstrates that the organisation was optimistic about plans for future expansion and that the primary concern was that capital investment should be made so that the additional students and staff could be properly accommodated on campus.

*After a full year of comment and discussion of the Robbins report, both within and without universities, and despite some uncertainties about the impact of its major recommendations on future developments, the new session began in a mood of sombre optimism. Whatever the future might bring us by way of growth in undergraduate and postgraduate studies a determined effort needs to be made to house existing departments properly and to increase residential accommodation before any further large-scale expansion can be contemplated.*

AR65, p20

It had originally been anticipated that student residences would be situated on the campus. However the rate of expansion, and the acquisition by the CSU of a significant portion of land in a nearby village meant that, by the 1960s, all but one of the student halls of residence were off campus and virtually the whole of the original site was set aside for academic buildings (with a cricket pitch replacing the originally planned tennis, lacrosse and swimming facilities). The CSU took the opportunity to buy up nearby houses as they became available and by the 1990s it had acquired almost all the properties in the two streets to the east of the campus which were also used for student accommodation and meant that the main site could continue to be used for academic buildings.

The CSU received considerable capital investment from the UGC during the 1960s and was able to replace most of the temporary buildings on campus with state of the art teaching and research facilities. 1966 saw the completion of a large new building to house Arts, a sport centre and the award of a significant grant from the UGC for a new Social Science building. Around that time, work on six new Science buildings and the library was also
completed (A1). In the late 1960s the area to the east of the campus was acquired and was used to build the Social Science building and in later years a science park, a nursery and some additional student accommodation.

In 1966 Senate reported that no further capital grants had been made for 1968-70 (AR66) and in the years that followed the rate of building on campus slowed down considerably. However, the academic buildings that had been erected on campus and the Halls of Residence built in the nearby village during the 1960s were sufficient to accommodate a 150% increase in student numbers during the 1960s (1660-4296) and a further 50% growth throughout the 1970s and 1980s (4,296-6,561).

It was clear from the 1966 UGC visit that the CSU’s plans for growth were consistent with the national policy of expansion of HE and that the UGC were pleased with the way in which the CSU was executing its plans:

...immense progress had been made in the last few years and the university was clearly in a state of great liveliness...the Committee had acquired a lively admiration and regard for the university, both for the way it had carried through the vast expansion of recent years and for having at the same time kept a grip on the situation.

Chairman of UGC comments to Council and Senate reported in AR66

By the end of the 1960s however there was evidence of discord between the local and national expansion plans. As the growth in national spending on HE began to tail off the UGC urged the CSU not to continue to increase student numbers but if it insisted on doing so, that additional numbers should be taken in Arts, not Science subjects (A1). Senate commented at the time that this approach was inconsistent with both national policy (which sought to increase the number of science graduates) and with the CSU’s own plans (following the recent heavy investment in new Science buildings) and indicated its intention to fill as many of the spare Science places as the number of qualified applicants allowed, (AR68). In the event student demand for Science actually fell and the proportion of Science students at the CSU decreased from 35% to 27% between 1969 and 1976 (AR69 and AR76).
Figure 4.1 demonstrates that the number of students at the CSU increased at a much lower rate during the 1970s and the 1980s. As will be demonstrated in the following section, during this period the focus within the CSU was on managing a series of funding crises and therefore planning for the future growth in student numbers was not a priority.

The 1990s saw the most rapid expansion of student numbers at the CSU (6,561 in 1990 compared to 19,915 in 2001, a 204% increase). This was partly due to the acquisition of a satellite campus with circa 5,000 students but it was also indicative of the policy adopted by the CSU of aggressively pursuing additional student numbers (ASNs) being made available by the funding council during that decade. One respondent described the CSUs approach to expansion during this period as follows:

*The efficiency gains were being applied to us every year so what do you do to redress that? What you do is chase whatever resource is going. Resource was tied to additional student numbers therefore that’s what was chased. Along with other international income and so on. But I think there still was a perception of needing to grow, there was still a desire to grow. I remember early on having a discussion with [the Registrar] and asking "why do we want to grow". He was very very bullish about every ASN bid that was going, we would be in there for massive numbers. His argument was simply about distributing costs over a larger base and why wouldn’t you do that? I think there was also a bit of an argument that it gives you more muscle if you are perceived to be bigger and better i.e. seen to be attractive to students. In wanting to grow - the same that was true in the 60s still held in the 90s and the 2000s, but I think there had been this change in that in the later era it was an attempt to offset the funding cuts that were happening. So I think that that is the difference....and don’t forget, we were not constrained physically, we had plenty of land and buildings.*

RP5.b

In the mid 2000s the CSU was given the opportunity to acquire the site to the west of the main campus. This plot had previously been the campus of another university that had moved to new premises on another site. The funding council was keen to support the move of the other institution and for the site to be made available to the CSU and significantly subsidized the exchange (R5). The transfer of this site enabled the CSU to consider further expansion (partly via the establishment of a medical school) and to bring the Faculty of
Nursing, which had up to that point been located on a satellite campus, on to the main campus.

The pattern of growth in student numbers at the CSU over the fifty years covered by the case study is significant in a number of ways. First, in the degree to which the organisation’s own plans for expansion coincided with the national policy of extending HE, enabling the CSU to take advantage of generous capital investment from the state, particularly in the 1960s, and with the acquisition of the western campus in the 2000s. Secondly, the CSU was perhaps unusual within the sector because it had the ability easily to expand physically, due to the generous size of the original plot, the acquisition of the off-campus land and houses that were used for student accommodation and because of the timeliness of the land to the east and west of the campus becoming available. As one respondent commented:

*I think that from various points of view they handled the expansion well. I don’t think that the feel of the place has changed dramatically. When I came here there were probably fewer than 4000 students - it felt cosy, you felt the human dimension and I still think that that’s the case.*

RP4.b

**Funding**

Although the case study covers the period 1960-2009 it is worth noting a number of points about the funding arrangements of the CSU in the preceding thirty years.

When the CSU was established in the 1920s it was a private institution and did not receive any funding from the government via the UGC. It was therefore reliant on grants from the Local Education Authority (LEA), subscriptions from supporters, sponsorship for specific academic initiatives and on student fees (A1). As referred to above for a very small institution the early plans were that it would cover a wide range of academic disciplines (in the first year 16 members of academic staff were appointed to 14 departments). The founding fathers of the CSU consulted with a Vice Chancellor from another university on the financial plans for the new university and received the following response “I cannot see how so many departments can be financed by £20,000 a year” (A1, p14). They nevertheless went
ahead with their plans and, perhaps as a result, the defining features of the first twenty years of the organisation were a combination of optimism and financial difficulty.

By the outbreak of the second world war the CSU was in deep financial crisis and its future seemed bleak (A1). However by the end of the war with the 1944 Butler Act, secondary education became compulsory and it was anticipated that within a few years demand for higher education would far outstrip supply. The UGC saw the CSU as a ready-made opportunity for increasing the number of university places nationally. Buildings A and B had been completed but were not filled by the circa 24 staff and 91 students enrolled at the university during the war and the amount of spare space on the site meant that additional numbers could easily be accommodated if more buildings were erected. The CSU was therefore invited to make an application to join the UGC list which it did successfully in 1945. The author of the official history of the CSU noted that while joining the UGC list meant that the organisation had to sacrifice its autonomy it had not in fact had a great deal of autonomy in the preceding decades because of the acute financial shortages it had faced (A1).

Table 4.2 shows that by the start of the period covered by the case study the CSU, in common with most universities, had become reliant on the UGC for a significant majority of its revenue. By the 1970s the total revenue had increased dramatically (from £0.75M to £4.03M) and the CSU was receiving 85% of its revenue from the UGC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>60/61</th>
<th>70/71</th>
<th>80/81</th>
<th>90/91</th>
<th>00/01</th>
<th>09/10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income (£M)</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surplus (% of income)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-2.9%</td>
<td>-2.8%</td>
<td>-2.2%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% income from UGC/HEFCE</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures presented above in Table 4.1 showed that during the 1960s the generous state funding had allowed staff numbers to expand at a greater rate than student numbers (the student staff ratio decreased from 7.14 to 6.06 between 1963 and 1969) and in the previous section it was shown how capital grants from the UGC had transformed the central campus within a very few years. All of the interview respondents who had been at the CSU in the
late 1960s and early 1970s spoke fondly of this period as a time when academics had ample
time to dedicate to their research and to other activities:

Actually put this in as a little anecdote, let's see if we can make this sound really
awful, it was pretty awful actually. I'd come in and I'd think well I've got to give a
tutorial you know, and that was it. And then I'd look out on the willow, which was
just there, it was a great big beautiful willow, marvellous, gone now. And then I'd
think oh dear, I've forgotten to bring the damn novel in I was reading so I'll go across
and have a cup of coffee. So I'd go over to what is now Geography but was then the
staff common room and Ray would be there puffing on his pipe and he told
anecdotes about the older generation of Oxford academics in literary studies and so
on. And we'd sort of sit and listen and others would come across. And then he'd go
back because he had to sign some papers or dictate something to Gill. And then he'd
disappear and I'd finish off my coffee and a group of us would get out the croquet set
which was under the seats in that room. And we'd go out onto the lawn behind the
[building B/C], it was a beautiful croquet lawn there so we would put the hoops in
and we'd play croquet and we'd notice the admin staff dutifully going back to clock
on and we thought we are academics and we don't have to do anything like that,
we'll do our work tonight. And if it were a nice sunny day we would play croquet
until eleven. Then we'd go back in and have a cup of tea. I'm caricaturing a bit but it
was like that.

RP3

These halcyon days were not to last and by the end of the 1960s there were signs that
harder times were ahead. The 1968 report of Senate warned that that the worsening
national economic outlook (high rate of inflation and devaluation of the pound) was likely to
adversely impact the CSU and predicted that it would soon be facing financial difficulties
once again (the increased costs associated with the new buildings and additional academic
staff, the five year grant system which did not take inflation into account and the slow down
in capital investment in HE), (AR68). In the event the UGC grant received by the CSU was
cut by 5% in 1969/70 and further reductions in state support were to follow.

As predicted, by the mid-1970s the CSU was experiencing hard times. According to the 1974
annual report of Senate “the main feature of the year has been the drastic deterioration in
the Finances of Universities in the United Kingdom” (AR74). In 1976 the outlook was even more gloomy:

The year was again one of continuing and growing difficulty...The allocation of recurrent grant for 1975-76 was for one year only...[and] was inadequate to meet existing commitments...It has repeatedly been pointed out that three-quarters of our total expenditure is on salaries and wages. The economies which can be achieved in the remaining quarter are limited if the university is to continue to exist – some books must be bought for the library, some consumable materials must be provided for departments and some heating must be provided in our buildings...Government spokesmen have made light of the matter. On the one hand they state that all that is involved is a change in the staff/student ratio from, say, 1 to 10 to 1 to 11, that more undergraduates can be admitted by reducing the number of postgraduates, and that there are all kinds of “unnecessary” research which could be discarded...In this situation it is not surprising that the morale of the staff of the University should be at a low ebb...[they] are now being expected to assume increased teaching and other loads, and with substantially worsened prospects of promotion or advancement in their profession either as teachers or research workers.

AR76

The most significant point during the fifty year period in terms of the CSU’s finances was 1981 when the UGC cut the grant by 25% and the university was forced to respond by drastically cutting spend and seeking alternative ways of generating revenue. A full account of the 1981 cuts and the CSU response is presented in chapter 5.

Following the cuts the CSU entered an extended period of acute financial difficulty during which time a number of changes already referred to above occurred; more managerial approaches were adopted, the CSU repeatedly bid for high numbers of additional student numbers (ASNs) and there was an increased focus on marketing in an attempt to maximize revenue from student recruitment and other sources of income and reduce reliance on the UGC grant. When asked whether the CSU had had a specific plan to reduce its reliance on state funding during this period one respondent commented:

...this university has tended to respond to the incentives or the funding opportunities. It’s wider than international recruitment isn’t it? So we’ve chased funding
opportunities like some of the initiatives you talked about because they existed during an era of restrained resource available from the state. So I don’t think that there has been an explicit desire to wean ourselves off state funding (as there has been in some other institutions).

RP5.b

From its height of 85% in 1970/71 funding body grants declined as a proportion of the CSUs income to 64% in 1980/1 and to 41% in 1990/1, remaining at that level until the 2000s. With the introduction of student tuition fees in the mid late 1990s, home tuition fees grew as a proportion of the CSU revenue and funding body grants had fallen to 36% by the end of the case study (see table 4.2).

Throughout the 1990s and the 2000s the CSU continued to respond to opportunities for additional resource from HEFCE (through ASNs and special funding initiatives) and became increasingly focused on attracting additional revenue from other sources (international recruitment, research grants and contracts and other income). The finances of the CSU improved further following the raising of the home tuition fee cap from £1100 to £3000 in 2006 as undergraduate recruitment remained strong after a one year dip and revenue increased. Table 4.3 shows how the CSUs revenue streams grew and diversified over the final decade covered by the case study.

**Table 4.3: Change in Sources of Revenue 2001/2 to 2009/10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>2001/2 %</th>
<th>£M</th>
<th>2009/10 %</th>
<th>£M</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEFCE</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees and Contracts</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>162%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGC</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Of which</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEFCE R</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Fees</td>
<td>8.24</td>
<td>12.57</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>173%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Fees</td>
<td>17.13</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>179%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HEFCE Financial returns 2001/02 and 2009/10
As the financial position of the institution began to improve and there was a diversification of activities a number of initiatives that had at one stage been funded externally were continued and the costs began to be met by the institution. Many of these activities were aimed at supporting education and other initiatives in the local area however one respondent commented:

*My impression when I arrived here was I'd never worked anywhere that was doing so many things for free.*

RP6

During the 2000s a number of these initiatives were discontinued and the newly appointed PVCs introduced more rigorous planning and budgeting techniques that had been employed at their previous institutions. As revenue continued to grow, this greater constraint on spending meant that the CSU began to generate substantial surpluses for the first time (see table 4.2) which gave it the freedom to invest in priorities determined internally. Though, one respondent suggested that this was at the expense of activities that had previously been supported for social or educational, rather than financial, reasons.

The case study revealed that the CSU had experienced three fairly distinct phases in terms of its finances. The first phase covering 1960s and 1970s saw considerable capital investment by the UGC accompanied by generous grants to support teaching and research. The second phase was triggered by the 1981 funding cuts and led to a period of limited growth, reductions in staff and non-staff spending, increased market focus and more managerial approaches to resource allocation. In the final phase during the late 1990s and early 2000s the CSU had adjusted itself to the significantly decreased grants from the funding council, it had successfully diversified revenue streams and was doing well in terms of recruiting international students, obtaining some additional resource via ASNs and was beginning to generate annual surpluses which could be spent according to university-defined priorities.
Regulation

In this sub-section the impact of increased regulation in the form of funding council intervention, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) on the CSU will be described.

Funding Body Intervention

As described in chapter 3, over the period covered by the case study the way in which the funding body interacted with universities changed quite significantly, with increasing emphasis being placed on the need for universities to be accountable for the public money being provided.

From the 1960s until the 1980s the UGC would visit the CSU periodically in order to give its view on what the university was doing and provide advice, though the annual reports show that the Senate was aware that the UGC was unable to compel the CSU to follow its advice (AR68). Following the 1981 funding cuts the UGC became more directive (Shattock, 1994) and in chapter 6 some examples of the UGCs attempts to direct the CSU to close academic departments will be described. In addition to the UGC visitations the CSU was required to submit five year plans and received its grant on the basis of its historical allocation and the UGC’s judgement of the university’s plans.

The UGC was replaced by the Universities Funding Council in 1989, which was itself superseded by the national funding councils in 1992. In the latter half of the case study period the CSU was required to submit increasingly complex statistical returns which, along with the information submitted by other universities was publicly available. The CSU was still required to submit plans and reports to the funding body but the block grant it received was driven by complicated funding algorithms linked to student numbers and applied consistently across the sector, rather than being based primarily on the judgment of funding body members. The UGC-style ‘visitations’ were no longer undertaken and the new Funding Council did not intervene, or advise in the same way as the UGC had done.

One respondent noted this change, both in terms of public accountability and a related increase in transparency within the CSU, which adopted an internal resource allocation model which mirrored the funding council’s formula funding:
...there became a sense that you had to explain what you were doing with the money and why you wanted more money...

RP4.b

Another respondent commented on the reduction in the level of direct interference from the funding body that came in the latter half of the case study period:

_They don’t try to steer us as overtly as that these days...they just question whether our strategy is sustainable in the longer term. Can you sustain research in all areas, can you conceivably continue to resource that? They are more likely to challenge us like that now (they challenge, but they don’t try to steer you so overtly)._ 

RP5.b

Perhaps reflecting the shift in funding from the state to the individual during this period, one respondent described how the primary external driver for change within the CSU shifted from explicit regulation by the funding body to an increasing focus on students’ demands:

...in the earlier era, as we already discussed, there were things being imposed on the university to which we were having to respond. In the 2000s it’s more that we are responding to student market drivers, those sorts of pressures...

RP5.b

This shift in the balance of the state and the student market as the key external/environmental consideration of the CSU mirrored the broader sectoral trends described in chapter 3.

In summary, in the first part of the case study period the CSU was subject to direct attempts to steer its activities by the UGC but, along with other universities, remained fairly unaccountable for the public grants it received and was able to ignore the advice given by the funding body if it was not consistent with the CSU’s preferred approach. In the middle part of the case study the CSU came under more direct pressure from the funding body, which was harder to resist because of the funding constraints it faced. By the end of the case study the CSU had become more accountable for its public funding via the new statutory returns and was less subject to direct attempts to steer its approach by the funding...
body. By this time there was also evidence that the student market had replaced the funding bodies as the primary external stakeholder of the CSU.

**Quality Assurance Agency**

As referred to in chapter 3 during the 1990s the CSU, in common with other universities, became subject to external assessment of its quality assurance arrangements first by the Academic Audit Unit and then the Higher Education Quality Council (HEDC). In 1997 HEDC was replaced by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) which was given the following remit “It is our responsibility to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications, and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education” (QAA website, About us page, Nov 2011). In practice this meant that universities were required to report on their quality assurance arrangements and became subject to periodic subject and institutional reviews by panels of academics from other institutions. One respondent gave the view that generally:

*Old academics, old style or old thinking academics, dislike the quality regime because they remember this golden age where we didn’t have to explain anything to anybody.*

RP4.a

Despite a certain cynicism regarding the work of the QAA most respondents who were asked about it stressed that, as a result of the student focus within the CSU, it had performed better than many institutions in the external assessment of its teaching, particularly at the subject level. One respondent described the university’s response to the QAA subject reviews as follows:

*The university was always very keen, at a senior level, on the subject reviews, because we did well. That goes back to what I was saying about the departmental strength and the interest in teaching, perhaps they didn’t espouse the vocabulary either of pedagogy or of quality assurance but they were doing something that worked for their students. And you didn’t need a board of studies, with terms of reference to achieve that, it happened because departments were keen to help their students.*

RP4.b
Table 4.4 shows the teaching quality scores achieved in the subject reviews that were undertaken during the period 1996 to 2001.

