The relationship between professional autonomy, social power and organisational structure for Heads of Quality as third space professionals in English Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The increasing complexity of external regulation and quality metrics applied to universities in recent decades has emphasised the importance of the internal role of Head of Quality. This thesis discusses the social power and professional autonomy of Heads of Quality in higher education in England. It considers the types and levels of power and autonomy they exercise, and how this is affected by organisational structure. Following a scoping survey with responses from 52 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in England, 11 interviews were conducted across three case study HEIs, selected as representatives of particular organisational types, with staff in similar roles interviewed in each case. Alongside the Head of Quality, interviews were also conducted with their line manager, a direct report, and a senior academic with responsibility for quality management. The thesis proposes a new exploratory typology of HEIs according to organisational structure, based on the degree of centralisation / devolution and the strength of hierarchical control. Secondly, it offers an enhanced understanding of the role played by 'third space' professionals within English higher education, typified by the Head of Quality. It argues that the 'space' in which these third space professionals operate is not uniform, and that while each Head of Quality exercises professional autonomy, the ways in which these are enacted is dependent on organisational type and the availability of different bases of social power. It therefore adds to the literature on third space professionals in higher education, by proposing a more structurally-situated explanation for the phenomenon which also considers organisational type. Finally, the thesis proposes a model of social power and the deployment of professional autonomy according to organisational type. These findings extend our understanding of the exercise of social power and professional autonomy within different types of HEI, and have practical implications for universities, individuals with responsibilities for quality assurance, and the wider professional workforce.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the chapter

Recent years have seen a significant rise in the number of 'third space professionals' appointed to positions within higher education (Whitchurch, 2004 and 2006). These are professional staff whose roles traverse the traditional boundary between the academic and the administrative functions of the University, potentially giving them extensive influence across a wide range of activity, but equally placing them in a challenging position where they may lack legitimacy as being a member of neither of these two groupings.

This chapter sets out the context for the research project. It briefly summarises the current higher education environment in England, and the specific policy features which have given rise to the appointment of third-space professionals. It then explains the researcher's personal and professional interest in the study, and sets out the aims of the project, which are to examine the role played by Heads of Quality in a selection of English universities with different organisational structures, determine the extent to which they hold professional autonomy in their roles and understand how this is exemplified. The research will also explore the status of Heads of Quality as third-space professionals. The chapter closes with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

Higher education is one of the policy areas which is devolved to the various national governments or assemblies within the UK. The arrangements for higher education in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are increasingly changing to meet the requirements of the respective national political authorities, and in consequence this study focuses on higher education in England, under the political oversight of the Westminster government. References to years before 1999 (when the Scottish Parliament was formed) refer to the whole UK.

1.2 The context of the investigation

1.2.1 Political and regulatory environment

The current regulatory framework for higher education, introduced through the 2017 Higher Education and Research Act (HERA)[1] and implemented through the establishment of the Office for Students and its conditions of registration (Office for Students, 2018), is the latest step in a 30-year journey to encourage English Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to become more like private sector businesses, and to respond to priorities determined by the national government.

The last decade has seen the most far-reaching changes. From 2012, the maximum fee was raised to £9,000[2] but the graduate became liable for the full fee through a loan system. This change was explicitly linked to an expected increase in the quality of education through greater competition (BIS, 2011, p.24); and the cap on student numbers at each HEI was removed to encourage competitive practice. The government also introduced a new Teaching Excellence Framework[3] (TEF) from 2017, under which institutional performance in student satisfaction, retention, achievement and graduate employment was assessed against benchmarks, with the intention of promoting a focus on the quality of teaching and the student experience, and student outcomes (Johnson, 2017); and from 2018, the introduction of a new regulator, the Office for Students, with a specific remit to increase competition and operate in the student interest. There have also been changes to the regulations for students from outside the EU who require a visa; the continuation of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) to judge the quality of research; and the need to comply with national legislation relating to, for example, enhanced data protection laws, and the Consumer Rights Act.

While the new regulatory regime in principle respects institutional autonomy, as confirmed both in HERA and in the OfS regulatory framework (OfS, 2018), in practice, institutional behaviour is necessarily influenced or steered by the demands of competition, the reduction in the available

[1] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/29/section/2/enacted
[2] Since 2012/13, there has been only one uplift to the maximum fee, to £9,250, made in 2017.
[3] The specification for the 2017 Teaching Excellence Framework is available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-excellence-and-student-outcomes-framework-specification

resource, and the explicit regulatory requirements for all English providers. HEIs retain their autonomy, in that they are free to make their own decisions; but in practice have little room for manoeuvre; a "project of market citizenship that places emphasis on issues of quality, consumer choice and private contribution reshaping the 'publicness' of higher education" (Jayasuriya, 2015, p.974). Organisations which were previously focused on the creation and dissemination of knowledge, through research and teaching, face an increasing range of regulatory challenges to be addressed with a declining unit of resource.

Systems of "regulatory autonomy" (Enders, De Boer and Weyer, 2013, p.6), using policy levers to steer from a distance, have been introduced in many countries, especially in Europe (Bleiklie et al, 2011). Such systems are also likely to lead to a need for stronger executive management as organisations determine how best to respond to the various policy incentives (Ferlie, Musselin and Andresani, 2008; Marginson, 2008). For steering levers to be effective, HEIs need responsible officers at the helm who will understand the steering calls, and translate them into action at institutional or local level (De Boer, Enders and Leisyte, 2007; Vuori, 2016). For an HEI which requires a whole-organisation approach (for example, in response to national regulatory requirements, or to maximise its response to forms of audit, or even just in terms of managing its reputation globally), there will be pressures to bring the functional units closer to the centre and manage them more closely, leading to a planned strategy rather than unconnected strategies at a local level; in other words deliberate rather than emergent strategy-making (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985).

This has seen the appointment of a new cadre of staff, the "third space professionals", employed by and working ostensibly for the central administrative units of universities, but with the academic staff (Middlehurst, 2013). Celia Whitchurch first coined the term "third-space professionals" for these staff (Whitchurch, 2008a), adopting a term which has been used in a variety of contexts and using it in higher education as an umbrella term to describe all those staff whose roles sit between the purely academic and purely administrative. This can include those responsible for enhancing learning and teaching practice, developing and implementing policy, research management, or enhancing the academic student experience. In relation to quality management and assurance, staff have been appointed and empowered to make decisions which

were previously considered exclusively academic (for example, in relation to course design, assessment strategies, learning and teaching, and even course performance indicators). There is a need to make judgements about whether the provider's practice meets the demands of external regulation, and whether it will enable regulatory conditions to be met; this can only be achieved successfully by understanding these external demands and translating this into policy and practice for the HEI.

1.2.2 Developments in quality assurance

Quality assurance, in the form of activities designed to assure the academic standards of awards, has been part of the UK higher education system for almost 200 years (Bloxham and Price, 2015). This focus on academic peer review – through both external and internal examiners – as the way in which autonomous HEIs assured academic standards was the norm across all UK universities until the 1990s. This decade saw significant changes to the national approach to quality assurance, characterised by Watson as the 'quality wars' (2006). He judges that "the sector has colluded, by not taking responsibility, in giving responsibility away" (p.6); higher education reacted too slowly to increased political interest in higher education and thereby lost the opportunity to continue with effective self-regulation. The 'wars' resulted in the proposal to establish a new national body, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) which would oversee a single national process for quality assurance. This arrangement was subsequently confirmed in the Dearing Report (1997, p.161).

QAA was established in 1997 and one of its first acts was to codify the modern infrastructure and language of quality management, setting out a range of expectations for HEIs. An immediate consequence was that, while peer review was retained as an essential element of assessment, the role of the Head of Quality and their team gained increased importance as they oversaw the internal processes in response to this new regulatory framework, thereby reducing the sole authority of academic staff in relation to matters of quality assurance. Since that time, national arrangements for quality assurance have changed again on several occasions. This is not the place for a detailed history, but it is instructive to note the gradual move away from a

codified framework with regular peer reviews at discipline level, through more "risk-based approaches" with the Revised Operational Model for quality assessment (HEFCE, 2016) and the transfer of responsibility away from a national agency in favour of local governing boards; to the conditions of registration set by the Office for Students, including a detailed Condition B[4], known as the 'Quality condition', which is of particular significance to the work of the Head of Quality, although conditions relating to access and participation, protecting the student interest, and information for students may also be relevant. Condition B also confirms participation in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) as a formal requirement for all providers. The OfS regulatory framework (2018) sets out how provider performance will be monitored based on a range of lead (lag) indicators, with the explicit intention of creating an environment in which competition flourishes. For student regulation, these indicators include factors such as retention and progression rates, attainment of students, progression to highly-skilled employment and, until 2020, the results of the National Student Survey.

Throughout this time period, HEIs have had to revise their internal academic quality assurance mechanisms to align with the developing national expectations; initially by ensuring that their practices met certain published expectations, and more recently by responding to the OfS conditions of registration. The guidance supporting each condition is detailed and complex, and the Head of Quality requires considerable specialist knowledge and insight to ensure that organisational practices align with regulatory expectations. The increasing focus on data, as a proxy for measures of academic quality, represents an additional challenge in identifying how outcomes might be improved through a revision to the complex, interlocking internal mechanisms already in place.