**Table 4.4: Teaching Quality Scores for the CSU 1996 to 2001**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>TQA Score</th>
<th>Out of 24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Studies</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iberian Studies</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE Asian Studies</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical Engineering</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BioSciences</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality Leisure and Tourism</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theology</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These QAA scores were adopted as a teaching quality measure by various league tables and the very high scores achieved by the CSU subject areas led to improvements in the institutional rankings. One respondent described how the CSU responded to this:

*Any body like QAA or a system like quality assurance has an effect over time. This university of course, having the trait that we talked about is a bit slow, so it didn’t do anything to begin with, until it noticed the scores for departments. Then it thought - oh this might be important. Then you go through a phase where you introduce all sorts of systems and react...*

RSP.b

Despite the success at subject level the institution did not perform well in the 2000 Institutional Audit. According to a confidential internal paper on the approach to QA within the CSU at that time:
...the QAA was right to identify the weaknesses of an approach that was too diffuse, that failed to allocate responsibilities and that was uncertain in its balance between centre and Faculties.

Q1

According to the paper the high scores in the subject reviews had “engendered a sense of complacency” (Q1). In the wake of the 2000 Audit report the CSU adopted a much more coherent, centralized approach to its quality assurance processes. Responding to a suggestion made by the QAA that there should be a “voice of authority” within CSU, the Registrar’s role and title were broadened to “Quality Director and Registrar”. Additional resource was dedicated to the central Quality Office and new quality assurance (QA) roles were created in academic departments. New QA processes consistent with QAA guidance were introduced and applied more consistently across the organisation and the CSUs performance in later QAA audits improved.

In summary, during the early and much of the middle period covered by the case study the CSU was not subject to external scrutiny of its teaching processes. With the introduction of the QAA in the late 1990s the subject and university level processes for assuring the quality of degrees came under external scrutiny. Following external criticism of the university’s QA arrangements and a realisation of the importance in terms of reputation the CSU developed a more deliberate and tactical response and began to invest in QA systems and processes.

Research Assessment Exercise

Historically all universities on the UGC list had received a grant which covered both teaching and research activities. Following the 1981 funding cuts the Government decided that institutions should be funded separately for teaching and research. It determined that teaching grants should be driven by student numbers and that research grants would be driven by the quality of the research being undertaken by institutions. It was decided that the quality of research would be assessed periodically by panels of experts reviewing a selection of research outputs submitted by the institution (known as the Research Selectivity Exercise, then as the Research Assessment Exercise or RAE and most recently the Research Excellence Framework or REF). The later exercises also required academics to provide quantitative evidence of the quality of their research such as the number of PhD students, amount of research grants awarded and the number of honorary positions held.
The new approach was launched by the UGC in 1985. The notes from a UGC visitation to the CSU towards the end of the year show that, while it had taken longer than expected, the representatives of the funding council were satisfied that the university had put in place appropriate mechanisms for managing the new process:

The Chairman congratulated the University on establishing a research committee, albeit somewhat late, and suggested that the committee be strengthened as far as possible in order to assist its future role of advising upon internal selective allocation of funds which would complement the external selectivity to be practiced by the UGC in future grant allocation.

The CSU did not perform very well in the first selectivity exercise undertaken in 1986\(^{16}\). One respondent reflecting on the early research selectivity exercises suggested that the institutional trait of insularity combined with the university’s then focus on student recruitment and teaching may have contributed to the poor performance:

They might not have been fully aware of what they were being judged against.
That’s true. But I think it is a reflection of that era when very significant individuals were preaching the message that it was all about teaching. Those were the signals that were being sent.

Table 4.5 shows that the overall performance of the CSU remained fairly poor in the 1992 and 1996 exercises (in which the CSU gained the top ratings for only 3 and then 2 subject areas). The number of subject areas and academic staff submitted in the 2001 and 2008 exercises decreased significantly and on the whole the results improved (with 7 and then 5 subject areas achieving the highest ratings).

\(^{16}\) I was not able to find a copy of the results of the exercise but I found documents referring to it and respondents spoke about the change in institutional approach to research that occurred following it.
Table 4.5: 1992-2008 RAE Outcomes for CSU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subjects submitted</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Submitted</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas with Highest Ratings (4 or 5 1992-2001 and % with 4*+3* in 2008)</td>
<td>3@4</td>
<td>14@4</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3@5</td>
<td>2@5</td>
<td>3@5</td>
<td>5 with 50%+@4* and 3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Rated Departments</td>
<td>Mechanical Engineering, Politics and Drama</td>
<td>History and Economic History</td>
<td>Geography, Law Politics, SE Asian Studies, English History and Music</td>
<td>History, Allied Health, Geography, English and Chemistry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1992, 1996, 2001 and 2008 RAE Results

The reduction in the numbers included in the later exercises reflected a more explicit attempt on the part of the CSU to ensure that the university’s submission included the highest quality research in the subject areas where good ratings were most likely to be achieved. In earlier exercises individual departments had taken the lead on deciding which members of staff should be submitted. A more centralized approach was adopted in the preparation for the 2001 and 2008 RAES with a dedicated senior administrator supporting the research committee and lead PVC, working with the research leads in each department to ensure that the optimal submission was made. Due to the improved financial position at this time the CSU was also able to start investing in some of the areas of research strength. One of the respondents reflected on the new approach that was adopted as follows:

*It always ends up being more tactical but disguised as strategy. Finally the decisions are based on what is going to produce the best return you have to invest, because if you didn’t invest our money would go down. Of course this is one of the perennial debates, the only way you can really invest is by using money that comes in through teaching. So you invest in research in order to keep your position in some sort of league table, to keep your dignity as a research university.*

RP4.b

This statement reflected a number of important features of the CSUs general approach by the end of the case study period, that is the growing tension between teaching and research activities and the increasingly tactical and resource-oriented approach taken to university decision making. It also draws attention to the importance of research and performance in
the research selectivity exercises to the reputation and legitimacy of the CSU and individual academics:

*Once the RAE started to kick in then suddenly we realised we needed to think about are we a new university or are we an old university. If we are a proper old university, and certainly in [my department] we are, then we ought to be very good. And so we, I, all of us really got our act together, and some of us already had.*

RP3

In summary, the introduction of the research selectivity exercise in the middle period of the case study highlighted a number of interesting responses from the CSU. As with the QAA the CSU was initially slow to respond to the new arrangements but when the significance to the institution became clear it began to adopt a more centralised and tactical approach which may have contributed to the improved performance in the later exercises. Above all else the RAE demonstrates two key organisational traits of the CSU; its commitment to an activity that, while unprofitable, is necessary to ensure its reputation within the HE sector and its initial resistance to the new environment and slowness to engage with it until it became apparent that this approach might have an adverse impact on the institution’s legitimacy.

iv. *Summary of Findings*

In this chapter an overview of the CSU has been provided including quantitative information demonstrating the significant expansion of the organisation and qualitative information describing its structures and the way in which it responded to the external pressures identified in chapter 3.

Over the fifty years covered by the case study the CSU went from being a relatively small university operating the traditional mode of academic self-governance (Moodie and Eustace, 1974) to being a much larger and more diverse operation with a stronger central management function. A number of distinctive organisational characteristics were identified, some of which were consistent with the institutional-organisation traits referred to in chapter 3 (devolved, professionally dominated decision making, resistance to change)
and some which were seen as being specific to the CSU (geographical isolation, subject
innovation and student focus).

The evidence from the case study showed that the impact of the three external HE trends
described in chapter 3 (expansion, funding and regulation) on the CSU were significant. The
university benefitted from the additional resource that was made available for the
expansion of HE in the post-Robbins era in terms of increasing staff numbers and investment
in its campus. In the early part of the case study the CSU received significant state funding
and became very reliant on this (85% of all revenue in 1970). When the UGC grant was cut
in 1981 the CSU entered a prolonged period of financial difficulty which it only emerged
from towards the end of the case study when revenue from home and international student
recruitment increased significantly. In terms of regulation, the CSU was not subject to a
significant degree of external regulation in the early period of the case study. In the middle
period the level of scrutiny increased with the introduction of external quality assurance
monitoring and research selectivity exercises and the institution did not perform well in
terms of external review. By the end of the case study period the CSU was performing
better in both the QAA and the RAE exercises.

The information presented in this chapter will be analysed in chapter 7 and the blue box
below includes an overview of how the results will be considered in relation to Analysis
Questions 1 and 2.

In the following chapter evidence showing the CSUs approach to the core activities of
teaching and research will be presented.
ANALYSIS OF THIS THE INFORMATION IN THIS CHAPTER

Analysis Question 1: How independent is the CSU from its environment and did its level of dependency change over time?

Expansion
- The evidence shows that the CSU wanted to expand. The government/funding body didn’t have to apply pressure to achieve expansion and the CSU benefited from generous investment because its own plans were consistent with national policy. So the CSU was dependent on an external stakeholder but was not being coerced by it.
- In the latter period the key external stake-holder shifted from being the state to the individual and the evidence showed that increased efforts were made in order to appeal to student market, suggesting a change in the nature of the CSU’s environmental dependence.

Funding
- The CSU was very dependent on public funding for most of the early period of the case study but the funding was generous and attempts to control the organisation were minimal (relatively low environmental dependence).
- The CSU became more environmentally dependent in the middle period as state funding declined, there were greater attempts from the funding council to steer the CSU and it had to try to respond to the student market in order to generate revenue.
- By the final period the CSU’s dependence on direct public funding had significantly decreased, it was effective at appealing to the student market and the finances improved, enabling it to become more self-acting (lower environmental dependence).

Regulation
- During the early period the CSU was subject to minimal external regulation (low environmental dependence).
- In the middle period the CSU was subject to a wider range of external regulatory requirements including funding body intervention and the introduction of the research selectivity exercises (greater environmental dependence).
- By the end of the case study the CSU was subject to much greater external regulation than during the rest of the period (QAA, funding body and RAE/REF) however the evidence suggested that it had become more effective at managing that dependence (investment in staff/units to ensure compliance, greater centralisation, more tactical approach to institutional submissions).

Analysis Question 2: Where is the CSU situated on the institutional-production organisational continuum and did its position change over time?

The CSU is at the institutional end of the Meyer and Rowans organisational spectrum:
- It is has multiple, core HE and non-commercial objectives (research, teaching and engaging with the local community).
- Concern with the legitimacy as well as commercial success of the organisation (the importance of being viewed as a ‘pre-92’ and concern with unaligned status within the sector).
- Leadership by academics/professionals.

However the case study also provided evidence that demonstrated that, over the 50 years, there was a shift towards the production organisation end of the spectrum:
- Still strong focus on core HE and non-commercial objectives e.g. research, teaching and the local community but increasing concern with out-puts (QA, RAE and student recruitment targets) and the financial viability of the CSU.
- By the end of the case study the CSU was still led by professionals/academics but these individuals adopted a more managerial approach.
Chapter 5 – Teaching and Research at the CSU

In this chapter evidence showing the approach taken by the CSU to the core higher education activities, teaching and research, will be presented. Evidence from the interviews and CSU archives will be used to show the approach adopted in the early period covered by the case study (1960s and 1970s) and how these approaches came under pressure. The sections will conclude with a description of how teaching and research changed over the course of the case study.

The evidence from this chapter will be used in the analysis of following AQs in chapter 7:

Analysis Question 3: Did environmental and/or organisational factors prompt the CSU to change its behaviour (or not) during the period covered?

Analysis Question 4: What behaviors did the organisation adopt in response to the pressures to change and critical incidents identified in the case study?

i. Teaching at the CSU

Teaching at the CSU in early period of the case study

Reflecting on the early period of the case study (1960s and 1970s) interview participants identified the size and nature of student cohort as significant factors in the way in which teaching was delivered at the CSU. They described how as junior academics they had a significant degree of autonomy in determining both the content and mode of delivery of their courses which was seen as being appropriate for their audience of well qualified and motivated school leavers.

According to the statistics presented in table 4.1 in the previous chapter, in the early 1960s there were on average only 83 students per academic department and the student to academic staff member ratio (SSR) was 7.1. The relatively high levels of staffing and low student numbers meant that class sizes were small and that the teaching load of academics

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17 1,660 students, 20 academic departments and 314 academic staff in the early 1960s
was comparatively light (RP3 and RP4.a). The interview respondents who had started their academic careers at the CSU in the 1960s and 1970s described a traditional model of lecturing, seminars, class teaching and lab work (in Science disciplines), with the academic departments and individual lecturers determining the structure and content of the courses which made up the degree programmes. One academic likened the approach to teaching at the CSU to his experiences as a student at Oxford:

I moved from Oxford and for the first three years I was here I might just as well have still been in Oxford. The teaching was the same and it had the same informal amateurish quality to it.

RP3

In addition to the size of the cohorts being smaller, respondents also stressed the importance of the type of students entering the university during the early period for the way in which academics could approach teaching. At the beginning of the case study period only circa 8% of the eligible cohort of young people were able to take up places at Universities which meant that those who entered had generally performed very well at school. One respondent described the typical undergraduate student from an Arts-subject at the CSU in the following terms:

There was a certain kind of standard, 2:1 type girl then, who had been to a grammar school even, no I suppose none of them had been to minor public schools, but I had the impression that they did. She was very keen and would write extremely immaculate, sometimes almost elegant essays. They are still here but they are lost now in a huge penumbra.

RP3

Another respondent who arrived at the CSU a little later described how in the 1970s the intakes were still low and that the students tended to be academically well prepared for higher education:

If you take students coming in, in 1972 where you’re average numbers are 24 and you’ve got 25 members of staff, and they are coming in with what would nowadays be 2 As or 3 As or whatever... the students are intellectually high fliers, they have
their own grasp of why they are studying [academic subject X] and they do background reading and all that kind of stuff.

RP4.a

The respondents who had taught at the CSU during this period, explained that they had a significant amount of autonomy, both in terms of what was being taught and how the material was delivered:

I would say that when I came there was really very little oversight of what people were doing, certainly nothing in terms of teaching, how people taught or what they taught. It seemed to be very largely down to them.

RP1

A common theme that emerged from the interviews regarding this period was the absence of training and support that these academics had received when they arrived at the CSU. The three longest serving academics all described how they had been left to ‘get on with it’ without any training and only minimal guidance from senior colleagues (RP2, RP3 and RP4). One respondent described his induction into teaching as follows:

You got a bit of advice I suppose. You’d pick up notes from someone who was retiring, they’d say here are my notes, this is what I give and you’d maybe discuss it with them. And then you’d get up and teach it. And we gave more, I’m sure we gave more, per lecture, just the way we did it, the way we would run through it. Slowly the courses have thinned down, probably for the better, because you always thought I have to give all this or it won’t look... That was the thing it was what you felt you should be giving. People didn’t come in and sit in on your lectures, there were no feedback sheets. There were no module handbooks, but there were syllabuses. The fact is it was easier for the academic, if not for the students.

RP2

Most of the respondents acknowledged that, in some cases the degree of autonomy academics had during this period coupled, with the lack of training, support and monitoring of academic staff, led to bad practice. Though not typical of the general standard of staff and teaching in their departments they described a small number of colleagues from their
early time at the CSU as lazy and useless (RP3) wasters (RP1) and sloppy (RP2). They also described how, even when students complained about the quality of teaching, there were very few sanctions available for the university to address the issues.

A further feature of teaching in the early period that was evident from the interviews, was that while the academics were responsible for individual courses or topics, the structure of degree programmes was largely determined at departmental level there were therefore differing practice in terms of the structure and assessment of degree programmes across the organisation.

The picture presented by the interview respondents of teaching at the CSU in the 1960s and 1970s is one of academic autonomy, small and able student cohorts, limited external interference in courses from colleagues within the department and an absence of formal mechanisms the ‘centre’ could adopt to either monitor or influence teaching practice.

**Pressures on traditional approach to teaching at the CSU**

In this sub-section a range of factors which exerted pressure on the approach to teaching described above will be presented including; the increase in student numbers, diversification in the nature and demands of the student body, pressure to conform with external regulatory requirements and attempts by the centre of the university to introduce standardised practice.

In line with the general trend of expansion of the HE sector during the second half of the 20th century the number of students at the CSU increased dramatically and the undergraduate cohort became increasingly diverse. By the end of the case study period the data in table 4.1 in the previous chapter shows that the average number of students in each academic department had increased almost tenfold to 905, and the SSR had risen to 17.7.\(^{18}\)

The interview respondents were each asked what the student intake to their department had been when they arrived. Table 5.1 shows how the undergraduate student numbers increased significantly in all but one of the interview participants departments.

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\(^{18}\) 22,370 students, 24 academic departments and 905 academic staff in 2009. NB It should be noted that the average student numbers per department and the SSR include part time as well as full time students.
Table 5.1: Undergraduate intakes to Interview Respondents Departments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Respondent starting period</th>
<th>Undergraduate intake at starting period</th>
<th>2009 undergraduate intake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>81 degree and 31 foundation degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Interviews and CSP 2009 Intake report

As the proportion of the eligible cohort attending universities increased (from 8% at the beginning of the case study to 45% at the end) inevitably the academic profile of undergraduates shifted from being just the straight A, grammar school-type student described above. By the end of the case study period 30% of entrants to the CSU had not undertaken A levels\(^{19}\) and only circa 26% of undergraduate entrants with A levels had achieved the top grades\(^{20}\). In response to being asked what the most significant change in teaching at the CSU had been one interview participant responded as follows:

*The major change is in the people we've got, especially on the undergraduate and the foundation programmes. They tend to be female. They tend to be in their 30s or 40s and they tend to be locally based. And certainly foundation degree, they are people who may have had no education at all and therefore are excited are challenged, are concerned, are worried, they have all the kinds of issues you'd expect with that and so there's a huge variety which can be very exciting for them and for tutors but does take an enormous amount of work.*

RP1

As RP3 indicated in the previous sub-section, by the end of the period covered by the case study the CSU still attracted students with top results, however, rather than being the norm, this type of student became a much smaller cohort within the undergraduate population. The quote above identifies that the newer types of students tended to need more support from their teachers than the traditional cohort who were able to undertake their studies with less supervision and support.

A further change in the student population identified by the interview respondents was the fact that undergraduate students had become much busier in recent times e.g. mature

\(^{19}\) Source – CSU Student Statistics handbook, Non A level qualifications include Access Course, ONC, OND, no qualifications and ‘other qualifications’.

students with family commitments and undergraduates who are required to work in order to pay for their time at university:

So you do put a huge amount of effort in for [foundation route] students. It's not that they can't do it, it's probably that they are working all the time, doing jobs to survive. And they forget about trying to do what they are supposed to be doing. That's another new thing, it makes a big difference. I think in the early days very few students worked, it would have really been the exception.

RP2

According to those interviewed these changes in the size and nature of the student population had a significant impact on the approach to teaching within their departments. The newer cohorts of less well academically prepared students required more time and support from lecturers and the increased numbers meant that more time was needed to deliver the requisite number of classes and lectures.

In addition to the changes in the student population respondents also explained how teaching at the CSU was increasingly influenced by two forms of what they viewed as ‘external’ regulation. First, in subject areas that were accredited by professional bodies, it was noted that those bodies became increasingly prescriptive in terms of curriculum, with academics being left less room to determine what should be taught:

The PGCE is another different sort of example from the 80s onwards, after the Council for Accreditation of Teaching we had increasingly dictated curriculum for the PGCE and I think probably of all the programmes in the University it’s probably the most controlled and the most dictated and the most inspected and I’m extremely glad I don’t teach on it anymore... I like to be able to use my expertise and I’m not sure how much you could do that on the PGCE anymore. I don’t like the idea of having a course entirely defined externally.