The requirements of quality management are a paradigmatic example of the use of 'steering levers'. The creation of league tables from the data, and of comparison websites (including one commissioned by the lead regulator), make it logical for HEIs to engage thoughtfully with this agenda, and to perform as well as they can against the metrics, whether they endorse them or not. Failure to manage the quality risks could lead to serious reputational damage; and an

[4] The Office for Students issued a revised Condition B: quality and standards in 2022. That post-dates the research undertaken for this thesis.

allegation of inappropriate practice which led to investigation, from the regulator or the ombudsman, could have more far-reaching consequences. Every HEI in England therefore has an individual who holds operational responsibility for the quality management and academic governance framework: meeting the expectations of Condition B. They may variously be titled Academic Registrar, Head of Quality, Head of Academic Services or similar, and they may sit in different positions within the university management structure, but they are the acknowledged expert on the national quality infrastructure and its implications. For the purpose of this study, the title Head of Quality is used for this role-holder, irrespective of local terminology, for clarity. The Head of Quality is not primarily an academic role, although some postholders were previously members of academic staff.

Head of Quality is a role which is often contested; its status is not always accepted by academic staff who may question the legitimacy of decisions which were once the sole preserve of academics now being taken by staff who are not employed on an academic contract (Shattock, 2017). Despite this contestation and ambiguity, there has been very limited research into the types and level of professional autonomy deployed by Heads of Quality, who are playing an increasingly important role within providers in response to increasing, and increasingly complex, regulatory requirements. This leads to the working assumption that Heads of Quality should be considered third-space professionals, on which there has also been limited research. This study seeks to address this gap in the HE literature.

1.3 Professional motivation

As someone who has worked within quality management in higher education for twenty-five years, the researcher has had an interest in the notion of third space professionals since Whitchurch first used the term explicitly in 2008. Intuitively, for most staff working within quality management, this is a more attractive and resonant description than the historic ‘non-academic staff’ or ‘administrative staff’: it affords a level of esteem, and recognises that these employees are not simply ‘capable generalists’ (Lauwerys, 2002, p.94). The term ‘third space’ also draws a distinction between the typical professional services functions such as human resources and finance, which are required in every organisation of at least medium size, and

those roles which are unique to higher education and deliver services which respond to sector-specific demands (be that regulation, guidance, or pedagogic enhancement), directly or indirectly supporting the delivery of academic excellence. The quality management professional is often tasked with working through the implications of external demands, while ensuring that internal processes are aligned to these and deliver outcomes which meet regulatory requirements. This includes exploiting their knowledge of different territories – such as the external regulatory environment, and the priorities of individual academic faculties and departments – and using this knowledge to develop appropriate solutions. This complex role positions them as third space professionals, as defined by both Whitchurch and subsequent writers (see for example Denney, 2022).

The increasingly complex external environment – including the recent establishment of the Office for Students as a market regulator in England – has reinforced the importance of the role of the Head of Quality in recent years. However, it is evident from various seminars, conferences and informal discussion with peers across the sector that the role played by the Head of Quality is not uniform, and continues to change and develop. The researcher was thus interested to understand these different roles, and in particular to explore more deeply the nature of the Head of Quality as a third-space professional.

To understand the role of the Head of Quality, it is necessary also to consider the organisation in which they work. Both the strength of hierarchical control, and the centralisation or devolution of authority, might have an effect on the role and how it is approached. The thesis thus seeks to explore whether the Head of Quality can be understood to play a similar role within each HEI, with a similar level of professional autonomy to undertake the job, or whether there are significant variations between them caused by the organisational structure in which they work. In doing so, it will investigate whether all Heads of Quality can legitimately be designated third-space professionals; and in turn this will provide evidence about the importance or usefulness of the designation of the Head of Quality as a third-space professional, and whether it has explanatory power or is only a matter of nomenclature which confers greater professional recognition. This area of research might have both theoretical and professional implications, and

gave initial structure to the literature review which follows in the next chapter, and led in turn to the research questions in this thesis, as discussed in the next section of this chapter.

1.4 Aims of the study

The investigation aims to understand the role played by the Head of Quality in English HEIs. In particular, it will examine the ways in which Heads of Quality are able to exercise power and professional autonomy in their role, and – if so – how this power and autonomy is exemplified and enacted.

Aim One: to evaluate the effect of organisational structure on the role played by the Head of Quality

The study recognises that the Head of Quality is required to ensure the HEI responds to national expectations for quality assurance; this is a determining feature of the job role. Of particular interest is whether the Head of Quality takes decisions independently, or works in collaboration with the local faculty staff, and how they are able to influence local decisions (an exercise in social power). HEIs have often been described as being "loose-coupled" (Weick, 1976; De Boer, Enders and Leisyte, 2007; Bleiklie, Enders and Lepori, 2015), with the individual parts operating independently (Gore, 2018), but at times of significant external challenge there is a natural tendency for the executive to reduce or even eliminate this freedom: there are risks to allowing semi-autonomous units to operate with limited central control. "Collegiality as a collection of balanced self-interests with an aim to consensus building fails often to make big and difficult decisions which might be more in the best interests of the university as a whole" (Pekkola et al, 2018, p.1953). The pressures of external regulation, or the need to maximise performance in external audits such as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) or Research Excellence Framework (REF), is likely to encourage a tighter coupling (Clark, 1998 and 2004). The study will therefore examine whether the level of authority and autonomy exercised in the role is determined by organisational structure, and if so how.

Aim two: to determine whether Heads of Quality are professionally autonomous

Heads of Quality can be identified as third-space practitioners, as discussed in section 1.3 above. However, it does not necessarily follow that they hold professional autonomy; it is possible to work within the third space, but to hold responsibility only for implementing agreed procedures (Seyfried and Pohlenz, 2018). The thesis investigates the professional autonomy which Heads of Quality hold within their organisations, and how they use their knowledge and insight to influence policy or practice. In doing so, it will consider whether the status of Heads of Quality as third space professionals is valid. There has been limited research into this area, which has the potential to inform an understanding of the operation of professional autonomy within English higher education, with particular reference to a discrete group of third-space practitioners. This is a gap which this study seeks to address. Where professional autonomy is more limited, or where a role lacks sufficient variety, employees may seek to extend or otherwise modify the parameters of their job role, a process which has been referred to as 'job-crafting' (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). This may be to make the role more personally meaningful, or to bring about enhanced outcomes. There has been little research which considers the opportunities for job-crafting for those based within central services in higher education, and the study will seek to address this through its consideration of the ways in which autonomy is deployed by Heads of Quality.

Aim three: to consider the implications of the project findings for the work of Heads of Quality in English HEIs

As discussed above in section 1.3, one of the motivations in undertaking this study was to understand whether the designation of the Head of Quality as a third-space professional has explanatory power, or whether this is simply a matter of nomenclature which appears to confer greater recognition and esteem (while not in fact changing how staff are treated in practice, see Sebalj, Holbrook and Bourke, 2012). The findings will suggest how the relationship between organisational structure and social power affects the role played by the Head of Quality, and the deployment of professional autonomy. As well as being a contribution to knowledge, this may have implications for practice (for Heads of Quality, and for providers). This is logically

subsequent to the first two aims, as it can only be considered once the findings have been confirmed and discussed, but is an important professional motivation.

The research questions and sub-questions for this study are therefore:

1. How does organisational structure affect the roles played by Heads of Quality, as third space professionals, and the bases of social power they deploy:
   1.1. in relation to the strength of hierarchical control;
   1.2. in relation to centralisation or devolution (of organisational structure).

2. How are Heads of Quality, as third space practitioners, professionally autonomous?
   2.1. Do Heads of Quality have autonomy over their decisions and actions? (Are they rule-makers or rule-takers? Is their judgement shaped through the wider influence of institutional values or power hierarchy, and how can they approach this most effectively?)
   2.2. How does professional autonomy interact with organisational structure in the role of Heads of Quality?

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured into six chapters. Chapter Two provides an overview of the current literature which is relevant to the area of study, and constructs the theoretical framework within which an empirical investigation can take place. It considers how managers gain and use power within organisations; the authority they hold; the ways in which they establish and deploy professional autonomy; and how this might vary according to the structure and character of their organisation. This is followed by a discussion of organisational structure, in particular the structure of HEIs as organisations. The chapter then introduces third space theory, with particular focus on the appointment and role of third space professionals within HEIs. It next reviews literature on the role of the Head of Quality within English universities and considers its classification as a third space professional. The chapter concludes with the proposal of a conceptual model of the bases of social power available to Heads of Quality as third space

professionals within English higher education, and the types and level of autonomy they might deploy within different types of HEI organisational structures. This model in turn leads to the research questions and associated sub-questions.

Chapter Three discusses the overall research methodology, explaining the methodological decisions which were taken at each stage and the reasons for these. It sets out the epistemological and ontological basis for the study, then provides a rationale for the use of a multiple case study approach based on interviews, recognising both the strengths and weaknesses of the approach and explaining how validity and reliability have been achieved. It discusses the selection of both the providers and the interviewees within those providers; then explains the development of the interview schedule through a pilot phase, noting the lessons learned and improvements which were introduced, ensuring that there was a clear link between the research questions and the interview schedule. The chapter concludes by explaining how the data were analysed – including the iterative nature of the coding process – how ethical considerations were managed, and steps taken to maximise validity and reliability of findings.