RP1

The second form of external influence described by respondents came as a result of the ‘centre’ seeking to introduce more standardisation in teaching practice across the university in response to external pressure from the QAA. Examples provided by the respondents included ‘modularisation’ (the process by which a more consistent approach to programme
structures and credit bearing was introduced), semesterisation (moving from 3 terms per year to 2 semesters, imitating the American academic model) and the introduction of more consistent and transparent methodologies for calculating degree results. It was clear from the responses provided by some interview participants that these initiatives were not always welcome and that the academics felt that they were being forced to comply with these new requirements:

*The next time it came, with modularisation through [name of the person who led the implementation] it was quite obvious that we were being told we’d got to do it and there was no alternative….and whatever we thought about it we would have to do it.*

RP3

To summarise, the traditional approach to teaching at the CSU came under pressure in the latter half of the case study as a result of the growth and diversification of the student body and because of increasing attempts by external bodies to control the structure and content of degree programmes. In the following sub-section evidence showing how the CSU responded to these pressures will be given.

**Response to Pressures on Teaching**

The interview respondents identified a number of ways in which the CSU adapted its approach in response to the growth and diversification of the student population. It was noted that because of the financial difficulties facing the CSU there was an increased emphasis on recruiting large numbers of students rather than on admitting only those candidates who were strong academically:

*We needed student numbers to grow to keep us financially viable, financially strong.*

RP5.a

This reliance on student numbers for maximising revenue led to the CSU adopting a more market-oriented approach to teaching provision. Some departments at the CSU began to develop new types of programmes (such as foundation degrees, distance teaching and online degrees), the institution discontinued some disciplines that were not attracting large numbers of students (Minority modern languages, Classics, Geology and Mathematics) and it began to launch new subject areas (Business studies, Computer Science, Medicine and Sport...
Science), which it was anticipated would be more attractive to students seeking to enter into higher education.

The increasingly market-oriented approach also led to traditional subject areas introducing options and greater choice in their undergraduate programmes in order to make them more attractive to potential students:

*I think there was almost none [choice in the early period]. I may be wrong but it rapidly became a watchword. We became very proud of having lots of choice. Even back in the 70s when we had open days we used to say, and especially when we introduced the new literatures, and we were the first English department to do that.*

RP3

*We realised that we ought to teach options. So if we just offered applied physics we would get 10 students, if we offered applied physics with laser technology, which we were well known for, we’d get another 5 so that was 15. Applied physics with electronics, we thought that would be important but it wasn’t. So we’d teach options like that. That’s what changed a lot, as soon as we merged Physics and Applied Physics we’d run Physics, Physics with Astro-Physics, Physics with Laser science, Applied Physics...*

RP2

The interview respondents also described how over the course of the case study period there was a shift from departmental autonomy in terms of determining the structure and content of degrees to more centralized and external control of programmes. As noted above the most extreme examples were in externally accredited subjects, where the curriculum became increasingly dictated by the accrediting bodies and the monitoring and inspection of programmes increased.

A major internally driven attempt to introduce greater standardisation in teaching practice was a process referred to as the *Way Forward* which emerged from the publication of a report on the CSU’s future aspirations in terms of learning and teaching provision in 2000. The stated aim of the *Way Forward* initiative was to “establish a new environment for learning and teaching which is student-centered, effective and efficient” (D6, p1). The rationale for it was clearly driven by external, QAA pressure:
The external environment for learning and teaching is provided by the requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency, which expects all universities to adhere to its extensive codes of practice and to the mandatory new National Qualifications Framework from 2003/4 at the latest. The QAA will be testing with almost immediate effect our progress towards compliance with requirements for Programme Specifications and adherence to its level descriptors and subject benchmarks as part of the new institutional and subject review processes. It will be important to align our internal change programme to these timetables.

D6, p1

The Way Forward action plan proposed, amongst other things, that there should be greater standardisation in modules and assessments, the introduction of module and programme catalogues, a review of the academic year, more training for academic staff and the introduction of measures to ensure that academic departments complied with the new university-wide arrangements (D6).

Although the academic respondents did not specifically mention the Way Forward initiative they did refer to the introduction of modularisation, semesterisation, the introduction of the postgraduate certificate in higher education, published learning objectives and course outlines, module handbooks and student feedback surveys, most of which were introduced as part of the Way Forward. It was apparent from the academic respondents that there had been some resistance to these new measures from within the academic departments, and those who had been involved in leading the processes from the ‘centre’ reported that the introduction of these quality assurance mechanisms had not always gone smoothly. One respondent described how it took the institution six attempts to introduce standardised modules across all areas and how colleagues in some areas had argued against the changes as a point of principle (R4.a and b).

Despite disagreement with and resistance to the quality assurance mechanisms described above the leadership of the CSU was eventually successful in introducing greater standardisation across the institution and complying with the approaches advocated by external regulatory bodies such as the QAA (Q2).
While most of the respondents felt that the changes that had occurred had resulted in an increase in their workload and an erosion of their academic autonomy, they also recognised that it had had the effect of lessening some of the bad practice they had encountered from some colleagues during the earlier stages of their careers. This acceptance of the need for a degree of monitoring to ensure that provision is of sufficient quality was articulated by one respondent as follows:

*There has been some superb teaching but there needs to be, it seems to me, some kind of oversight of what people are doing and some ways of changing people’s practice if it’s not up to standard because the students deserve better.*

RP1

However, in addition to acknowledging the benefits of some of the changes in teaching practice the same respondent was concerned that, over the period, the increased market-focus of the CSU had undermined the integrity of teaching:

*I think it sees itself in a higher education market competing for students with other higher education institutions and works in that way. I don’t think it ever asks questions about the nature of learning except as part of a corporate policy. I’ve never heard a debate at University level about ‘what is the function of a University?’: In the kind of things you might see in some academic writing. It’s very much about business and very much about survivability in a market.*

RP1

Despite their concerns about the erosion of academic autonomy and about the increasingly market-oriented approach to teaching, most of the respondents remained positive about the degree provision of the CSU and reflected that, despite all the pressures, teaching practice hadn’t fundamentally changed:

*We used to have tutorials, lectures and labs, and we still have tutorials, lectures and labs. I don’t think it’s a lot more.... We have to deliver roughly the same number of lectures, to do a course. Teaching that for 6 hours a day. And first years have still got tutorials. I don’t think it’s changed a great deal.*

RP2
The respondents also acknowledged that in most subject areas, even where external constraints on the structure and administration of degree programmes had increased, as academics, they retained a significant degree of autonomy in terms of being able to determine the content of their degree programmes:

*People within the departmental structure will innovate at the local level, how they teach particular modules, the next research idea, and that kind of innovation is fundamental, they are the only ones who can do it.*

RP4.b

A number of specific examples of academically led innovation in teaching practice were identified such as the use of new technologies in the delivery of traditional subject areas and the introduction of new modules based on the research interests of lecturers (RP4b and RP3).

In the following section the approach of the CSU to its other core activity (research) will be described.

**ii. Research at the CSU**

*Research at the CSU in the early period of the case study*

All the academic interview respondents emphasised the importance of research, both in terms of the credibility of the institution (with research being viewed as key to the status of the organisation as a ‘traditional’ university) and in terms of their own professional identity. One respondent indicated that in his department research was considered to be a greater priority than teaching when he first started at the CSU:

*The interest everybody had was to do research; you also had to do a bit of teaching to keep everybody happy.*

RP2

Another respondent described how promotion was dependent on an individual’s research performance:
...with research there was no ambiguity, if you wanted to get a senior lectureship you needed to have published this, this and this

RP4.b

A third respondent described how in his department, although research was considered to be of central importance, in common with the approach described above in the induction of young academics into teaching, he received very little support and guidance in his research from more experienced colleagues:

When I came in there was an assumption that you would be a researcher. There was little or no support for you. No help in describing how you would become that. Trial and error. If you were lucky you bumped into somebody who would, who you might be able to work with. But the department was largely composed of individuals who did their own thing and when they were good they were very good.

RP1

Although the interview respondents stressed the importance of research within their departments and for their promotion prospects it should be noted that all of them had been research active and went on to become Professors and so they were not necessarily typical of the all the faculty at the CSU at the time. Table 5.2 shows the proportion of staff that were producing research outputs each year. These data show that during the fifty years covered by the case study between 35% and 55% of academics were regularly producing research outputs, suggesting that around half of the staff at the CSU were either not research active or not producing published material on a regular basis.

Table 5.2: Staff with research outputs by year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Academics</th>
<th>Academics with publications</th>
<th>% Academics Publishing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>200*</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>758**</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>35%***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* estimated staff numbers – information not included in calendar that year
** 1994 staff numbers (1992 not available)
*** The acquisition of the satellite campus with a lower proportion of research active staff impacted here.

Sources 1958-1975 University Annual Reports (no of academics who had produced a publication that year)
1992-2008 HESA for staff numbers, RAE for publications (no of staff submitted in the RAE)
Some evidence was found from documentary sources suggesting a number of reasons for this including; the importance placed on teaching within the CSU, inertia on the part of some academics and, in some disciplines, a lack of acceptance of the traditional academic approach to research:

_The fact that a production might enthrall, terrorize or amuse 100 people in a week was for too long regarded as nothing compared to the value of an article in a journal which might be read by six scholars in six months._

D5, p13

Even amongst the interview participants, who all went on to enjoy success in research and associated promotion, it was acknowledged by one that it took a little while for him to seriously engage with the research agenda:

_So for someone like me coming in ‘68, there was this rather fallow period for the first few years where I’m doing stuff, interesting stuff. I’m writing a novel and doing a bit of odd research on this that and the other but not feeling somehow that I’d got a career path that I necessarily have to follow._

RP3

It was clear from the interview respondents that research was viewed as important, both for themselves as academics, and in terms of maintaining the CSU’s position as a ‘traditional’ university. However documentary evidence from the case study indicated that the interview respondents were not necessarily typical of the academic population of the CSU as a whole, approximately half of whom were not actively engaged in research throughout the period. In the next sub-section evidence will be presented showing how research active academics came under increasing pressure during the latter half of the case study.

**Pressures on Research**

In this section details of the factors identified by the interview respondents as putting pressure on their research will be identified. These include; increased student numbers and teaching loads; the reduction in state funding; the introduction of the RAE and a specific agenda from the funding council; and the idea that the CSU should focus on teaching rather than research.
A key issue raised by the respondents from departments that had seen a significant increase in student numbers, was that teaching and associated administration started to take up more of their time, leaving them and their colleagues less time to dedicate to their research (RP1, RP2 and RP3).

A knock on effect of the focus on teaching as the key revenue generating activity, identified by RP2, was that when resource did become available, the CSU increasingly invested in areas that would improve the ‘student experience’, rather than activities that would enhance research.

Another significant factor which impacted research, raised by all the respondents, was the introduction of the research selectivity exercise in the 1980s (later RAE and then REF). The respondent who described the ‘fallow’ period during 1970-early 1980s identified this as the event which highlighted the importance of undertaking research and getting work published:

…and that was when the penny dropped for me and I suddenly thought this research is actually a really serious thing...

RP3

These pressures combined with the relatively low research outputs, resulted in additional pressure that was specific to the CSU, namely an external view that the university was essentially a teaching university and should focus less on research.

During the 1980s the UGC championed the idea that universities should be formally categorized as T (teaching only), R (research intensive) or X (mixture of teaching and research in selected departments) (Kogan and Hanney, 1999, p98). The respondents who referred to this policy were concerned that had it been rolled out the CSU would have been categorized as an X institution and would no longer be perceived as being a ‘traditional’ research-active university. The VC openly and strongly disagreed with this policy at the time:

More effective concentration and selectivity, which we favour, do not require such institutional categorisation. It would inhibit change and produce ossification in the research community. It could encourage complacency amongst staff in designated
research institutions, and breed depression and a sense of failure among institutions not so designated.

Pressure on the CSU to focus on teaching rather than research came from other quarters during this period. Following the relatively poor performance in the first research selectivity exercise the Times published an article questioning why 12 institutions (including the CSU) should continue to receive public funding to undertake research “why, they might ask, should research be funded at these 12 universities?...They all had the quality of their research assessed last June by the University Grants Committee as being below the average in at least 10 subject areas” (R1). One respondent, recalling this period, described an event that demonstrated the anti-research agenda in relation to the CSU on the part of politicians and the funding council. The VC had arranged a dinner at a London to promote the university and its research and received the following responses from those who were attending:

...they said “we don’t understand why you are doing research now at all. Why on earth? What possible good can come out of research there?”

R4.b

In the event, the funding councils R/X/T policy wasn’t introduced and so the CSU was never designated as either teaching or mixed, though one respondent did say that into the 1990s and 2000s the funding council continued to hold the view that there was “no future for [the CSU] in the research game” (RP5.b).

In the following sub-section the CSU’s response to the pressures on research outlined here will be described.

**CSU response to pressures on research**

The respondents were asked to describe how the CSU’s approach to research had changed over the period of the case study. Although the figures in table 5.2 suggest that across the board the proportion of academics engaged in research remained between 35% and 55% over the case study period, a number of respondents suggested that the CSU had become more teaching-focused over the period:
There is no doubt that this university has become more teaching oriented because people have slowly and inexorably said "teaching brings in the money". You only have to look at it for our faculty. What's the turnover £26M? And I think the research income is something like £5M. Which tells you immediately that over £20M of it comes in through teaching students. So you've really got to go some to become an independent financially viable research unit, you've really got to be good...Some of these bigger places are putting in 6 or 7 research grants per year per research staff member. And ours find it very difficult because they are all tied up with the extra load of teaching now.

RP2

In addition to the pressure on research active departments from increased teaching demands respondent RP2 also explained how, over time, the CSU redirected resource that had been dedicated to research support to other areas of the university, effectively undermining the research infrastructure in his department:

Everybody is research active but it's not the same 'active' as it was in that period. They were all ambitious people and the teaching didn't tie them down so much. They'd do their teaching but they didn't have to go to module reviews, or look at feedback. It was just get your lectures done, get them out of the way and go off to conferences and do research. When the funding hit seriously for us, and we'll never come back from this, was the lack of technical support. Because like it or not, you can't do physics, not original physics, you can do it but not in the same way. We had this fantastic team of technical people. They dried out because they got old, they retired, they weren't replaced. And in the end we lost all that expertise. Times were changing...

RP2

The CSU's response to the research selectivity/RAE/REF exercises was described in the previous chapter. The evidence presented there suggested that the CSU had initially been slow to respond to the research selectivity agenda and hadn't performed well in the earlier exercises as a result. The case study evidence showed how the CSU’s approach became more tactical in the later period and that some investment was made in research in areas where it was considered likely that good results would be achieved.
A number of the respondents raised concerns about the more output-based approach to evaluating the quality of research which arose as a result of the RAE. They argued that it wasn’t appropriate for all academic disciplines, and had the effect of undermining the traditional motivation of academics for undertaking research:

You’ve got this barmy system where you have to have four outputs so you get someone who’s written a massive, seminal book, but they’ve taken 15 years over, it’s one output. They haven’t got three more, you daren’t submit them. And then you’ve got someone who’s got 4 articles that are decent and reasonable and they get submitted without a problem. You get someone who has written two books and one article, where’s the fourth article? It’s like saying, I want to buy my coal for a coal fire heating system and I want four sacks and they can be 2lb bags or they can be 100 weights, doesn’t matter, yeah I want four of them.

RP3

You have to bid for research funds for the sake of bidding for research funds. So rather than research funds being the thing that facilitates research you actually go out and you find any research funding at all, as long as its money then you do that research and that seems to me to be a very back to front way of doing things…I actually think, in a way, the REF strips research out of your identity because it becomes something you have to do just to satisfy external criteria rather than something you see as part of yourself, part of who you are as academics.

RP1

A further concern raised by one respondent was that the focus on achieving a certain number of research outputs had an adverse impact on the approach that younger academics were taking to their teaching responsibilities:

I find it very appalling that some of my younger colleagues can only teach literature between 1850 and 1890 and will not do anything outside their specialism because it will take them away from their research.

RP3
As shown in the previous sub-section, during the 1980s and 1990s the CSU faced external pressure from the funding council, Whitehall and the media to focus on teaching and not invest in research. The response of individual academics and the CSU as a whole was to resist this pressure, and for those who were research active to continue to dedicate what resource they could to maintain their research:

So you invest in research in order to keep your position in some sort of league table, to keep your dignity as a research university.

3. **Summary of Findings**

In this chapter the approach taken by the CSU to teaching and research were described. Details of some of the pressures on those activities were given and the organisational response to those pressures were considered.

In the early period covered by the case study individual academics and academic departments enjoyed a significant degree of autonomy in terms of both the content and the structure of their degree programmes. Most of the changes in teaching described here were driven by external/ environmental factors for example the expansion and diversification of student numbers and by QAA requirements. The CSU responded to these pressures by becoming more market focused and introducing increasingly standardised practice across the institution in order to comply with external regulatory requirements. This resulted in a loss of academic and departmental autonomy, in greater standardisation across the organisation and more consistent and transparent processes for students. Despite the erosion of their control over some aspects of teaching practice, academics retained autonomy over the content and delivery of their modules and programmes within the new framework, and there was evidence of innovation driven by academic interests (not just in response to external pressures).

The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrated that throughout the period covered by the case study the research was of central importance to both individual academics and in terms of the perceived status/legitimacy of the university. In the latter half of the case
study, the external pressures on research increased as a result of larger student cohorts and teaching loads, the introduction of the RAE/REF and pressure from the funding council and the media that the CSU should focus on teaching rather than research. Perhaps as a result of these pressures and the relatively low proportion of research active staff at the CSU and the university did not perform well in the early research selectivity exercises. The organisational response was to resist attempts to undermine research in order to preserve the status of the CSU as a ‘traditional’ university and because of the importance of research to the professional identities and career progression of individual academics. The way that the CSU adapted its approach and became more tactical in the later research selectivity exercises was described in the previous chapter. The results presented here suggested that although this resulted in an improvement in terms of RAE assessments some academic members felt that conformity with the external requirements had had a detrimental affect on the quality and approach to research within the CSU.

The information presented in this chapter will be analysed in chapter 7 and the blue box below includes an overview of how the results will be considered in relation to Analysis Questions 3 and 4.

In the following chapter evidence will be presented showing how the CSU responded to a number of critical incidents that emerged from the case study.
ANALYSIS OF THIS THE INFORMATION IN THIS SECTION

Analysis Question 3 – Was change within the CSU prompted by internal or external drivers?
- Some changes in teaching were driven internally by academics or departmental innovation.
- The most significant changes in teaching were driven by external pressures (increased student numbers, more diverse student body, changes to curriculum driven by expansion, financial pressures and external controls e.g. QAA agenda)
- Pressures on research were mostly attributed to external pressures (increased teaching load caused by expansion, RAE and the specific pressure on the CSU in the 1990s from media and government to focus on teaching rather than research).