Chapter Four reports the findings. These are summarised by case-study HEI, with a brief final section which considers the main themes to have emerged through the analysis of the interview data, comparing and contrasting the responses given by interviewees at each of the case study HEIs. The findings show clear distinctions between the levels of authority, power and autonomy displayed by the Head of Quality at each of the HEIs, both in terms of how the role is described, and how it is enacted.

Chapter Five discusses the findings against the existing literature, drawing out the ways in which the thesis extends our knowledge and understanding of the role played by the Head of Quality as a third-space professional, and how this is affected by levels of hierarchy and centralisation within the HEI as an organisation. It proposes a refined exploratory typology of organisational structure for HEIs, concluding with developments in the conceptual models for the use of social power and the deployment of professional autonomy in relation to organisational type.

The closing chapter identifies the main contribution to knowledge which emerges from the thesis; and it also highlights potential implications for practice. The boundary conditions of the study are acknowledged and discussed; and the chapter closes by identifying some possible future areas for further research and some commentary on the researcher's overall research journey.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is to consider how Heads of Quality, as third-space practitioners (i.e. staff whose roles traverse the traditional boundary between the academic and the administrative functions of the University), operate within English higher education institutions (HEIs). In particular, it will look at the role which these third-space professionals play in HEIs, the power they hold, and the extent to which they are autonomous practitioners. In doing so, it will also consider whether there are specific features of organisational structure which influence the type and level of autonomy they display.

The theoretical framework will be constructed through a review of the literature on the exercise of power in organisations (who holds it and how it is exercised), and how this might be affected by organisational structure. It then considers the literature on professional autonomy, before going on to discuss the key features of HEIs as organisations. The existing literature will be used to create a theoretical framework within which an empirical investigation can take place. This is followed by a discussion of the third space, especially within higher education, and the key gaps which emerge from the literature and guide the research questions for this study.

2.2 Theories of social power in organisations

It can be argued to be central to the definition of an organisation that it has a power structure and hierarchy, and some form of central control or coordination (Langfred and Rockman, 2016; Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson, 2000). Increasingly organisations, as well as the individuals within them, are being referred to as "actors", a term which "denotes bounded autonomy, clarity of purpose, decision-making capacity and sovereignty, technical action capability, effective self-control…" (Meyer and Bromley, 2013, p.377). This demonstrates the increasing importance of coordination and in particular the power to make decisions or effect change within the organisation.

Dowding (1996) draws the distinction between outcome power – the ability of an actor to bring about preferred outcomes – and social power, the ability of an actor to change another actor's incentive

structures in order to bring about preferred outcomes. This is a useful theoretical distinction; in this study the focus is on social power: that is, on the power relationships between two or more actors, since Heads of Quality typically act through others to effect change. There are many definitions of social power given in the literature, but this research study follows the definition set out by French and Raven (1959, cited in Raven, 2008, p.1) as: "the potential for an actor to bring about a change in the belief, attitude or behaviour of another actor (the 'target')". French and Raven's work has been extremely influential with subsequent writers, such that more recent definitions of social power are generally consistent with theirs, including that given later by Dowding. In his three-dimensional view of power, Lukes (2005) also recognises both outcome power and the power to "secure… compliance by controlling [someone's] thoughts and desires" (p.27). For the purposes of this study, the broad definition above given by French and Raven is judged to be applicable to Heads of Quality in HEIs.

Raven has subsequently written extensively about social power, and (2008) identifies six primary bases (or sources) of social power which might be used, although he recognises that in most cases, more than one base of power will be involved. While much has been written in this area, most taxonomies of social power can be traced back to (or have much in common with) the original French and Raven nomenclature (Elias, 2008). The six primary bases of social power are:

- Coercive
- Reward
- Legitimate (broken down into Position, Reciprocity, Equity and Responsibility)
- Informational
- Expert
- Referent.

These are discussed extensively in the literature (for example see Elias, 2008, for an overview). For this study, the most relevant are legitimate position power (obeying an order from someone in a more senior position within an organisation); expert power (accepting that the agent has superior knowledge or insight about a specific topic); and referent power (based on the agent's personal ability to inspire and influence the target). Within higher education, direct use of coercive power (the threat of negative or undesirable consequences) is comparatively unusual (Bleiklie, Enders and Lapori,

2015); the use of coercive power and a dominant strategy is more common in situations where there is significant inequality, but is less effective in situations where participants are more equal in status (Ronay, Maddux and von Hippel, 2020). Reward power is generally associated with incentives such as promotion or particular work privileges, which are unusual in higher education, and even more unlikely to be available outside the formal line management structure. Certainly, for Heads of Quality as a reference group, the use of reward power is likely to be limited since they are not in a position to offer promotion or privileges to their targets.