Analysis Question 4 – What behaviors did the organisation adopt in response to the pressures to change and critical incidents identified in the case study?
- The response to the pressures to change teaching included adaption of existing teaching practice e.g. modularisation, adjusting teaching to meet the needs of bigger class sizes and more diverse student cohorts, and compliance e.g. implementation of the new PGCE curriculum (RDT behaviours).
- There was some resistance on the teaching front (N-IT behaviour) – took 6 attempts to implement modularisation.
- The response to the pressures on the research was resistance to external pressures for academics to focus on teaching rather than research at the CSU (N-IT behaviours).

Drawing Conclusions
- Most of the drivers for change in teaching and research at CSU were external/environmental (as per Resource Dependence Theory) rather than being internally driven (as per Neo-Institutional Theory).
- However the organisational response to these external pressures included some behaviors associated with high resource dependence (adaption and compliance in the case of teaching practice) but also institutional responses such as resistance e.g. to standardisation and to pressure to focus less on research and a importance of research in relation to the institutional legitimacy of the CSU.
Chapter 6: CSU Response to Critical Incidents

In this chapter a number of critical incidents which occurred at the CSU during the period 1980s-2000s will be identified. A description of how the incidents came about will be given and evidence of how the CSU responded will be provided.

The critical incidents highlighted here emerged from the documentary analysis and first set of interviews and were then explored in more detail in the second round of interviews and further analysis of the archive material. The incidents were selected because they illustrated how the organisation responded to various explicit and perceived pressures over the case study period. The following incidents/groups of incidents were selected for consideration:

- **1981 Funding Cuts.** The 25% reduction to the CSU’s UGC grant were referred to in chapter 4. This incident marked the start of a period of acute financial difficulty for the CSU.

- **Departmental Closures.** During the second half of the period covered by the case study a number of academic restructurings occurred at the CSU. Three incidents of attempted and successful restructurings/ closures will be presented which demonstrate how the organisational approach evolved during the latter period covered.

- **Special Funding Initiatives.** In the final decade of the case study HEFCE introduced funding for a number of initiatives which sought to incentivise universities to pursue specific government HE agendas. The CSU’s engagement in two of these initiatives, widening participation and business engagement, will be covered in the final section of this chapter.

Evidence from this chapter will be used in the analysis of the following AQs in chapter 7:

**Analysis Question 3:** Did environmental and/or organisational factors prompt the CSU to change its behaviour (or not) during the period covered?

**Analysis Question 4:** What behaviours did the organisation adopt in response to the pressures to change and critical incidents identified in the case study?
i. **1981 Funding Cuts**

As described in chapter 4, the early 1980s was a difficult period for the CSU. The national economy was struggling in the latter part of the 1970s and by 1980 the CSU was aware that significant cuts in government funding were on the way (p81). In response an Economies Working Party (EWP), consisting of three senior academics, with senior administrative officers in attendance, was set up to present the university with recommendations for how it should respond to cuts in the UGC grant. The EWP was asked to work on the basis that the CSU would receive between 11% and 12.5% cut over the following two years (including a 3.5% to 5% cut in 1981/82) and was given the following terms of reference:

>To identify areas of savings for 1981/2 of between £0.5 and £0.75 million with, as the highest priority, the minimum reduction of the academic function of teaching and research, but with regard also to the efficient operation of the institution as a whole.

C6, First Report of the Economies Working Party, 8/7/81

On 1 July 1981 the VC received a letter notifying him that the University’s funding would in fact be cut by 25% (£3M) over the following two years (C2). The VC responded to this letter on 2 July 1981 as follows:

*I cannot adequately convey to you the intensity of the feelings of the University about these letters, and it is with great anger that I write immediately to leave you in no doubt about the irreparable damage that your proposals will do to this University.*

C1

The first report of the EWP coincided with the arrival of the letter announcing the 25% cuts and was presented to Senate one week after the letter was received. It recommended (C6):

- **Transferring costs of services to the consumer** (levying a £15 fee to students to cover costs of sports facilities, counseling service etc).
- Ensuring that residences and catering services covered their full costs rather than being subsidised by the university.
• That the CSU should seek to increase income from fundraising, consultancy, recovery of overhead costs on research grants and by developing short course provision.

• Non-staff savings to be achieved by decentralising budgets with Heads of Departments being tasked to reduce non pay by 20%, compulsory use of central services instead of out-sourcing, reduce spend on cleaning services and AV (CSU had highest spend on AV in the sector at the time) and reductions in maintenance, subscriptions, recitals, public lectures and publications.

• Staff costs savings (reduction in temporary teaching assistants, delay the appointment of replacements, new appointments to start at bottom of scales and freeze in all non-essential vacant posts).

Although these measures represented a significant shift in the financial strategy of the CSU (transferring costs to students, seeking new revenue streams and dramatically cutting non-pay costs) it should be noted that at the time circa 75% of spend at the CSU was on salaries (AR75 p15). Once the full scale of the cuts were known it would have been immediately apparent that what was proposed would not be adequate to balance the books. The first report of the EWP did recognise this and hinted that more drastic measures including reductions in salary costs might be required:

*We are bound to point out that if future cuts approach anywhere near those estimated in section 3 above, the budget can only be balanced by major economies which cannot be confined to the provision of goods and services.*

C6

The Senate met on 8/7/81 and endorsed most of the recommendations of the EWP, including the suggestion that budgets be decentralised, but rejected the recommendation that HoDs should be asked to examine and report on all possible reductions to achieve a 20% decrease in non-pay (C11). Despite the fact that, by the time of the meeting (8 July), the full extent of the cuts would have been known (the announcement came on 1 July), no

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21 One adverse affect of this was that the production of the CSU’s annual reports seems to have ceased in the mid 1980s–causing the researcher some difficulties in finding consistent financial accounts for the CSU through the 1980s.

22 In 1980/1 total revenue was £17.5M (salary costs = circa £13M and non-pay = circa £4.5M). UGC grant = £11.2M. 25% reduction = £2.8M. So in order to have a 0% reduction in salary costs non-pay costs would have to be cut by 62%.

23 So the HoDs were given greater responsibility for their budgets but were not expected to make the 20% savings recommended by the EWP, which wasn’t anywhere close to the level of savings that were actually required in order to balance the books.
undertaking was made to look at reducing staff costs, other than to encourage staff nearing retirement to leave early.

The notes of that Senate meeting and the subsequent Annual Report for 1981 also demonstrate that, against the advice of the UGC, the CSU was committed to maintaining student numbers and honoring the offers made to candidates seeking admission in Autumn that year. In the event the CSU was not able to maintain numbers as planned and as Figure 4.1 in chapter 4 shows there was a slight dip in numbers during the 1980s. The commitment to maintaining numbers following the cuts put further pressure on the already limited resources of the CSU and resulted in a £40k fine from the UGC after student number targets were exceeded again in 1982 (AR1983).

In addition to the determination to avoid major staffing cuts and to maintain numbers, the CSU’s response to the cuts also included the resignation of the VC from all of his non-University offices so that he could give the CSU his “undivided attention over the next two years” as well as instigating a number of unsuccessful attempts to lobby Government and the UGC in the hope that the decision would be reversed (C2 and C9).

Reflecting on the organisational response to the cuts one interview respondent commented as follows:

*It was led by a VC who thought it was grossly unfair what had happened. The whole University thought it was unfair...I imagine he persuaded himself that it would be reversed at some point.*

R5.b

However, at the time, the approach adopted by EWP and Senate was viewed positively within the CSU and on the 16th of July 1981 Council issued a vote of confidence in the actions being taken by the VC in response to the cuts:

*[Council] endorse[‘s] most warmly Finance Committee’s expression of confidence in the Vice-Chancellor’s leadership and to affirm Council’s support for the action he was taking to deal with the exceptionally difficult situation.*

C8
Despite being specifically asked for details of plans to reduce staffing levels by the UGC (C15, UGC circular 18/81), the CSU remained resistant to considering a redundancy scheme and continued to focus on non-pay, vacancy savings and voluntary early retirements.

By February 1982 there was still resistance to the University adopting a more aggressive approach to reducing the spend on pay:

Some members of Senate took the view that the University should not make even planning assumptions on future staffing reductions at the present juncture.

C12, Senate meetings 3/Feb/82

The EWP submitted its 6th report and recommendations for economies later in 1982 and the Annual Report of that year openly conceded that greater numbers of staff would have to take voluntary retirement or redundancy in order to reduce the forecast deficit (AR82 p10). It was only at this stage that a voluntary severance scheme was introduced.

By 1984 Senate reported that “the target job losses as a result of Government Policies has been reached; over 120 academic and academic related posts have been lost through voluntary severance and early retirement” (AR84 p9). However, according to the detailed lists of staff joiners and leavers included in the Annual Reports 1982, 1983 and 1984 (summarised in table 6.1 below), although some 154 Academics and Researchers had left the CSU during that period, a further 137 had been recruited suggesting that the voluntary leavers scheme may not have been as effective as was suggested by Senate in the Annual Report24.

24 One respondent who reviewed the case study made the point here that many of the people who left at this stage were old and on higher salaries than then individuals who replaced them. He also pointed out that the number of internally funded academics fell and the number of externally funded researchers increased, helping to improve the university’s finances.
Table 6.1: Number of Staff Leaving and Joining the CSU according to 1982-1984 Annual Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Leaving</th>
<th>Joining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic 1982</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic 1983</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic 1984</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Academic</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research 1982</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research 1983</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research 1984</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Research</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Academic 1982</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Academic 1983</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Academic 1984</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Non-Academic</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Academic and Research</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the eventual compliance (or appearance of compliance) with the UGC’s advice regarding staff reductions, the CSU remained defiantly critical of the cuts and of the approach taken by the UGC:

_We maintain that the University has been the victim of ignorance, that the UGC’s allocation of grant and student numbers in 1981 failed to take account of our achievements and developments and our contribution to teaching and research nationally and regionally…One may suspect that decisions have been made on the basis of what Sir Edward Parkes himself described recently in a speech to Information Officers as ‘informed prejudice’. In our case the information on which the UGC acted has not been disclosed, but the prejudice is painfully obvious._

AR83, p8

Despite the implementation of the non-pay recommendations made by the EWP and the eventual acceptance of the need for a voluntary severance scheme by the CSU, the UGC remained unconvinced that the university was making serious attempts to deal with the financial realities it faced. According to one respondent this sense of injustice and slowness to respond contributed to the UGC’s frustration with the CSU during this period:

_So maybe that contributed to what the UGC would have seen as the university sitting on its hands. It certainly wasn’t seen like that in the University. When I got here we felt like we’d been through a torrid time and were still going through a torrid time._
They were still closing down areas when I arrived, and departments that were regarded as good and we didn’t really want to lose, like Geology. They were pretty traumatic times going on then. It wasn’t that nothing was happening.

RP5.b

A key moment for the CSU during this funding crisis was the appointment of a new Vice Chancellor in 1985:

[the old VC], he was severely depressed about what had happened, it came out as anger, it came out as resistance, it came out as you don’t understand us, you understand the impact. So there wasn’t a dramatic action plan that I was aware of, saying that this is what we are going to do...Whereas [the new VC]...as soon as he came through the door he presented a plan for saving I don’t know how many millions of pounds. That was his pitch.

RP4.b

Under the new VC, the approach adopted by the CSU to the financial crisis and UGC guidance changed. An academic restructuring was undertaken, replacing departments with larger, apparently more efficient Schools, further voluntary redundancy schemes were introduced and commitments were made to implementing the recommendations from the 1985 Jarratt report. One respondent questioned whether these changes had much of an impact but suggested that the important point was that the UGC was persuaded that the CSU had started to take the right sort of approach - “whether it happened is another matter. It was simply a demonstration to the UGC that you were doing something” (RP4.b).

In 1986 Council received the following note from the UGC suggesting that the new measures had at least been successful in persuading them that the CSU was now responding to its financial difficulties in an appropriate manner:

It was the Committee’s impression that the University had postponed confronting some of its problems in recent years, in the hope that the economic pressures on the university system were temporary. While this may have been a defensible stance at the time, continuing financial constraint only made these decisions more painful.

25 One interview respondent who reviewed the case study commented here that the CSU at this time actually became the first university to make a member of academic staff redundant on financial grounds.
The University had now realised that it was no longer possible to defer difficult decisions and had begun to face up to some hard choices. It was to be congratulated in doing so.

C10 – note to Council from UGC, Nov 1986

ii. Departmental Closures and Restructuring

The CSU had a number of stages of academic expansion and restructuring during the case study period (20 academic departments in 3 faculties in 1960, 45 departments in 1981, 14 Schools with 39 subject areas in 1990, 24 academic departments in 6 faculties in 2009). Details of the subject areas/departments that were offered by the CSU throughout the case study period and the subject areas that have been merged, discontinued and introduced are provided in Table 6.2 below. It is not known how typical this volume of internal restructuring is amongst English universities. However, this information does suggest a significant amount of change during the fifty years covered by the case study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standing Subjects*</th>
<th>Merged Subject Areas</th>
<th>Discontinued Subjects</th>
<th>New Subjects (introduced during cases study period)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>Physics and Applied Physics</td>
<td>Aeronautical Engineering</td>
<td>Business/Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Mathematics, Applied</td>
<td>Engineering **</td>
<td>Sport Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Mathematics and Statistics</td>
<td>Oceanography **</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>French, German Spanish</td>
<td>Linguistics</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>and Italian</td>
<td>Classics</td>
<td>Drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theology</td>
<td>Electronic and Mechanical</td>
<td>Geology</td>
<td>Theatre (satellite campus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Zoology</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Bio Chemistry, Plant</td>
<td>Dutch Studies</td>
<td>American Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Biology and Applied Biology</td>
<td>Scandinavian Studies</td>
<td>Film Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td></td>
<td>South East Asian Studies</td>
<td>Media, Culture and Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td></td>
<td>Studies</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Digital Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Botany</td>
<td>Logistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These subject areas were offered by the CSU throughout the case study period, all were at some point departments in their own right, though some were affected by departmental reorganisations during the period.
** These subject areas were discontinued prior to the case study period but are included because they illustrate that the CSU has always offered niche academic disciplines.

The reorganisation, closure and merger of academic departments at the CSU had not originally been a focus in the research project. However, data from the initial interviews and from the documentary analysis showed that these had been significant events in the history of the organisation and for the individuals involved. There was also clear evidence of external pressure on the institution to change its structures (from the funding body and in terms of student demand) and there was also evidence of some quite powerful institutional forces at play during these changes. It was therefore considered that a selection of these incidents would be useful in illustrating the significance of environmental and organisational factors on the academic structure of the CSU.

Following the funding cuts of 1981 the CSU came under pressure from the UGC to close a number of departments including Classics, Drama and Geology and to merge its departments of Physics and Applied Physics. The first two cases to be presented here relate to the approach the CSU took in the cases of Drama and Physics/Applied Physics in the wake of the 1981 cuts. The third case to be described here is the closure of the department of Mathematics which occurred in 2005.

**Drama**

The CSU established a department of Drama in 1963. According to the account given in a history of the department written in the 1980s “there was little or no tradition of Drama as an academic discipline. Manchester had anticipated [the CSU] by a mere two years in founding a department, Birmingham by only one, and Bristol alone had produced any graduates”, (D5.a). Despite some early estate-related challenges 26, the Drama department soon established itself as a highly regarded centre amongst its peers, had acquired funding for and built a state of the art drama teaching facility and was receiving the highest rate of applications per place of any department at the CSU (D5a and b).

It therefore came as a surprise to the CSU when, in the announcement of the 1981 funding cuts, the UGC made the following suggestion:

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26 The department didn’t have any theatre space and had adapt a disused military hut in its early years.
It [the UGC] invites the University to consider discontinuing Drama and the History of Art.

C2 UGC letter announcing cuts, 1 July 1981

The following extract from the minutes of the Senate meeting that was held a week after the cuts were announced indicates that this particular recommendation was unexpected and that members challenged the approach the UGC had taken in reaching it:

*Attention was drawn to the new role which the UGC had adopted and whether its present composition and procedures were appropriate in these circumstances. A number of speakers also referred to the difficulty in not knowing the criteria on which the UGC had based its judgments...the case of Drama seemed to falsify the assumption that the cuts were based on the quality and number of applications...it was argued that in these circumstances, no department was safe and that the UGC's interventionist role might well be repeated if it was allowed to succeed on this occasion.*

C11, Minutes of Senate meeting on 8/7/81

One of the interview respondents commented that, although the Drama department was generally viewed as being successful and worthy of being defended by the CSU, the Head of Department at that time was also very active and influential within the institution during this period:

*I'd be interested to be reminded who was on this Development Committee, there was a senate representative, I think [the Head of Department] from Drama was on it. He seemed to be on everything, I remember a professor of Theology saying, when they write the history of the university and they ask who was responsible for major decisions taken during the 1980s it has to be [Head of Drama].*

R4.a

Soon after the UGC announcement and the Senate meeting referred to above the Head of Department sent a long letter to the VC setting out a detailed and powerful case in defense of the department citing the high application rate, strong A level profile of entrants, breadth
of degree provision, high rate of 2:1s and 1sts, the quality of its performance and research facilities and the significant investment from an external source in the custom-built theatre workshop. His letter concluded that:

The UGC’s proposals constitute an attack on Drama as an academic subject: just over half the universities offering degree courses in Drama have been invited to consider discontinuing or restricting them...no grounds have been advanced by the UGC, either for this general onslaught or for the discrimination against particular departments.

D1, Letter from Head of Drama to VC arguing against the closure of the department, 17 July 1981

The Head of Department appeared to be successful in persuading colleagues within the CSU that the UGC’s suggestion should be ignored and a few months later Senate announced that:

...the Development Committee endorsed the view of the Faculty of Arts that Drama and the History of Art should not be discontinued and this matter would be taken up with the UGC Sub-Committee on 6 November 1981.

C13 Senate Minutes 4/11/81

As referred to above, the VC had by this stage already indicated his extreme displeasure at the funding cuts and the way in which the UGC had arrived at its allocations and specific recommendations. The decision not to close the department of Drama constituted, perhaps, the most significant act of defiance on the part of the CSU during this period. A number of respondents stressed that at the time if the UGC made a suggestion or invited an institution to do something, it was expected that a University would follow the guidance (RP2). This episode demonstrated the growing weakness in the UGC, which received significant criticism for the way it, and its sub-committees, had managed the 1981 cuts (Shattock, 1994, p22). While the government was pleased with the approach taken by the UGC to the cuts, the body lost much of its credibility with universities and its influence began to wane during the 1980s. It was eventually replaced by the national University Funding Councils in 1989.
One respondent noted that a significant difference between the newer funding councils (UFC and later HEFCE) and the UGC was they tended not to issue such specific subject-level guidance to universities (p85).

Once the decision not to discontinue Drama provision at the CSU was taken, Senate and Council then agreed that the department should not be subject to the same reductions in resource as other departments were under the recommendations of the EWP:

*Senate and Council have agreed that provision for Drama should be maintained. They have done so in the knowledge that cuts will have to be found elsewhere in the University.*

AR81 p9

This Drama department case demonstrated both the willingness and the ability of the CSU to stand up to the UGC. It also showed the collegiate nature of the institution with the academic community lending its support to an area that was seen as being valuable to the institution (on non-financial grounds).

Following this episode the department was not complacent and this extract from the departmental history demonstrated that the threat of closure led to a recognition for the need for flexibility within the department and an increased focus on research:

*Since 1981 we have learned to be chameleons, as strolling players always had to be, preparing to adapt to whatever new philosophy current thinking was dreaming up. Our research rating has risen to a maximum 5 with the publication of books and articles, we offer a semi-vocational M.A. course and currently welcome an annual BAQTS intake of second year students from [local college].*

D5.b, history of the department written in 1990s

The response by the CSU to the attempt by the UGC to persuade it to close the Drama department demonstrated that, despite its financial difficulties, it was still an autonomous organisation that was able to resist external pressure from the body that still provided the majority of its funding (64%). This incident also illustrated the importance of the role of Head of Department, the collegiate nature of the CSU’s response to the UGC and the focus
on academic at the expense of economic considerations (the decision not to reduce the Drama non-pay budget at the expense of other departments).

**Physics and Applied Physics**

Physics was one of the original departments of the CSU (A1). In the mid 1960s a department of Applied Physics was established which admitted students who had undertaken two years of study in Physics into specialised final year programmes (AR65 p23). By the 1970s Applied Physics had its own intake of 15-20 students and Physics had an intake of circa 30 students and across the two departments there were 35 academics (D2) and 30 technicians (RP2). According to numerous respondents and archival material, the Applied Physics department had by this time established a strong research reputation, particularly in laser physics. However, it was noted that the CSU was distinctive in having two Physics departments and one of the respondents commented that, even within the organisation, there was a recognition that this didn’t make much sense:

> If you’d looked at it you would have said "how come Oxford has got Physics, Imperial has got Physics and [CSU] has got Physics and Applied Physics, two separate autonomous departments”.

RP2

The UGC was aware of this anomaly and had been suggesting that the University merge these two units since the late 1970s. It emphasised the point in the letter announcing the 1981 cuts in which it invited “the University to review departmental organisation with the aim of combining Physics and Applied Physics” (C2, letter from UGC announcing the funding cuts, 1/07/1981). In a file note which considered the implications of the 1 July UGC letter the Registrar advised the VC that:

> Combining Physics and Applied Physics...This has been a “target” of the UGC for some time past, and reference was made to it informally in 1978, and rather more strongly at the visitation in 1980. With a total academic staff in the physics field of about 35 the [CSU] is greatly over-exposed and the merging of the two Departments will render maintaining this type of establishment impossible.

D2 (File Note from Registrar to VC, 13 July 1981).
It is not clear from this statement whether maintaining the existing establishment was seen as desirable or whether this statement was a warning that if the UGC advice were followed the implication was that redundancies would be inevitable. Nevertheless, the CSU response in this case was markedly different to the suggested closure of the Drama department. The matter does not seem to have generated as much attention as the Drama issue at the Senate and Council meetings that followed the UGC announcement and no definitive response to the UGC on this issue was found in the archive material.

Despite the lack of discussion on the CSU’s governing bodies one respondent indicated that considerable time was dedicated to the issue at departmental level during this period:

> So at that time we did have loads and loads and loads of meetings about merging the two departments. We had this meeting with our Head of Department and he said "well if you merge the two departments there are bound to be job losses because they can't cope with everybody". Physics would be saying the same. In the event then, I think you could really put it down to two Heads of Department, who was going to be Head of Department? They were both strong characters. So neither would want to merge because one would have to step aside for the other. So in the event they fought it and didn't merge.

RP2

It appears from this response that the leaders of the CSU were prepared to avoid dealing with this issue in the immediate aftermath of 1981. The lack of official discussion at the time at a senior level, and the lack of evidence of an undertaking to follow the UGC advice vis a vis the Physics merger would appear to confirm this.

The UGC repeated its recommendation that the two departments should be merged in 1986 (D7) and it was not until the CSU had submitted its 1986/7 Academic Plan to the UGC that a firm undertaking was made that the two Physics Departments would be merged (J3, p14). However, the Council Minutes from May 1987 (D3) show that the issue was still under consideration by the CSU and it was not until the end of that year that the final decision to cease to admit students to courses in Physics and concentrate teaching and research in Applied Physics was taken (AR87 p10).
Two factors that may have contributed to the eventual decision were identified by the RP2 as being the introduction in the mid-1980s of the threat of losing the best academics to a rival institution that had expressed interest in transferring them and the arrival of the new VC during 1985/6 whose view was reported as being “if they don’t want to merge shut them both down” (RP2).

Although the outcomes were very different, the Physics/Applied Physics case has a number of similarities to the Drama example. First, in both cases the Heads of Department appear to have played an important role in determining the organisational response (support in the case of Drama and avoidance of the issue in the case of Physics/Applied Physics). Second, the CSU was able to resist the external pressure from the UGC (refusing outright to comply in the case of Drama and avoiding compliance for nearly ten years in the case of Physics/Applied Physics). Third, the CSU’s approach in both cases was driven by institutional rather than commercial factors (defense of Drama on academic grounds and avoidance of the Physics/Applied Physics issues because of the practical and personnel difficulties that would arise from the merger)27.

**Mathematics**

The decision to close the Department of Mathematics emerged from the Way Forward process, referred to in the previous chapter (p102). Implicit within the Way Forward agenda was the assumption that teaching would in future be market-led (D6 p7) and that “the University has to confront the reality of matching declining income per student with increased efficiencies in learning and teaching”. As described in chapter 5, the focus of the initial phase of the Way Forward was on implementing more standardisation in terms of teaching practice at the CSU. A secondary phase began in 2002/3 which included the CSU giving consideration to what the future for departments with small numbers of students should be. The outcome of this phase included recommendations to discontinue the departments of Mathematics and South East Asian Studies at the CSU and to transfer elements of the provision to nearby universities.

When asked what the rationale behind these recommendations was one respondent who was familiar with the process stated that:

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27 An interview respondent who reviewed the case study commented here “Ultimately the market spoke. Drama could recruit good students. Physics went into near terminal decline nationally. The number of departments decreased from 70 to 47”
... I would argue that student demand has generally been the reason why, whether correctly read or not. I mean the Maths thing, that was both about absolute numbers falling but also the quality of the students that we could recruit.

The paper that recommended the closure of Mathematics confirmed that the main concern was with the undergraduate recruitment (which had halved from 70 to 35 p.a. over three years), an over-reliance on a single programme and one international market for postgraduate provision and the decline in the quality of entrants. Other arguments given included the relatively average research performance of the department (within the CSU and the subject area nationally) and the low level of staffing which was seen as being unsustainable (D8). This case was accepted by the central management of the CSU and the decision was made that the department should close, that some staff, programmes and research activity should transfer to a nearby institution and that only service Mathematics teaching should provided within the CSU.

The respondent referred to above was asked whether the decision to discontinue Mathematics had been taken purely as a result of the internal agenda of ensuring that all areas were economically viable or, as in the case of Drama and Physics, there had been external pressure on the organisation to take the step:

None whatsoever, no. In fact any external pressure there was would have been for us not to do it, from the local teaching community, from that sort of external pressure.

This respondent was also of the view that, had representatives from the funding council been involved in the discussions, they would have argued against the closure of the Mathematics departments on the grounds that it was a strategically important subject area. Indeed, at a later date HEFCE did make it a requirement that universities notify them of their intention to close subject areas, such as Mathematics, that were considered to be strategically important and vulnerable.
The closure of the department of Mathematics demonstrated a radically different approach than had been taken in the Drama and Physics/Applied Physics cases. Rather than being prompted by explicit pressure from an external body, the decision to discontinue this provision was based on the CSU’s analysis of the demand for and financial sustainability of the provision. In common with the other two examples, this case demonstrates that the CSU was autonomous and able to be self-acting in terms of determining its academic structures however in this case it appears that its decision was driven more by commercial than by institutional/academic criteria.

### iii. Special Funding Initiatives

State funding for universities has predominantly been delivered via a block grant that universities are able to determine how to spend. However, throughout its history, there have been examples of the funding body ring-fencing amounts for particular activities that form part of government policy, for example in the postwar period 30% of university grants were set aside to support particular fields of study that were viewed as being of national importance (Shattock, 1994 p3).

During the late 1990s/early 2000s, the funding council began to ring-fence funding for special initiatives designed to incentivise universities to engage with various government/funding council agendas. Universities were able to bid for funds to support a range of activities including widening participation, teaching and research initiatives, business and community engagement and enhancing the leadership and governance of institutions (I1). The CSU successfully bid for grants for a number of these initiatives in the early 2000s and its approach to two of them (business and community engagement and widening participation) is described here.

**Business Engagement**

In August 2000 HEFCE announced that it would “*distribute over £20 million to 50 projects which will help universities and colleges work more closely with business and the community*” (I2). The initiative was known as the Higher Education Reach-Out to Business and the Community (HEROBC) and the CSU successfully bid for £550k from the fund to invest in intellectual property management, commercialisation activities, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), and an innovation centre (I5).
As mentioned in chapter 4, the CSU was founded by local philanthropic businessmen and from the outset had more of a focus on regional businesses than many older universities (p72). One respondent confirmed that the availability of the HEROBC funding created an additional incentive to engage with the local economy:

...without that kind of push I’m not sure we would have been so engaged regionally, am not sure that we would have embraced [the Regional Development Agency] and some of the businesses in [the city] in just the same way.

R6

In 2001/2002 the HEROBC funding stream was replaced by the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) and the CSU was again successful in a bid for funds. In the same year, the CSU also submitted a bid to establish a New Technology Institute (NTI), as part of a related initiative to encourage universities and industries to work together in order to transfer new technology skills and training between the sectors. Details of the business engagement funding allocations and the associated activities undertaken by the CSU under HEIF are included in table 6.3 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>CSU Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEROBC</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>£550k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTI</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>£1.2M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEIF1</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>£470k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEIF2</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>£1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEIF3</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>£1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEIF4</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>£1.3M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: I10 – HEFCE HEROBC NTI and HEIF Allocations 2000-2008

The interview participants who were familiar with the business engagement initiatives were asked to comment on the approach adopted by the CSU and whether it had changed over time. Both stressed that throughout the period the CSU had been diligent in ensuring that the institution delivered the activities and outputs that had been agreed in the bids and plans submitted to the funding council. However, they also explained how the approach taken to these initiatives evolved from a default position of introducing new staff and structures to oversee the implementation of each of the new activities, to a more strategic approach where new funding was used to buy out existing staff who were working in related areas and who were able to incorporate the new objectives into their existing workloads:
With the NTI the money came in, the team looking after the money acted quite properly and delivered what they thought was required, but we gave about £1M away. At the end of that nothing was left and the external people walked away and thanked us for the investment and we were left with staff and no sustainable activity. And I think the trick is to make some of the things we do sustainable down the line.

We got the HEROBAC money and hired a bunch of people, we made them permanent, we got HEIF 1 money and hired a bunch of people and made them permanent. And then when we got HEIF 2 money the plan that came in to me from the Business Support manager was hire another bunch of staff including 8 secretaries, and make them permanent. So we were growing and growing the Business Support Unit but there wasn't any steady income. What I did was to move all of them onto permanent contracts...they are all now paid for out of that funding stream and we've stopped hiring more staff.

One respondent who confirmed that this evolution of approach was consistent with the way in which other initiatives funded in this way were approached was asked why the CSU had initially dedicated such a large proportion of the additional funding to completely new activities, rather than using it to buy-out existing related staffing and structures:

Because we didn't think about it. It was before we became aware of how the rest of the sector did it. The rest of the sector flannelled and used it to pay people that they already had, or to package things that they were already doing. I think we were naive, that's partly to do with [the CSU’s] insularity from the rest of the sector.

The respondents described how by the end of the case study period the CSU had become more strategic in its administration of its business engagement initiatives and how, in addition to delivering the objectives agreed with the funding council in its strategies and action plans, it had become standard practice to ensure that this type of funding would also be used to support initiatives that aligned more closely with core teaching and research
activities and to leverage funding from other sources such as the Regional Development Agency (RP6).

No evidence was found that the Funding Council either noticed or disapproved of the evolution of the approach adopted by the CSU in the administration of its business engagement initiatives, and those involved in their delivery provided examples of where CSU initiatives funded in this way were cited as examples of best practice in the sector by HEFCE (I15, HEFCE report on best practice in HEIF4).

**Widening Participation**

Along with the aspiration that the participation rate in higher education would increase to 50% of the eligible cohort, widening participation (WP) was a significant component of Tony Blair’s Labour Government’s higher education policy. In June 1998 HEFCE announced that £1.5M had been set aside to support initiatives to “address low demand from under-represented groups by encouraging progression into and within higher education” (HEFCE 98/35). In 2003, the funding council announced that the WP allocation had been increased to £255M p.a., though it should be noted that there was a significant corresponding decrease in the core teaching grant allocations. The CSU’s WP allocations for the period 2000 to 2008 are included in table 6.4 below.

**Table 6.4: Growth in CSU WP allocations 2000-2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Retention (for supporting students/reallocation from T grant)</th>
<th>Recruitment (aimed at supporting recruitment from under-represented groups)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>£159k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/2002</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>£312k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/2004</td>
<td>£1849k</td>
<td>£434k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/2006</td>
<td>£1459k</td>
<td>£775k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/2008</td>
<td>£2198k</td>
<td>£1508k</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CSU Funding Letters 2000-2008

The CSU is situated in an area of low educational attainment and already had a programme of activities to encourage local school children to aspire to progress to higher education, long before the HEFCE special initiative funding for WP activities became available. The University also historically had a much higher proportion of under-represented groups making up its student body than other traditional universities, for example in 2003 29.5% of young full time undergraduate entrants came from low participation neighbourhoods compared to the England average of 18.9% (2002/3 HESA WP performance indicators). In chapter 4 the focus on teaching and student support was identified as one of the distinctive
features of the CSU and in chapter 5 academic respondents described how they had to adapt their teaching practice to support non-traditional students as increasingly large numbers entered the university towards the end of the case study period.

Therefore, rather than engaging in the WP initiative because of the additional resource being made available by the funding council, recruiting and supporting non-standard students was already something that was core within the CSU’s mission (I4). The approach that was taken was to continue to allocate the ‘core’ WP funding (which was the element that had been taken from the core Teaching Grant) to the academic departments and to ring-fence the much smaller formula-based element and use it to fund a dedicated WP office, to fund existing WP activities and to develop some new WP initiatives.

Reflecting on the CSU’s approach to special initiative funding generally, and the WP strand in particular, one respondent commented:

> I think we went through a period, arguably we still do it, where we chase funding initiatives because they are one of the only sources of additional resource. There are instances of the resistance that we spoke of earlier. A classic example is the WP funding. The Funding Council ‘stole’ it from the teaching grant, rebadged it as widening participation and we to some extent tried to avoid spending that again. Not completely, elements of it were spent on additional activity, but the core funding that was stolen from teaching grant we never did do anything specific with on the argument that we were already promoting WP out there in the academic areas and was funding them to do it already. Whether that is right or wrong doesn’t matter. There’s an example of where we nuanced an initiative. It was massive, it’s still big today, there is hefty funding for WP and we still do the same. There were bits of it where we gave money out but they were relatively trivial sums compared to the global £3M or something like that. So if you wanted an example of where we managed our response there’s one for you.

RP5.b

As with the business engagement initiatives there was no evidence of the Funding Council disagreeing with the approach adopted by the CSU in the administration of its WP funding. Examples were also provided of the CSU approach being viewed as best practice within the sector, both in terms of recruiting and supporting non-traditional learners (I12, QAA report on supporting non-traditional learners and examples of other institutions copying a long-running project aimed at increasing the aspirations of 14-15 year old School pupils).
iv. Summary of Findings

During the course of the case study a number of significant incidents that demonstrated the evolving organisational behaviours of the CSU were identified. These incidents were explored in more detail in further archival analysis and follow up interviews using critical incident technique. The results of these further investigations were presented in this chapter and the organisational response to each of them is summarized here.

The evidence from the case study demonstrated that the CSU’s initial response to the 1981 funding cuts was defiance and avoidance. Although the institution made genuine attempts to cut costs the scope of the initial attempts to bring expenditure in line with the reduced income levels were not adequate. A deliberate attempt to change the CSU’s approach was made with the appointment of the new VC who was able to convince both Council and the UGC that the issues caused by the funding crisis would be addressed. By apparently following the external guidance being given in terms of restructuring, staff reductions and the Jarratt agenda, the CSU gave the impression of compliance, though the internal archival material suggests that the impact of these developments may not have been as significant as the UGC supposed.

The examples of attempts to close academic departments demonstrated that very different organisational responses were adopted by the CSU in the middle and latter periods covered by the case study. In the cases of Drama and Physics the CSU was under direct external pressure to close/merge the departments and its response could be described as institutional (defiance and avoidance, non-economic arguments and the organisational response was driven by devolved academic heads of department). In the case of Mathematics there was no external pressure to close the department and the rationale adopted by the CSU for doing so conformed more closely to production-organisation behaviours (economic argument with decision being made by the ‘central’ management).

In both of the special funding initiatives identified here the government/funding council agenda was consistent with the CSU’s existing organisational priorities (local engagement and widening participation). The CSU was not subjected to external pressure to act in a way that it viewed as undesirable (as had been the case when the UGC tried to force the closure of Drama), rather it was able to leverage additional funding to support activities that it was either already doing or were consistent with its mission. The examples presented here show
that the CSU’s initial response to these initiatives was direct compliance, as it used the funding to create new roles and activities to deliver the outputs required by HEFCE. The evidence suggested that as time went on, the CSU’s approach to these initiatives evolved and became more tactical, using the resource to buy out existing staff time and support related activities. In doing so the CSU was successful both in delivering the HEFCE objectives in relation to these initiatives (the CSU was cited nationally as an example of good practice in both business engagement and WP) and was also able to use the additional resource to pursue its own objectives.

The information presented here will be analysed in the next chapter and the blue box below includes an overview of how the results will be considered in relation to Analysis Questions 3 and 4.
ANALYSIS OF THIS THE INFORMATION IN THIS SECTION

Analysis Question 3 – Did environmental and/or organisational factors prompt the CSU to change its behaviour (or not) during the period covered?
- 1981 funding cuts were definitely externally/environmentally driven.
- Departmental restructurings were driven by different factors. In the cases of Physics and Drama the CSU was under explicit pressure from the UGC to merge and close these departments. In the case of Mathematics the CSU responded to what it perceived to be an environmental pressure but there was no pressure from the funding council to do this.
- Engagement with special funding initiatives was more complex. The governments WP and business engagement agendas were consistent with the existing mission of the CSU. Engagement in the initiatives provided an opportunity to secure additional funding for activities that were already being done by the CSU. Combination of environmental and organisational factors.

Analysis Question 4 – What behaviours did the organisation adopt in response to the pressures to change and critical incidents identified in the case study?
- Initial response to 1981 funding cuts was resistance and avoidance. It took the CSU a number of years, and a change in VC, to fully engage with the new funding circumstances of the organisation and show greater compliance with the UGC approach. Initial institutional response gave way to a more resource dependent response.
- In the case of Drama the CSU showed defiance. In the case of Physics there was a significant period of avoidance and compliance with the UGC advice only occurred when internal circumstances suited. The Mathematics case showed the CSU responding in a more RDT way (adopting strategies that are designed to increase efficiency of organisation and maximise resources) rather than being driven by the more institutional approach shown in the other cases.
- Special funding initiatives were different from the other two types of incidents because the organisational mission was consistent with the HEFCE/government agenda. Initial response was compliance which evolved into a more tactical response of adaptation which enabled the CSU to divert more of the resource to other activities.