In their first expression of the bases of power, French and Raven did not include informational power. Raven added this subsequently (see Raven, 2008), distinguishing it from expert power because when informational power is used, the target subsequently understands the reason why they should change their behaviour; when the agent uses expert power, the target may simply accept the agent's argument because of their perceived expertise. French continued to view the exchange of information as an aspect of expert power. For the purposes of this thesis, the fine distinction is not required; it is sufficient that the agent can bring about a change in beliefs, attitude or behaviour because of their own expertise, whether or not the target fully understands the reasons. Expert power implies, in any case, that the person perceived as an expert can help to improve knowledge (Clauss and Bouncken, 2019); and "Change agents with high levels of power stemming from their expertise within the process and content domains are more likely to use participation and sensegiving than change agents with low levels of expert power" (Lines, 2007, p.164). This demonstrates the close linkage between expert and informational power; reference to expert power throughout this study will be intended also to cover the subset of informational power.

In his review of 40 key papers on expert power, Savolainen notes that expert power is usually highly context-specific; and that it is strongly based on the perceived credibility of the agent (Savolainen, 2021; see also Lines, 2007). The target of influence may not understand why they are following a particular course of action, but they trust in the knowledge of the expert. Savolainen adds that expert power in part depends on an agent's position in their personal network, which means that referent power is also likely to play a role in making expert power effective (Savolainen, 2021). Some users of expert power are considered 'gatekeepers' within their specialist domain – they not only hold knowledge and skills, but they control or facilitate access to this information. The strength of their

position depends on “the extent to which the gated have access to alternative sources of information” (Savolainen, 2020, p.14). In societal terms, the rise of social media and networked information environments means that this base of power is eroding; but the rapid changes in higher education regulation mean that Heads of Quality will still have an important role in facilitating access to accurate information about regulatory requirements, so may be seen as holding expert knowledge which can be used as a base of social power.

In discussing the bases of social power, Pierro et al (2013) differentiate between ‘harsh and ‘soft’ bases. Coercion, reward, and legitimacy except for dependence are harsh; the remainder are soft. Pierro et al argue that softer bases of power are generally accepted more favourably, and lead to better outcomes, as they recognise the agency of the target in accepting the demands made of them. It can therefore be in the actor’s interest to use soft power bases when they are available. A decision might be enforced using legitimate position power, and a recognition that the actor’s role in the organisation gives them the authority to make such a determination. However, this may not always be sufficient, or indeed possible, if the agent does not have line management authority over the target; so the use of either expert power or referent power may be the most effective way of achieving the desired outcome.

Social power is “not a thing but a process” (Clegg, 1989, p.97). It is a “property of relationships between people, rather than a property of an individual” (Janss et al, 2012, p.56). Increasingly, organisations are described as networks of actors (Meyer and Bromley, 2013, p.382), despite their formal management structures. Krackhardt describes how a significant base of power can be “an accurate cognition of informal networks” (1990, p.342) – an appreciation of how the internal networks function, and therefore how best to use these; this is echoed by Fligstein and McAdam who describe these networks as “fundamentally concerned with the efforts of collective actors to vie for strategic advantage in and through interaction with other groups in what can be seen as meso-level social orders” (2011, p.2). This is likely to reflect the use of referent power, which explicitly refers to shared connections or beliefs and is based on strong personal relationships, although it could also involve expert power. Indeed, Blois and Hopkinson argue that it can be difficult to distinguish between the softer power bases, and that some research results suggest the importance of the cultural context of the study (2013). Gibbs (2019) also demonstrates the social power that an individual may

have through establishing strong personal networks; while formal position in the organisation is correlated to social power, it is not the only determinant. Foss Hansen et al explain that, "Whereas political/bureaucratic and managerial accountability relationships are hierarchical, professional relationships are network-based" (2019, p.559).

More recently, Timms and Heimans have introduced a 'new power' model (2018). New power is described as "open, participatory, and peer-driven" (p.18). In a newspaper interview, Heimans commented that "no political or commercial organisation will survive… unless it abandons 'old power values' of expertise, confidentiality, formal governance and managerialism, and adopts 'new power values; of online crowd-sourcing, radical transparency, leaderless structures and amateurish enthusiasm" (Aitkenhead, 2018). Timms and Heimans discuss how, under these more participative and open structures, power is more like a current than a currency (2018, p.18), potentially giving power to anyone in the organisation who is able to harness and exploit it – if the organisation is sufficiently flexible to permit such an approach. Timms and Heimans give examples of how this might work in practice, with regular polls of staff and encouraging widespread participation in decision-making. They note that people increasingly value "feedback loops", which are ever-present on social media, and that these are often absent in working lives (2018, p.224), but would encourage greater staff loyalty and commitment. However, the authors also accept that an organisation which operates on a new power model will only be manageable if the leader has sufficient legitimacy – through referent or expert power – to set parameters for decisions. It might also provide opportunities for any member of staff who was able to mobilise sufficient referent power to have significant influence over decision-making. The relationship between organisational structure and the deployment of social power is discussed in more detail in the following section.