Drawing Conclusions
- In many of these cases the pressures that brought about the incidents were externally/environmentally driven. The exception was the special funding initiatives where the CSU received external support to undertake activities that were consistent with internal priorities.
- The CSU’s responses to these incidents show that the organisational response shifted from typical NIT responses (resistance and defiance to external pressure and motivated by non-financial priorities e.g. refusing to the introduce staff redundancies necessary to balance the books in order to protect academics jobs) to exhibiting more RDT responses (compliance and adaptation and acting in ways that it was thought would optimise resources e.g. closure of Mathematics and more tactical approach to special funding initiatives).
Chapter 7: Analysis of the Case Study

In this chapter the results of the case study will be analysed using the theoretical framework and analysis questions presented in chapter 1. Each section in this chapter relates to one of the four analysis questions and the results will form the basis of the answer to the third research question:

RQ3: To what extent is the organisational behaviour of universities driven by environmental and institutional factors?

In the analysis of the case study material three distinct phases will be considered:

- **Early period.** This period covers post-Robbins period of the 1960s and 1970s during which time the CSU was relatively well funded, expanding significantly, investing in its campus, was bringing new subject areas online and experienced very little direct intervention from either the funding council or other external regulatory bodies.

- **Middle period.** This period covers the 1980s and 1990s during which time the CSU experienced a significant reduction in state funding, continued expansion and growing external pressure from the QAA, RAE and began to be more responsive to the student market.

- **Late period.** This period covers the final decade of the case study during which time the financial position of the CSU improved, student numbers began to level off, a new campus was acquired, the management of the institution had become more centralised and more formal structures were in place to respond to the external pressures described above.
i. How independent is the CSU from its environment and did its level of dependency change over time?

**Approach**

In this section the level of environmental dependence of the CSU will be considered. Scott’s definition of environmental dependence will be used as the basis for the analysis:

> “whether organisations are self-sufficient, relatively self acting, insulated forms or are highly context-dependent, substantially constituted, influenced and penetrated by their environment”

Scott, 2008, p122

The extent of the dependence/independence of the CSU will be considered in relation to the major environmental pressures on universities that were considered in chapters 3 (expansion, funding and regulation) during the early, middle and late period of the case study.

**Early Period**

The first environmental factor to be considered is the expansion of the HE sector. Following the publication of the Robbins report in 1963 the government committed itself to increasing the number of students at universities threefold (see chapter 3). While the post-Robbins expectation was that universities would continue to accommodate 60% of the HE cohort individual universities were able to determine the level of their expansion (demonstrated by the example of the University of Cambridge expanding by just 24% between the mid 1950s and 1980 in chapter 3). Evidence from the case study showed that the CSU was both keen to expand and that it had the space to be able to do so comfortably (p74). The number of students at the CSU trebled between 1960 and 1980 (1,660 to 5,457, table 4.1), in line with the policy projections that the government had for the sector as a whole. Although the CSU was heavily reliant on the state to finance this growth (p76) it was not compelled to expand and it therefore took advantage of funding opportunities available in the post-Robbins era, rather than being forced to expand against its will. So although it was not self-reliant in terms of resources, it was able to determine its own approach in student number planning, and chose a course of aggressive expansion.
The second environmental factor to be considered is the extent to which the CSU was influenced or controlled via its funding. At the beginning of the case study period the CSU received significant capital investment (p80) as well as 75% of its operating revenue from the UGC (table 4.2). By 1970 the CSU reliance on the UGC had increased to 85% (table 4.2). During this period, despite the significant UGC investment in the CSU, there was little evidence of UGC interference other than an attempt to steer the CSU into recruiting Arts rather than Science students which the University ignored (p76). So, while the CSU was heavily reliant on the UGC for resources the level of interference from the UGC/government was relatively low. This is consistent with the observation made by Tapper in chapter 3 that “power did not automatically translate into policy control” (2007 p277). Again, the evidence from the case study suggests that, while not self-sufficient, the level of external influence and penetration of the funding body was relatively low.

The third environmental factor to be considered is the extent to which the CSU was constrained by external regulation. During the early period of the case study the CSU was required to report and submit plans to the UGC every five years. In return the UGC provided the CSU with guidance on its future plans and awarded a quinquennial grant based on the historical allocation received and the plans submitted by the CSU (p.84). The reporting/accountability requirements on the CSU were therefore relatively light touch and, at that time no attempts were made to regulate teaching practice or interfere with research at the institution. So, at this stage the CSU was relatively independent in terms of being able to determine how to undertaken its core activities of teaching and research and wasn’t overly burdened in terms of accountability requirements for the public funding it received.

The analysis of these sources of potential environment pressure on the CSU show that during the early period, despite being very reliant on the UGC for resource, it was not subjected to major external attempts to steer or regulate its activities and will therefore be categorised as having enjoyed a relatively high degree of environmental autonomy.

**Middle Period**

After this initial period of relatively low environmental dependence, the CSU was subjected to greater levels external constraint during the middle period.

In terms of student numbers, in the early 1980s the CSU wanted to continue to grow, ignored student recruitment targets it had been set by the UGC, and was fined. Following
this the CSU began to comply with the lower UGC targets (p117) and there was a dip in student numbers (figure 4.1). By the 1990s the government was once again seeking to expand higher education and, as in the 1960s, the CSU was keen to grow, however by this point universities had to go through a competitive bidding process (ASNs) if they wanted to expand (p77). The setting of low recruitment targets and the control of student numbers via the ASN process during the 1980-90s demonstrate that, in contrast with the expansion of the 1960s, in the middle period the CSU was much more constrained in terms of its ability to determine its levels of student recruitment and that funding body (UGC and then HEFCE) was beginning to exert greater control over the university.

Evidence of increasing environmental dependence was also found in terms of the CSU’s finances during this period. As a result of the funding cuts in 1981 and the decline in the UGC unit of resource in the early 1980s the proportion of state funding the CSU received fell to 64% in 1980 and by 1990 was just 41%. It therefore became necessary for the CSU to seek ways of increasing revenue and decreasing expenditure (chapter 6, section 1). The university’s attempts to address its financial difficulties led it to adopt some radical new approaches (such as academic restructuring, introducing staff redundancies, (p120) and implementing the recommendations of the Jarratt Report (p135)) that were seen as being necessary, though not desirable within the CSU.

The CSU’s level of environmental dependence also increased during this period as a result of the new regulatory requirements being imposed on it. In particular, the introduction of the research selectivity exercises in the 1980s and the external quality assurance mechanisms in the 1990s led to changes in research and teaching practice that were viewed as detrimental by academics (p110) and were initially resisted (p102). These new arrangements represented a fairly significant change in the higher education environment as teaching and research, which had historically been the preserve of individual academics, departments and institutions, had essentially become a matter of public interest and accountability.

The analysis of the CSU’s approach to expansion, the reduction in state funding and the increased regulatory requirements described here, demonstrate that by the middle period of the case study the CSU was having to respond to a much greater level of environmental controls and constraints than it had in the preceding decades.
**Late Period**

In the latter period covered by the case study the financial position of the CSU improved and a range of mechanisms were put in place to manage some of the external pressures described in the previous sub-section.

Following a period of fairly rapid expansion during the 1990s and the acquisition of a satellite campus in 2000, student numbers fluctuated a little but remained between circa 21,000-22,000 throughout the next decade. The CSU invested in marketing and recruitment activities (p68) and revenue from both home and international recruitment improved (p82). By the mid-2000s the rate of expansion slowed, and the focus shifted to consolidating and arranging appropriate accommodation for the existing numbers. Two new sites were acquired and redeveloped and new academic provision was launched, including a Medical School (p61) and a Logistics Institute (p72). Evidence from this period demonstrates that the CSU had the freedom and resources to both hold back on further major expansion, concentrating on high revenue international recruitment, and to invest in the newly expanded campus, demonstrating a level of self-sufficiency and autonomy that had been absent in the middle period.

During this period state funding continued to fall as a percentage of the CSU’s total revenue, from 40% in 2001 to 36% in 2010 (table 4.2). However, total revenue increased from £95M to £168M (+77%) as a result of the introduction of variable fee rates for home students, increased international recruitment and additional revenue from fees and contracts and other income (table 4.3). By the end of the case study the CSU was generating surpluses of circa £14M a year (table 4.2) which it was able to invest in strategic priorities. The CSU had therefore achieved a far greater level of financial stability and autonomy than it had during the rest of the fifty years covered, it was less reliant on the state for funding and by becoming more market-oriented ensured that student recruitment remained buoyant.

In terms of the external regulatory environment, evidence from the case study showed that in the latter period the CSU adopted a more pro-active approach towards the management of QAA and RAE requirements. In response to the criticism included in the 2000 QAA report the CSU invested in more dedicated QA roles (p88) and embarked on a process of centralisation and standardisation of programme structures and teaching quality assurance processes (p102). In response to the poor performance in earlier research selectivity exercises the CSU adopted a more centralised and tactical approach prior to the 2008 RAE
In terms of both teaching and research the CSU was achieving more favourable outcomes following external reviews than it had done in the middle period of the case study. These examples indicate that although the CSU was still subject to external scrutiny it had begun to adopt strategies and approaches that achieved more positive responses from external agencies.

The analysis of the CSU’s approach to growth, the changed funding environment and the external regulatory requirements in the latter period of the case study demonstrate that it had achieved a greater level of financial autonomy from the state, and was able to determine its own priorities regarding the size and nature of its student population. The CSU also adapted its approach to external regulatory pressures from the QAA and RAE and by adopting a more tactical approach achieved better results in these exercises. So, although the CSU was still very influenced by its environment (it was still reliant on the state for 36% and on the student market for 39% of its revenue and was subject to the external control imposed by the QAA and RAE) it had become more effective at mitigating the external pressures it faced and its level of environmental dependence was thus lower than it had been in the middle period.

**Summary**

At the end of the following section the CSU’s position on the organisational type/environmental dependence model will be plotted.

These findings show that the CSU’s level of environmental dependence fluctuated across the early, middle and late periods of the case study. Its reliance throughout the fifty years on the external environment for funding (initially predominantly on the state and latterly on the state and the student market) meant that it never enjoyed a high level of environmental independence. In terms of the model, its position was therefore never at the low dependence end of the scale. The evidence presented above demonstrates that, despite its resource dependence it enjoyed relative autonomy in the early period, became much more constrained in the middle period (financially, in terms of determining its rate of growth and in terms of external regulation) and then less so during the late period as it began to manage its environmental dependencies better.
ii. Where is the CSU situated on the institutional-production organisational continuum and did its position change over time?

**Approach**

In this section the evidence from the case study will be analysed with a view to determining the position of the CSU on the organisational continuum presented in chapter 1:

...one can conceive of a continuum along which organisations can be ordered. At one end are production organisations under strong output controls...At the other end are institutionalized organisations whose success depends on the confidence and stability achieved by isomorphism with institutional rules.

Meyer and Rowan 1991, p55

The characteristics of production and institutional organisations described in chapter 1 are summarised here:

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Production-organisations</th>
<th>Institutional-organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
<td>out-put focused (Meyer and Rowan, 1991)</td>
<td>Multiple and/or ambiguous objectives (Meyer and Rowan, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Success measured by</strong></td>
<td>Economic criteria (Pfeffer and Salanic, 1978)</td>
<td>Legitimacy (Meyer and Rowan, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Managers (Scott 2008)</td>
<td>Professionals (Scott 2008)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis of the organisational characteristics of the CSU will now be undertaken according to these criteria.

**Organisational Characteristics of the CSU**

In chapter 3 (p52) the distinctive characteristics of traditional English universities were described and it was concluded that this group conformed to Meyer and Rowan’s institutional-organisational type. The CSU can be categorised as a ‘traditional’ English university because it existed prior to 1980 (p60), its structures and governance
arrangements conform to the model described by Moodie and Eustace (p64) and it was perceived as such by the interview respondents (p69, p111 and p106).

In terms of the objectives of the organisation, the case study demonstrated that the CSU had multiple objectives including teaching and supporting students (p71), conducting research (p111), widening participation (p134) and engaging with the local community and businesses (p72 and p131).

In terms of the success measures of the CSU, numerous examples were found in the case study where the organisation and the individuals within it had been motivated by the legitimacy or prestige of the CSU within the academic community. Perhaps the clearest example of this was the approach to research. Despite the poor performance in early research selectivity exercises the CSU resisted external pressure to focus on teaching (p108) and continued to undertake in research in order to “keep your dignity as a research university” (p90). Other examples of a focus on non-commercial objectives was the special attention given to supporting students (p71) and the enthusiasm with which respondents referred to various subject innovations at the CSU, even though many of these were not financially viable in the long term for example Aeronautical Engineering and Oceanography and Internet Computing (p72).

The leadership of the CSU was also consistent with the institutional-organisation criteria. In the early period respondents stressed the importance of the academic Heads of Department (p105) and Senate as a key decision making body (p67). The institutional leadership was also professionally-dominated with academic PVCs, initially drawn from the academic community within the CSU (p71) and latterly appointed to permanent positions from other universities (p67).

**Middle Period**

During the middle period of the case study the CSU was forced to adapt its behaviour as a result of its financial difficulties and in response to increased intervention on the part of the UGC. As a result, there was a greater focus within the organisation on economic performance and a number production-organisational behaviours and structures were introduced, for example the appointment of a more overtly managerial VC (p.120), who introduced the NPM managerial approaches advocated by Jarratt (p120), attempted to
control expenditure in the wake of the 1981 funding cuts (p116 and 118) and increased the focus on revenue generation via commercial activities and student recruitment (p68).

**Late Period**

In the later period it appeared that some of the production-organisation characteristics described above, that had originally been adopted in response to the extreme financial difficulties the organisation faced, had become more embedded in the governance of the organisation. In the final years of the case study examples were found of the leadership pro-actively adopting production-organisation approaches e.g. the economic rationale for the closure of Mathematics (p128-129), the expectation articulated in *the Way Forward* that teaching should become more efficient and market-focused (p102), the appointment of permanent PVC with more overtly managerial roles (p68) and the increased focus on teaching and research outputs in response to the QAA and RAE (p87 and 90).

**Summary**

The analysis of the organisational characteristics of the CSU showed at the beginning of the case study the organisation conformed to the institutional-organisation model. In the middle period a number of production-organisational characteristics were introduced as the CSU struggled to manage its finances and respond to attempts at intervention by the funding council. By the latter period these production-organisation approaches had become embedded in the governance of the CSU the management had become more pro-active in terms of attempting to respond to environmental opportunities and threats.

The position of the CSU on the organisational type/environmental dependence model according to this analysis is plotted in figure 7.1.
Figure 7.1: CSU position on the Organisational Type and Environmental Dependence Model

The implications of this will be considered in the following chapter.

iii. Did environmental and/or organisational factors prompt the CSU to change its behaviour?

In this section consideration will be given to the factors that prompted the CSU to change its behaviour in relation to its management, teaching practice, research and the critical incidents identified in chapters 6. In each case the extent to which the organisational approach changed as a result of internally driven priorities or in response to external pressures will be determined.

Management Approach

Although the CSU’s management and governance structures remained broadly the same throughout the case study, evidence was found that over time power shifted from Heads of
Departments and Senate to the ‘centre’, in particular to the VC and PVCs, (p66) and that the leadership of the university became more overtly managerial (p66).

No evidence was found that these changes arose out of an explicit desire within the organisation to move away from its traditional de-centralised and devolved academic governance approach. Rather, the description of the CSU’s response to the 1981 funding cuts presented in section 1 of chapter 6, showed that the changes in management approach were adopted because the existing decision-making structures and senior managers were not effective in addressing the financial problems facing the organisation. In response to this, the CSU’s governing body appointed a new VC with a more overtly managerial approach and an explicit strategy for addressing the deficit (p120). The new VC proved to be more effective at managing the institutional response to the new funding environment, persuading the funding council that appropriate action was being taken and advocated implementing the NPM approaches recommended in the Jarratt report within the CSU (p120).

The changes to the management structures were therefore driven by the need for the CSU to adapt its approach in response to the crisis it faced, rather than being institutionally driven.

**Teaching**

The approach taken to teaching at the CSU in the early period of the case study was highly devolved with each department determining the structure of degrees and individual academics having ownership of the courses assigned to them (p94). Academic respondents described how during the early part of their careers they received little training, support and that their teaching work was not monitored or evaluated in any systematic way (p96). By the end of the case study a centrally defined degree structure had been implemented across the CSU (p100) teaching had become more market-driven (p101) and the amount of administration and monitoring of teaching activities had increased significantly (p102).

Some internally driven innovations in teaching were identified in chapter 6, for example the introduction of new modules and the use of new technologies in delivering traditional subjects (p104). According to the interview respondents these innovations arose as a result of the research interest of academics.
However, most of the changes described above came about in response to external/environmental pressures on the CSU. The most significant external factor driving these changes was the introduction of the external quality assurance mechanisms, which required universities to demonstrate that they had standardised practice and robust quality assurance processes across their departments (p88 and p100). Another major factor was the diversification of the student population that occurred as student numbers at the CSU began to increase, leading to the introduction of new kinds of qualifications and requiring academics to adapt their teaching and provide greater levels of support (p98). The final factor that prompted changes in teaching from the mid-1980s was the increased need for the CSU to respond and be attractive to the student market (necessary in order to safeguard the university’s financial position (p100)). This market-focus drove the development of new modules and degree programmes (p101) and led to the closure of programmes and departments that did not attract sufficient numbers of students (table 6.2).

Although the case study showed that some changes in teaching practice at the CSU were brought about as a result of academically/internally driven innovations, the major forces driving change were external (QAA and the student market).

**Research**

The importance of research to individual academics, in terms of their professional identity and promotion, and to the CSU, in terms of maintaining its legitimacy as a traditional university was stressed by the interview respondents (p106 and p111).

Despite the organisational commitment to research, a number of powerful environmental factors were identified which applied significant pressure on research activity at the CSU. The first pressure came from the increased amount of time academics were having to spend on teaching activities (bigger cohorts and more administration associated with new quality assurance processes), which left them with less time to dedicate to their research interests (p107 and p100). The second pressure on research arose because of the financial difficulties the institution faced in the 1980s and 1990s and resulted in reductions in the amount of resource dedicated to supporting research activities (p109).

The third factor that impacted research at the CSU was the introduction of the research selectivity exercise (later RAE, then REF) in the 1980s. These exercises required academics
to submit a given number of publications for review by peers and to provide other quantitative evidence of research activity (p88).

The final external pressure on research identified in the case study was the an agenda put forward by the funding council, various Whitehall officials and the media, that the CSU should focus on teaching and either limit research to a small number of areas or cease to do it altogether (p108).

The case study demonstrated that the CSU was subject to a range of external pressures to change the way in which research was conducted, and even came under pressure to discontinue research and focus on teaching instead. In the following section the powerful institutional resistance to these pressures will be described.

**Critical Incidents**

In chapter 6 a number of critical incidents that occurred at the CSU during the period 1980s-2000s were described. Consideration will be given here to the factors that prompted each of these incidents to arise.

The financial crisis experienced by the CSU in the early 1980s triggered a number of significant changes in its financial strategy, management and academic provision and came about entirely as a result of the decision made by the UGC to reduce the grant by 25% (p127). Similarly, the question of whether the CSU should close its Drama department and merge its departments of Physics and Applied Physics only arose because the CSU received explicit guidance from the UGC in the wake of the 1981 cuts (p122-126).

The factors leading to the decision to close the department of Mathematics in 2005 were markedly different to those that prompted the consideration of the future of Drama and Physics/Applied Physics. The question of the viability of the department arose as a result of requirement that academic programmes should be market-led and financially viable (p.128). The rationale behind the closure of the department was that the university was responding to the external environment (in this case the student market rather than the funding council) however this was an agenda that came from within the organisation, rather than being externally imposed.
The two cases of special initiative funding identified in the final section of chapter 6 provided examples of where a specific agenda being pushed by an external body was consistent with the CSU’s priorities of regional engagement and widening participation (p131 and 134). As with the expansion that took place in the 1960s, the CSU was able, in the 2000s, to obtain additional resource from an external body in order to undertake activities that were consistent with its own objectives.

The critical incidents identified in the case study provided examples of changes that were internally driven (the closure of Mathematics), of external pressures on the CSU to change its teaching, research, financial strategy, and academic departmental structures as well as an example of where external pressure to undertake particular activities was consistent with internal priorities (business engagement and widening participation).

**Summary**

The examples provided in this section demonstrate that in the majority of cases the trigger for the CSU to change its behaviour came either as a result of changes in the environmental context or as a result of explicit external attempts to control it. A number of examples where the prompt came from within the organisation were found (teaching innovation and the decision to close the department of Mathematics) and the special funding initiatives showed that in some cases organisational priorities were consistent with externally driven initiatives.

This finding is perhaps not surprising given that it has already been established that the CSU exists at the institutional end of Meyer and Rowans organisational continuum. As an institutional organisation one would expect that it would be resistant to change and seek to preserve its academically dominated approaches to its management, teaching and research and therefore that any drivers to change the status quo would be predominantly external. The exception to this (the closure of Mathematics) is also consistent with the finding in the second section of this chapter that, by the later period of the case study, some production-organisation approaches had become embedded within the CSU. In that example, a decision was made internally, based on economic rather than academic criteria, that the provision should be discontinued.

In the final section of this chapter the way in which the CSU responded to the pressures to change identified here will be analysed.
iv. **What behaviours did the organisation adopt in response to the pressures to change and critical incidents identified in the case study?**

In this section an analysis of the CSU’s responses to the pressures identified in the previous section will be undertaken and the extent to which they conform to the behaviours predicted by resource dependence theory (RDT) or neo-institutional theory (N-IT) will be assessed. The following table summarises the organisational behaviours predicted by RDT and N-IT behaviours (p22)

**Table 7.1: Summary of RDT and N-IT Behaviours**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>RDT Behaviours</th>
<th>N-IT Behaviours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constrained/resource dependent organisation</td>
<td>Acquiescence and economic efficiency</td>
<td>Coercive Isomorphism and/or resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous/well-resourced organisations</td>
<td>Adaption or attempt to alter environment</td>
<td>Resistance and/or Normative or Mimetic isomorphism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Management of the CSU**

The case study revealed that a distinctive feature of the CSU is that it was the only ‘new’ university that had been established (rather than being an amalgam or development of an existing institution) in the early part of the twentieth century (p60). Its academic and governance structures were based on the traditional academic model which could be viewed as a deliberate attempt on the part the founding fathers to establish its credibility and legitimacy within the higher education sector and is consistent with the N-IT concept of normative isomorphism.

Further examples of institutional isomorphism were evident in the management approach at the CSU in the middle and late periods of the case study, for example the eventual compliance with the UGC guidance following the 1981 funding cuts (p121) an example of coercive isomorphism, and in the creation of permanent PVC roles and filling them with external candidates who brought practice from their previous institutions (p67), an example of mimetic isomorphism.

From the middle period of the case study the institutional leadership began to adopt approaches that were more explicitly economically driven, conforming to some of the RDT
behaviours described above. Examples included the appointment of a VC on the basis of a plan to reduce spending in the 1980s (p120), the University seeking to generate revenue through commercial activities and the establishment of and investment in market-focused functions (p68).

In the latter period further examples were found of the leadership adopting strategies that sought to maximise resources such as the introduction of new approaches to budgeting and student recruitment target setting (p67), the strategic use of special initiative funding to leverage other revenue streams (p133), the introduction of the principle that teaching should be market-focused and more efficient (p101) and the economic rationale for the closure of the department of Mathematics (p128). These behaviours clearly conform more closely with the RDT predicted behaviours than with those predicted by N-IT.

By the end of the case study the CSU had retained many of its traditional institutional structures and there were still examples of institutional-type behaviour such as resistance and mimetic isomorphism however examples were also found of the leadership adopting RDT behaviours.

**Teaching**

During the early period of the case study the only example of an attempt by an external body to interfere with teaching provision at the CSU that was found was the suggestion made by the UGC that it should recruit more Arts students (p76). As mentioned above the organisational response to this was to ignore the advice, conforming to the N-IT behaviour of resistance.

In the middle period, despite internal resistance, the CSU was obliged to conform to QAA requirements in relation to subject and institutional reviews of its teaching quality assurance arrangements (p88). It then began to adapt its internal structures so that it would perform better in QAA reviews, demonstrating behaviour that is consistent with coercive isomorphism.

The CSU’s response to the external pressures on teaching during the latter period included an interesting mixture of institutional and RDT behaviours. While the ‘centre’ of the university was attempting to ensure that the university performed better in terms of QAA requirements (p88) and that teaching provision became more efficient and market-oriented
the evidence suggested that the academic community resisted attempts at standardisation (p102). Even at the end of the case study period, although the academic respondents accepted that some of these changes had brought about improvements, a number of them raised concerns that they had increased workload, decreased academic autonomy and were concerned that they had actually had the effect of undermining learning within the university (p103).

**Research**

The CSU response to external pressures on research pressures conformed overwhelmingly to the institutional behaviours predicted by N-IT.

Despite the pressure that arose as a result of the introduction of the selectivity exercises, media and funding council suggestions to focus on teaching, and the reduction in time and resource dedicated to research, the CSU remained committed to research (p110). In this case the institutional resistance to these pressures was successful and, by the end of the case study, research remained an important priority for both the academics and the organisation and it was performing better in the research selectivity exercises.

**1981 Funding Cuts**

The CSU’s initial response to the 1981 funding cuts was typically institutional. Although some efforts were made to reduce expenditure following the announcement the measures proposed did not come close to addressing level of cuts (p116). Protecting academic jobs was a higher priority for the organisation at this time than balancing books (p117).

Although the academic community and Council endorsed the approach taken by the sitting VC at the time of the cuts (p117), when his term of office came to an end he was replaced by an individual with a more overtly economic agenda, whose priority was to reduce expenditure at the CSU. So it seems that the governing body made an explicit decision to replace a VC whose approach was institutional with an individual who was prepared to adopt RDT behaviours in order to improve the finances of the CSU (p120).
Departmental Restructuring

The three examples of departmental restructuring/closure presented in chapter 6 provided further evidence of institutional behaviours driving the CSU response in the middle period followed by RDT behaviours in the later period.

In the case of the attempt by the funding body to persuade the CSU to close its department of Drama the CSU exhibited the most successful example of institutional resistance that emerged from the case study. Not only did the CSU flatly refuse to follow the advice of the funding body, it subsequently was agreed that the department’s funding levels would be maintained as other areas were compelled to cope with significant reductions (p124-125).

The case of Physics provided a further example of institutional resistance to external pressure, with the CSU avoiding addressing the issue for nearly a decade (p128). The examples of Drama and Physics demonstrate that, despite the severe resource dependency of the CSU at the time, it retained sufficient autonomy and was able to resist direct attempts at intervention by the funding body.

The example of the closure of the department of Mathematics, which occurred in the latter period of the case study, highlighted a very different approach by the CSU. In this case the University was not responding to external advice, rather it took the view that the provision was not economically viable and the decision to discontinue it was made on that basis. This largely commercial approach to determining the academic structure of the university was in marked contrast to the institutionally driven behaviour exhibited in the cases of Drama and Physics.

Special Initiatives

The way in which the CSU responded to the special initiative funding demonstrated a combination of both N-IT and RDT behaviours. In the case of the business and community engagement funding, one respondent, reflecting on the initial approach of hiring staff and allocating funds to partner institutions, suggested the CSU had been too compliant and that once it became clear that other universities were using the funding more tactically, the approach was adapted so that rather than hiring additional people when new projects or funding came on line, the new resource was used to buy out the time of existing staff working in related areas (p132). This example of adopting the practice of other institutions within the sector is consistent with the N-IT concept of mimetic isomorphism.
The CSU’s approach to the widening participation and HEIF funding initiatives also showed that the organisation conforming to the RDT behaviour of adapting existing structures and projects/products in order to take advantage of an opportunity to acquire additional resource (p134) and to leverage additional funding from other sources (p133).

Summary

The range of behaviours demonstrated by the CSU over the course of the case study evolved from being predominantly institutional (normative and mimetic isomorphism and resistance) in the early stage. When the financial position worsened in the 1980s there continued to be resistance and there were examples of coercive isomorphism as the university was eventually compelled to comply with externally imposed requirements.

In the middle period the CSU began to adopt some RDT behaviours (the new VC’s attempts to improve the university’s finances and compliance with the Jarratt agenda) which became embedded by the end of the case study period and, rather than just being a reactive response to extreme environmental pressure the CSU had begun to adopt a more pro-active approach and was seeking to adapt to and control its environment.

iv. Results of the Analysis of the Case Study

The analysis of the case study presented here provides a number of insights into how the behaviour of the CSU was affected by organisational and environmental factors. These insights may be used to draw some conclusions in relation to the third research question:

RQ3: To what extent is the organisational behaviour of universities driven by environmental and institutional factors?

The analysis found that the CSU conformed to the institutional-organisation type and that, during the early period of the case study enjoyed a relatively high degree of environmental autonomy. Its behaviours conformed to those predicted by N-IT (resistance and isomorphism) and powerful institutional forces sought to maintain both the legitimacy of the university and to resist internal and external attempts to change it.
However, as its finances became increasingly restricted and it was subjected to increased regulation in the form of funding council guidance, QAA and RAE requirements, its level of environmental dependence grew. In response to the increased pressures at this time, the CSU began to adopt some production-organisation behaviours, which enabled it to increase its economic effectiveness and manage the external pressures better. As a result of this the organisation regained a greater degree of environmental autonomy and had the resource and freedom to begin to determine its own priorities. By the end of the case study the CSU remained at the institutional-organisation end of the spectrum but had shifted in the direction of the production-organisation end.

By plotting the organisational type and environmental dependence of the CSU on the model over the fifty years covered by the case study a pattern emerged which suggests that environmental pressures can have a significant effect on the organisational behaviour of institutional-organisations, with high resource dependence potentially driving institutional-organisations to adopt economically rational behaviours associated with production-organisations.
Chapter 8: Findings and Conclusions

The thesis has explored how environmental and organisational factors impact the organisational behaviour of English universities. A review of higher education literature covering the period 1960 to 2010 was undertaken which identified the distinctive organisational characteristics of universities and the environmental pressures they have been subject to during that time. A case study of an English university covering the same period was undertaken to illustrate how the organisational and environmental changes faced by the sector affected a particular organisation and how the way it responded to environmental pressures changed over the period. The case study was analysed according to the neo-institutional/resource dependence (N-IT/RDT) theoretical framework, developed in the first chapter, which demonstrated that the CSU’s level of environmental dependence fluctuated over the period and that its traditional institutional cultures and structures were challenged and to some extent eroded. The case study also demonstrated that throughout the period, in most cases, the CSU was prompted to change its behaviour as a result of environmental pressures (rather than internally driven priorities) and that, there was often institutional resistance to the pressures to change its behaviour. Although the institutional response to external pressures was frequently resistance, other institutional behaviours were also identified (normative, mimetic and coercive isomorphism) and, increasingly towards the end of the case study behaviours associated with production-organisations (attempts to achieve efficiency and greater commercial success) were also identified.

This chapter will draw on the information presented in the context chapter and the analysis of the case study in order to answer the research questions that were set out in the introduction to the thesis. Each of the sections relates to one of the 3 research questions.

i. What are the Environmental Pressures on Universities?

At the beginning of the period covered by the thesis, English universities were relatively small and highly autonomous institutions that received a significant amount of non-earmarked funding from the state with very little associated reporting or accountability. Over the course of the last fifty years, they experienced a much greater degree of external pressure as student numbers grew, state funding declined and successive governments took
a more active view on HE policy seeking to influence university provision and governance and make them more accountable.

In this section, evidence from the context chapter will be used to describe the most significant forms of external pressure that universities have been subject to and then evidence from the case study will be used to show the impact of those pressures on the CSU.

**Expansion**

The most significant factor that has impacted English universities over the last fifty years has been the transformation of HE from a small elite sector to a universal system in which institutions have expanded to accommodate nearly half of the eligible cohort of 18-19 year olds. Trow’s (1973) description of the impact on the finances, governance, administration, culture, teaching and research of universities, of the transition from an elite to a mass system in the US at the beginning of the 20th century applied equally well to the UK sector as it expanded throughout the 1960s-2000s. In chapter 3 the effects of the expansion on the HE sector generally were considered, including the pressure it placed on institutions, the resulting diversification of the student population, the impact on state funding and the diversification of institutions, subjects and qualifications.

The case study illustrated the impact of the expansion of HE on a particular university. The CSU’s student population increased more than tenfold between 1960 and 2009 and, as it expanded, the student cohorts became increasingly diverse with much greater numbers of women, part time, international and postgraduate students (table 4.1) with a much broader range of prior educational experience (p98). After the initial growth in the 1960s the number of academics being appointed did not increase at the same rate as the student population and by the end of the period SSRs had fallen from 7.1 to 17.7 (p94 and 97). Academics from departments that had expanded significantly reported that the increase and diversification of students had led to them spending more time on teaching which had put pressure on their research activities (p99 and 109). The case study also showed that as student numbers increased and state funding decreased the CSU become more market-focused (p101) as it sought to maximise revenue from student recruitment.

Although universities were being encouraged to expand by the government and the UGC the case study clearly demonstrated that this external pressure was not resisted by the CSU. Evidence from the respondents and the original campus design plans showed that the CSU
wanted to expand and that it was able to benefit from significant capital investment as a result of the national expansion agenda (p75).

**Funding**

Another major external pressure on universities arose when the generous post-Robbins funding arrangements for universities came to an end as the national economy began to decline in the 1970s, and again when the government began to reduce the unit of resource provided for each student. From the 1980s the government adopted an explicit policy of transferring the cost of higher education from the state to individual students and the proportion of university revenue provided by the state fell from a high of circa three quarters to about a half by the end of the 1990s. This put increased pressure on universities to recruit students and develop commercial activities in order to maximise their income.

The case study showed that by the 1970s, the CSU was more dependent on state funding than the average university. Having received 85% of its funding from the UGC in 1971 the proportion fell considerably in 1981 (64%) and by the end of the case study period just 36% of the total came from HEFCE. Evidence from the case study demonstrated that the dramatic deterioration in the CSU’s finances that occurred in the 1980s had a significant impact, increasing the focus on student recruitment and other commercial activities.

**Regulation**

Throughout the first half of the period covered by the thesis, universities were not subject to a great deal of external scrutiny or regulation. This changed in the 1980s when the government began to introduce a series of mechanisms designed to make universities more accountable for the public money they received (replacement of UGC with funding councils), to judge the quality of their research (research selectivity exercises) and, later on, to monitor their quality assurance processes associated with their teaching (QAA).

The impact of these regulatory developments on the CSU was described in chapter 4. Despite the increased reporting requirements, once the UGC had been replaced by the Funding Council, the respondents described how the new body was actually less directive than the UGC had been in the preceding years (p85).
After initially performing well in subject reviews the university’s QAA audits were critical about institutional quality assurance processes at the CSU (p86). Respondents described how after being slow to respond to the QAA agenda at the outset, it was eventually taken more seriously after the relatively poor performance of the CSU in the 2000 QAA (p88). By the end of the case study the CSU had introduced a range of robust quality assurance processes and its performance in the QAA audits had improved.

As with the QAA, respondents considered that the CSU was initially slow to respond to the new research environment that emerged as a result of the introduction of the selectivity exercise in the mid 1980s (p89). There was also a particular external pressure on the CSU in the middle of the case study period to concentrate less on research and to focus on teaching instead (p108). The CSU resisted the pressure and those academics who were research active continued to view it as important to their, and the institution’s, academic legitimacy. The CSU became more tactical in its approach to RAE in the later period of the case study and its results improved (p90).

**Conclusions**

The literature review provided in chapter 3 and the case study demonstrated that traditional English universities were subject to a range of increasing external pressures during the period 1960-2010. These pressures came as a result of national policies that sought to increase the number of young people entering higher education, to increase the accountability and regulation of universities and, in the latter period, to reduce the amount of state funding for higher education by transferring the cost to individual students. This change in the funding arrangements meant that universities became more reliant on student recruitment and had to adapt themselves to respond to both the state and the student market in order to remain financially viable.

The case study demonstrated that not all of these external pressures were unwelcome to universities. The CSU benefited from the post-Robbins investment in higher education and was able to obtain funding from the UGC in order to develop its campus, broaden its academic provision and increase both its staff and student numbers. The changes in funding and regulatory requirements that occurred in the mid-late period of the case study were less welcome to the CSU. By the 1970s the CSU was heavily reliant on the UGC (85% of revenue) and was plunged into a deep financial crisis when that funding was cut by 25% in 1981. The evidence from the case study showed that the university was initially slow to respond to
both its changed financial circumstances and to the new regulatory environment in which it found itself with the introduction of the RAE and later the QAA. However, towards the end of the case study the CSU had become more effective in terms of responding to external regulatory bodies and the new student market place and was performing better in QAA Audits, the RAE exercises and in terms of student recruitment. A respondent from the CSU summed up the university’s response as follows:

\[\text{It would be foolish to say that somehow you can isolate yourself from external pressures, I think most things are done in response to external pressures. It’s a question of how you manage it. I think this university has managed it quite well actually.}\]

RP4.b

ii. How have the Organisational Cultures and Governance Structures of Universities Changed Over the Last Fifty Years?

While the first research question considered what the external pressures on universities have been, the second question focuses on the internal cultures and structures of universities and considers how these evolved during this period. This internal/organisational perspective is less well explored within the HE Literature, which has tended to focus on external (particularly governmental) attempts to influence and control universities.

As with the first question the findings here will be based on the contextual information given in the chapter 3, which will be considered alongside relevant findings from the case study.

Traditional Academic Culture and Governance

Universities have a number of distinctive organisational features. Historically they had very devolved decision-making, with much being decided at the departmental level rather than by a small central leadership team. University policy and decision-making was determined collegiately rather than hierarchically, with the academic community’s views represented at Senate, via committee membership and through their Heads of Department. Leadership roles tended to be filled on a rotating basis by senior academics, rather than professional managers, and the role of non-academic administrators was to facilitate and execute the
decisions made by the academics. Moodie and Eustace (1974) referred to this organisational form as ‘academic self-government’ and described how it was underpinned by the powerful notion of academic freedom, which values individual and institutional autonomy and makes individuals and institutions resistant to external interference or control.