2.3 The effect of organisational structure on the deployment of social power

2.3.1 Mintzberg's configurations

How social power can most effectively be deployed will depend in part on the structure of the organisation. Mintzberg (1980, p.329-337) describes five possible configurations. In the Simple structure, action is coordinated by direct supervision, but this will only be possible is small

organisations. A Machine Bureaucracy has a number of functional units but operations are directed and coordinated from the centre. In a Professional Bureaucracy, typically found in environments such as schools, specialists are appointed to the 'operating core', who determine the standards to be implemented within the various divisions; this brings consistency of approach, even if oversight may be managed at the local level. The Divisionalised Form devolves considerable power to the individual units or divisions themselves, with coordination achieved through performance control measures – this form will often be used when the organisation is dealing with a diverse client base. While the performance measures are set and monitored centrally, how the divisions achieve these is for them to determine locally. Finally, in an Adhocracy, there is little formal structure – teams come together to undertake projects as required. Mintzberg notes that an Adhocracy will most usually be found in small, new companies, but that relatively soon they will become bureaucracies, especially when the operating environment becomes more complex; and indeed, that organisations tend to move towards a Machine Bureaucracy over time, "to the regret of operator and client alike" (ibid., p.339). He also mentions a sixth possibility, the Missionary Configuration, where coordination is delivered through a genuine shared sense of mission. Mintzberg accepts that organisations will generally not align completely with one configuration as described above but will have elements of two or more archetypes. Nevertheless, it is probable that one configuration is dominant; there will be centralisation or devolution, with formal decision-making power focused either within the central core or else distributed to local units. An organisation as large and complex as an HEI will inevitably operate as a form of Bureaucracy, being too large for the Simple structure and too complex for an Adhocracy.

2.3.2 Laloux's levels of consciousness

Laloux (2014) offers an alternative model of organisational types, which he describes as levels of consciousness. Each level represents a higher level of consciousness than the previous, and each is argued to lead naturally to certain types of organisational structure. Each level is allocated a colour; four of these colours are deemed to be most relevant to modern Western organisations. Examples of each of these types of organisation are also offered. An Amber organisation is very hierarchical, like an army; there is one 'right way' of doing things. In Orange organisations, managers set objectives but do not specify how they should be achieved. There is still a pyramid hierarchy but there are also

virtual teams and cross-functioning projects; global corporations are typically Orange. They are intended to operate as a meritocracy, but bosses tend to trust less than they need to to make this truly effective. The next level is Green, which is characterised by the word 'pluralistic', with a focus on fairness, equality, community and consensus. There is a focus on empowerment, and enabling decisions to be taken at the front line – Green organisations are values-driven and culture is more important than strategy, which means staff have a high degree of professional autonomy. Non-profit organisations are a modern example of Green, although Laloux notes that the establishment of consensus can be very time-consuming. The final, 'evolutionary' step is Teal. Teal organisations are a direct response to an increasingly complex world, where straightforward predictions are not possible:

> "The world is becoming increasingly complex… An airplane like a Boeing 747 is a complicated system. There are millions of parts that need to work together seamlessly. But everything can be mapped out; if you change one part, you should be able to predict all the consequences. A bowl of spaghetti is a complex system. Even though it has just a few dozen 'parts', it is virtually impossible to predict what will happen when you pull at the end of a strand of spaghetti that sticks out of the bowl" (Laloux, 2014, p.211).

In this environment, staff "don't try to predict what is inherently unpredictable; they just try to do the right thing" (p.214). Clearly this denotes a remarkable level of autonomy, which would be unlikely in Amber or Orange organisations.

In discussing Laloux's model, Nick Petrie from the Center for Creative Leadership commented that, "There is nothing inherently "better" about being at a higher level of development, just as an adolescent is not "better" than a toddler… Any level of development is okay; the question is whether that level of development is a good fit for the task at hand" (Gerndt, 2014). While certain forms of organisation may be most suited to a particular set of circumstances, as with Mintzberg's configurations, there is no guarantee that every organisation in that field will show the same structure.

The organisational categories suggested by Laloux do not correlate directly to Mintzberg's organisational types, but there is some overlap between them. The Amber organisation most closely

correlates to a Machine or Professional Bureaucracy, with clearly defined rules and processes determined centrally, with increasing devolved oversight. The Divisionalised Form, with more autonomy at the local level, is closer to Orange; while Green and Teal might be closer to the Missionary type but do not correspond neatly to the forms Mintzberg discusses.