At the beginning of the case study the organisational culture and structures of the CSU conformed to this traditional university model. However, it is interesting to note that the CSU was only established in the 1920s, so this mode of governance didn’t evolve over hundreds of years as it had at the ancient universities, it was consciously adopted when the university was founded. This approach can be explained by DiMaggio and Powell’s concept of normative isomorphism, whereby institutions seek to replicate the structures and approaches of organisations that are viewed as having a high degree of legitimacy in order to increase their own legitimacy (1981).

**Pressures on Traditional Academic Cultures and Structures**

The traditional academic organisational cultures and structures of English universities came under pressure in the 1980s. The emerging economic rationale for higher education and the New Public Management approaches advocated by the Conservative government challenged the traditional view of teaching and research and the dominance of professionals/academics in public sector management. In addition to these ideological challenges to the traditional university model, institutions were faced with significant reductions in state funding which meant that radical cuts to spending would be required if institutions were to remain financially viable. The devolved, collegiate model of University decision-making described above was not conducive to making difficult financial decisions required in the new HE environment and as a result in many institutions VCs began to gain greater power and adopt a more managerial approach at the expense of the traditional decision making bodies and academic values.

The initial response of the CSU to the 1981 funding cuts was anger and there was a reluctance to consider the full range of measures that would be required in order to bring expenditure in line with income. Eventually the CSU appointed a new VC who was prepared to address the funding issue, began to follow (or at least give the impression that the CSU was now following) the UGC’s recommendations regarding staff reductions and academic restructuring. The case study interviews revealed how respondents felt that Senate began
to be less influential around this time as the VC and the ‘centre’ began to be more proactive in determining the university’s response to external pressures. At this time the CSU also began to adopt some of the NPM techniques advocated by Jarratt report e.g. strengthening the role of PVCs in the university’s governance and focusing more on the efficiency and economy of academic activities. By the end of the case study the CSU’s structures were broadly the same but there had been a shift in power from the academics (HoDs and Senate) to academic managers (VC and PVCs) and managerial techniques associated with production-organisations were more embedded in the administration of the institution.

**Conclusions**

Universities have distinctive organisational structures. They are autonomous institutions that historically had a significant degree of freedom from the state. Although it was under pressure from the UGC and the government, the CSU wasn’t forced to become more managerial. In the end it chose to adapt its approach when faced with extreme financial difficulties with the appointment of a new VC who had a plan to reduce expenditure and was able to persuade the UGC that the requisite number of staff redundancies and academic restructuring had been achieved. Despite this the traditional academic governance structures described above were retained, though in a modified way, for example in Senate’s role appeared to change from determining the university’s response, to ratifying the approaches recommended by the VC. By adapting in this way, the institution survived the early 1980s crisis and became more effective at responding to its environment.

The HE literature often focuses on the external pressures that universities have been subjected to without looking at how as organisations they respond to those pressures, casting them in a fairly passive role. The case study demonstrated that in fact universities are a resilient organisational form which, when required, can adapt in order to survive / thrive in their environment.

Despite the challenges to the traditional academic view of the university (growth in prevalence of the economic rationale for HE and the NPM agenda from the 1980s) many of the academic/professionally-dominated structures remained in place at the CSU by the end of the case study period. The university’s leaders remained, academics (albeit administrative academics) and it was clear from the CSU respondents that traditional values of academic freedom, autonomy and the importance of research were still prevalent within the institution.
iii. To What Extent is the Organisational Behaviour of Universities Driven by Environmental and/or Organisational Factors?

The third research question is concerned with understanding how environmental and organisational forces interact and affect the organisational behaviour of universities. Consideration has been given to what prompted the CSU to change its approach and the behaviours it adopted when it responded to pressures to change. Its position on the organisational type and environmental dependence model has also been considered with a view to understanding how environmental and organisational factors interact over time and how the position of the organisation changed as a result of these factors.

The findings presented here are drawn from the results of the four RDT/NIT analysis questions that were considered in chapter 7.

**Pressure to Change**

The results of the case study showed that in many cases pressure to change organisational behaviour including teaching and research practice, academic restructuring and constraining expenditure came about as a result of undesirable external/environmental pressures on the CSU. These pressures included explicit attempts at interference by external bodies (QAA, RAE, UGC), an over-reliance on state funding and more general environmental pressures brought about by the expansion of the higher education sector (resulting in lower SSRs, a more diverse student body and a need to be more market-focused).

However, the case study also revealed a number of examples where change was either internally driven (innovations in teaching and research) or where internal priorities were consistent with external pressure being applied to the HE sector (post-Robbins expansion in the 1960s, widening participation and business engagement). In these cases rather than being coerced by external pressures the leadership of the CSU appeared to be happy to comply with these agendas and take advantage of the additional government funding that was available for activities that were consistent with the CSU’s own goals.

**Organisational Response to Pressures**

The organisational behaviour of the CSU during the early period conformed to the neo-institutional concept of normative isomorphism (as a relatively new university the CSU had
adopted academic and governance structures that were similar to more established institutions). The main external pressure on HE at the time was for institutions to expand and the CSU was able to secure significant levels of capital and recurrent funding in order to develop its campus and increase the number of students, academics and departments. So the organisational response to this external pressures at this time could be characterized as voluntary compliance.

In the middle period the CSU was subject to much greater external pressure in the form of funding cuts and direct attempts at interference by the UGC. In many cases the organisational response conformed to institutional behaviours of resistance, avoidance and in some cases defiance, for example the refusal to close the department of Drama and the initial reluctance to address the funding cuts. In other cases the CSU acquiesced and changed its behaviour and complied with the advice that had been given by the UGC e.g. with the introduction of redundancy scheme and academic restructuring in the mid-1980s. In these cases the organisational response was consistent with the notion of coercive isomorphism whereby institutions are compelled to alter their behaviour in ways that are not desirable internally.

In the late period there was still evidence of institutional behaviours including resistance and coercive isomorphism (for example the internal resistance to changes in teaching and research followed by eventual compliance with QAA and RAE requirements) and mimetic isomorphism (with the CSU taking on external PVCs and then adopting the practice of their former institutions). However, evidence was also found of organisational behaviours that were consistent with RDT including the adoption of approaches which sought to maximise resource e.g. the closure of Mathematics, increased market-focus in student recruitment and teaching and the introduction of new mechanisms to control expenditure.

The case study showed that the organisational behaviour of the CSU changed over the period from being predominantly institutional to later incorporating some RDT approaches, at first through necessity (in response to funding crisis) and then voluntarily (seeking to maximise appeal in the student market).

The Organisational Type and Environmental Dependence Model

The model developed in chapter 1 seeks to show that the interplay between organisational and environmental factors can be more complex than NIT and RDT theories on their own
suggest. The analysis of the CSU’s behaviour over the fifty years presented in chapter 7 suggested that the changes in its behaviours identified above, coincided with changes in its position on the environmental dependence and organisational type model over time.

At the beginning of the case study period, the CSU was relatively autonomous in terms of its financial position and its lack of external regulation/accountability. As its finances deteriorated in the middle period it became more constrained by environmental factors and this continued as external regulatory requirements increased and its financial position remained poor. In response to these difficulties the institution began to adopt some behaviours associated with production organisations and as a result it became more effective at managing external regulatory requirements and its financial position improved, thus reducing its level of environmental dependence. By the end of the case study the CSU had again achieved a greater degree of autonomy (performing better in QAA, RAE and generating surpluses) and some of the production-organisation behaviours had become embedded (market-focus, planning and budgeting and more managerial leadership).

iv. Implications of the Research

Objectives of the Thesis

The objectives of the thesis were to understand how organisational forces and external pressure affect the behaviour of universities and contribute to the literature on higher education and organisational behaviour.

How do organisational forces and external pressures impact higher education organisations behaviours?

The thesis has shown that universities are institutions with powerful and distinctive characteristics which make them both resistant to change and enable them to adapt and endure. When not prompted by external forces they may innovate in terms of their teaching and research or adapt themselves to achieve greater legitimacy within the HE sector but are unlikely to introduce radical changes in approach or behaviour.

During the last fifty years the HE environment has changed radically as student numbers increased, public funding declined and greater regulation has been introduced. These
environmental changes have significantly increased the pressure on universities and they have been required to respond to new top-down and market-driven agendas.

So, both organisational and external/environmental pressures are significant in determining the organisational behaviour of universities with external pressures often prompting them to change their behaviour and organisational forces driving the way in which they respond. The case study showed that extreme external pressure can result in an erosion of traditional institutional characteristics as its leadership elected to adopt behaviours associated with production-organisations in an attempt to manage its environmental dependence.

**Implications for HE Literature**

The thesis contributes to the literature on HE in a number of ways. First, by giving equal consideration to internal as well as external factors, it provides a more holistic view of the evolution of the HE sector over the last fifty years, in contrast to much of the literature which focuses on governmental attempts to influence and control universities. Second, by including both a thorough review of the HE literature and empirical evidence of the impact of sector trends on a specific institution, it makes an academically robust contribution to a literature which includes much work that is polemical and lacking in evidence. Finally, the analysis of the case study presented here is underpinned by a theoretical framework that attempts to explain the interplay between organisational and environmental factors on the behaviour of universities as institutional-organisations. This is in contrast to much of the HE literature which is descriptive rather than theoretically oriented.

**Implications for Organisational Theory**

The RDT/N-IT theoretical framework presented here emerged from the data collected in the initial stage of the case study which showed that, rather than passively responding to state intervention and the student market, the CSU was an active agent able to resist, defy and nuance pressures from its external environment.

The analysis showed that the nature of an organisation can influence the way it responds to its environment (something that RDT doesn’t take into account) and that characteristics of an organisation are not static. The organisational type/environmental dependence model provides a mechanism for plotting how an organisation’s behaviours and environment change over time and helps to explain why institutional-organisations sometimes behave in ways that are not anticipated by N-IT on its own.
Final Thoughts

Much of the literature on HE over the last fifty years gives the impression that following the initial post-Robbins era universities have been undermined by constant interference and under-funding from government. The case study shows, despite the significant changes that have taken place in the HE environment, the university is a resilient organisational form that is able to both adapt itself and retain its core values and purposes (teaching and research).

Throughout their long histories universities have served a number of masters including the church, the monarchy, wealthy benefactors and, more recently, the state. Towards the end of the 20th century as successive governments sought to transfer the costs of higher education to the individuals who benefit from it, universities found themselves having to respond to a new master, the student market. Does this shift herald the end of universities as we know them or should it be viewed within the broader historical context as simply the latest stage in their evolution? The enduring feature of universities is that they do things that are useful and valued by the individuals or bodies that pay for them. Over time that has included religious instruction, educating and socialising those who lead our country and businesses, creating knowledge that brings technological and medical advances, creating art and an appreciation of art, teaching people how to think and giving them the space to do so and equipping individuals with knowledge skills that make them better employees and members of society. The transition from state to individual funding may be a difficult one for higher education providers, and some universities and department may not survive, but history suggests that they have the ability to adapt and to survive and that they may even thrive in an era where greater diversity in funding could have the effect of increasing their institutional autonomy.
Postscript

This thesis has looked back over the last fifty years at a particular type of HE institution, (universities that existed prior to 1980). Given the significant changes occurring in the HE sector at the moment it is reasonable to ask what the findings presented here say about the future of higher education and to question whether they are relevant to other forms of HE organisation (HEO).

According to Levy the “new institutionalism does not prepare us for the organisational distinctiveness brought about by the sharp growth of private higher education” (2006 p144). The aim of this brief postscript is to consider whether the combined RDT/N-IT approach, and in particular the organisational/environmental model developed in the thesis, are relevant to the rest of the HE sector, including the new commercial providers. First, four fictional HEOs representing different sectors within English HE will be plotted on the model and their positioning will be explained. Then, their position on the model will be used to predict how each organisation will respond to the changing HE environment in 2012 and whether they are likely to thrive or will struggle to survive.

*Application of the organisational type/environmental dependence model*
A is an affluent and prestigious traditional university. It is highly regarded by students and within the sector and attracts significant research income and international student numbers. It retains traditional academic governance structures including devolved and decentralized decision-making, powerful academic departments, rotating senior management positions and an influential senate. Although constrained by government regulation, the QAA and REF requirements, because of its status and wealth, it retains a relatively high degree of institutional autonomy compared to others in the HE sector.

B is a middle-ranking traditional university like the CSU. It is a popular choice for students, has a pleasant campus with good facilities and a number of areas of research strength which preserve its status as an ‘old’ university. While it retains many of the formal governance structures of traditional universities over the last 20 years power has shifted from the academics (Professors, HoDs and the senate) to senior academic and administrative managers and decision making is now more centralized, top-down and economically driven. Like A it is required to comply with government regulation, QAA and REF however it is further constrained because it has expanded significantly (and is therefore forced to be very responsive to the student market) and, while in recent years it has been generating healthy profits it doesn’t enjoy the same level of endowment and reserves as A making it more vulnerable to fluctuations in government funding and student demand.

C is a ‘new’, predominantly teaching university covering a range of social science, business and arts subjects. It provides good vocationally-oriented teaching, is popular with students from the local area, has a limited research profile and is struggling to maintain an aging, multiple-campus estate. Having been part of the pre-1992 public (local authority funded) HE sector its governance structures are more hierarchical and managerial than A or B. It is subject to the same external regulation as A and B, it expanded at an even greater rate than B in recent years and just about breaks even (and so has limited resources in reserve or for investment) and therefore has relatively high environmental dependence.

D is a commercial non-university HE provider. It also provides good vocationally-oriented teaching, has growing student numbers, predominantly part-time, non-tenured teaching staff, no research overheads and is receiving significant investment from a large American HE concern. It is managed as a commercial entity and decision-making is driven by economic considerations. Although it has to comply with government regulation and the QAA and its income/expenditure margins are tight it is not constrained by expensive
academic overheads (research, science plant, large library and tenured faculty) and is able to quickly respond to market opportunities and is therefore less environmentally constrained than B and C.

**Using the model to predict organisational behaviour post-2012**

Many within the higher education sector anticipate that 2012 will be a significant year for universities in the UK:

> The UK higher education paradigm is in flux. Factors such as the introduction of new tuition fee regulations, heightened student expectations, changing patterns of global demand for higher education, new information and communication technologies, and potential reforms to university governance have made the planning environment highly volatile.

Invitation to 2012 Association of University Administrator’s Planning Forum

The government is withdrawing teaching grant for Arts and Social Science (A and B) teaching at HEOs and has lifted the variable fee cap for home students to £9000. A recent UCU report found that 27 universities and colleges would be at high risk as a result of the reduction of the HEFCE teaching grant. So what does the model tell us about how HEOs will be impacted and respond to this new environment?

The analysis of the case study within the model suggested that the organisational response will vary depending on where it is positioned at a given time. Some organisations will be more constrained by their environmental or institutional context in terms of the strategies and behaviours they will be able to adopt. The organisational response to the cuts in government funding and introduction of £9000 variable tuition fees of the four HEOs described above will be considered here:

A will probably continue to thrive. Affluent and popular with home and international students, it will continue to attract able students who are prepared to pay the full variable fee. The institution will be protected from the decline in HEFCE funding because it has reserves, a comfortable annual surplus and is starting to generate significant income from ancillary activities that do not negatively impact on core teaching and research. However, if problems did occur e.g. collapse in the international market this institution might struggle to
immediately respond because its traditional academic decision-making structures make it slow to respond and it lacks experience of dealing with adversity.

B will face some challenges but if it has had similar experiences to the CSU over the last 30 years it will probably be more market-focused than A and its leadership and administration will have more experience of reacting to/managing changes in its environment e.g. closing down provision or doing more targeted marketing/recruitment activities. It is a traditional university with a pleasant campus and facilities and provides a good student experience so it can probably justify the £9k in the home market, though it may have to offer some scholarships/discounts to incentivize academic high flyers and the less well off. It will be hit by the loss of HEFCE funding for Arts and Social Science however it retains some funding for Science and Medical subjects.

C, along with the 27 HEOs identified by the UCU, may struggle. It doesn’t have the same prestige as A or B so may not be able justify the premium fee to the home market (it might charge the full fee to not look cheap and then discount heavily). Although it may be more managerially agile because it is at the production-organisation end of the HE sector its low resource levels and high environmental dependence will significantly limit the range of strategies open to it if demand is significantly impacted by the new fee regime. It will be hard hit by the reduction in HEFCE funding because a significant proportion of its provision is in Social Science (especially business) disciplines.

D is well positioned to thrive in the new environment. More agile than A, B or C because it is run on entirely commercial grounds, with lean top-down management and is less constrained by academic overheads and the need to comply with external requirements such as the REF, though it is currently struggling to recruit overseas students because of the less favorable visa arrangements in place for private providers. It will be able to undercut C and B on price and offer potentially attractive options for the home student market e.g. a condensed two year degree validated by C. It may begin to invest in research/scholarship activities in an attempt to increase legitimacy in the HE sector but will not seek to replicate the inefficient academic/institutional governance and decision-making structures of A or B.
The thoughts presented in this postscript were deliberately not included in the thesis because they are unempirical and speculative. This version of the model was however discussed with colleagues from HEOs with similarities to A, B, C and D, who agreed with the organisational sketches in the first section and thought the post 2012 predictions in the second section were credible.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Official History of the CSU 1928-1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AR</td>
<td>CSU Annual Reports 1958-1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>VC response to UGC re Cuts, 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>UGC Letter announcing Cuts, 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>Notes of the UGC Visitation, 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4</td>
<td>Development Committee Notes on Redundancy Scheme, 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>Voluntary Severance Scheme for Technical Staff 1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>1st report of the Economies Working Group, 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
<td>2nd report of the Economies Working Group, 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8</td>
<td>Report from Council to Senate, Oct 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9</td>
<td>Report from Council to Senate, Dec 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C10</td>
<td>UGC visitation notes for Council, 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>Drama HoD letter to the VC, 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>Registrar note on UGC recommendations, 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3</td>
<td>Council Minutes, 1987 re Physics merger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D5</td>
<td>Drama Department History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D6</td>
<td>Way Forward Reports 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D7</td>
<td>UGC Letter advising merger of Physics and Applied Physics, 1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D8</td>
<td>Paper giving rationale for the closure of Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Senior Staffing structure in 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I1</td>
<td>HEFCE Review of Special Initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I10</td>
<td>HEIF and HEROBC allocations to the CSU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I12</td>
<td>QAA Report on Good Practice in WP (citing CSU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I13</td>
<td>NTI June 2005 Interim Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I15</td>
<td>HEFCE Report on Good Practice in HEIF Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I2</td>
<td>HEFCE HEROBC Press release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I3</td>
<td>HEFCE WP Announcement 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I4</td>
<td>CSU WP Strategy and Action Plan 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I5</td>
<td>CSU HEROBC statement 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I6</td>
<td>CSU HEIF2 Report 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I7</td>
<td>CSU HEIF3 Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I8</td>
<td>CSU HEIF4 Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I9</td>
<td>CSU 2001-2015 HEIF Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT1</td>
<td>Documents relating to the introduction of new management information systems in the 1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J1</td>
<td>Seminar on Jarratt Report held at CSU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J2</td>
<td>1982 Planning Circular referring to Jarratt Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J3</td>
<td>1985/86 Academic Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>Confidential note on 10 years of QAA at CSU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>CSU Institutional Audit Report, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R1</td>
<td>Times Article on research at CSU and associated briefing note for VC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>Research Participants 1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>CSU Student Intake Report 2009</td>
</tr>
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