The operation of social power in organisations is not straightforward. In Amber and Orange organisations there is a formal command structure, which confers authority through legitimate position power. This may be insufficient to implement all the decisions made by upper management, but legitimate position power will be more effective in more hierarchical organisations where greater authority is conferred by position. Even so, outside very small organisations, some of this authority has to be delegated for practical reasons, with the consequence that the original decision may be implemented less effectively than, or indeed differently to, how the senior managers anticipate (Sloof and von Siemens, 2019), although "decentralisation efforts are accompanied by increased accountability that could lead to bureaucratisation and the setting up of control structures at the central level" (Bleiklie et al, 2017, p.160). The structure, and the authority consequently held by individuals, will depend on a number of factors but can only be understood in the context of the field within which the organisation operates, including the nature of the product or service but also the regulatory environment and other stakeholders (Scott, 2008). "Organizations are complex systems and strategic decision architecture is far from simple" (Sibony, Lovallo and Powell, 2017, p.16). Effective leaders are often those who empower others (Lumby, 2019); and they may well need to collaborate to achieve their goals – working across boundaries which may be institutional, disciplinary or professional (Prysor and Henley, 2018), and which may prove quite stubborn to transcend. However, beyond that formal structure, individuals may secure power through their competence but also through their understanding of, and ability to exploit, the informal networks in operation across the organisation.

Social power describes the potential which an actor has to bring about their desired outcomes when working with others in an organisational setting; and the bases of social power outline the ways in which they might exert this influence. For this study, the focus is on the operation of social power within the HEI. The next section of this chapter focuses on the concept of professional autonomy, and what it means for an actor to be professionally autonomous within an organisation, as indicated

by the second aim of this project, before returning to discuss HEIs as organisations in which this social power and autonomy are deployed at section 2.6 below, followed in section 2.7 with a discussion of the concept of third space professionals within the higher education environment.

2.4 Professional autonomy

This section reviews the literature on the concept of professional autonomy, which is central to the aims of the research and to understanding how social power operates through Heads of Quality in different types of HE organisations. As such it forms a core component of the theoretical framework for the study.

2.4.1 Defining professional autonomy

Hackman and Oldham's influential definition of professional autonomy is: "the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out" (1976, p.258; see also Tims and Bakker, 2010). These strands of autonomy are not necessarily linked; an employee may have greater discretion over scheduling than the procedures to be used, or significant flexibility over *how* something is to be achieved, but little choice about *when*. Autonomy should not be confused with independence, or how often report has to be made to the direct manager; Breaugh (1985) gives the example of a bus driver, who is independent in that they may have no contact with the office for much of the day, but they have no discretion over the route to be followed or the times of arrival.

This definition can be extended for those working in professional roles within complex environments: "A professional is, then, someone who works in an organization that is not managed on the basis of formal bureaucratic procedures, but through autonomy and self-governance, and is highly educated, skilled and motivated, as well as exhibiting high levels of professionalism. Furthermore, a professional expects little external control, and has considerable autonomy, authority and responsibility for setting goals, defining tasks, setting performance standards and evaluating his or her own performance" (Macheridis and Paulsson, 2019, pp.472-3). The field in which an organisation operates will affect the level and type of autonomy it can grant to its staff, especially its middle

managers (Langfred and Rockman, 2016); but internal organisational structure is also likely to play a part.

Within a broad framework, professionals expect to retain autonomy in their work, especially in the most challenging situations. Indeed, it would be counter-intuitive to suggest that organisations have done “such a poor job of hiring that [they have] now got to watch the poor devils on a full-time basis" (Buono, 2003, p.547). Eisenhardt, Furr and Bingham (2010) describe how important it is that senior executives do not over-specify how outcomes should be delivered; within a broad framework or structure, professionals require the flexibility to respond to events as they happen. This relies on employees making judgements and taking decisions in response to the emerging complex environment.

The effective management of organisations depends on the sound management of ambiguity (March, 1991). Failing to acknowledge this ambiguity can have catastrophic consequences (Weick, 1993); if professionals are tasked with delivering complex services, they need to be free to exercise their discretion and judgement (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2008; see also Kreber, 2019). “High performance in dynamic environments relies on leaders’ resolving the fundamental tension between flexibility and efficiency” (Eisenhardt, Furr and Bingham, 2010, p.1264). There is a delicate balance between the instinct to centralise, whilst equally needing to maximise the value of local knowledge (Abell, 2015). This echoes Mintzberg’s observation, that organisations often move towards a bureaucracy, reducing the level of professional autonomy afforded to key actors at a local level.

Power (2004) decries the fact that so much professional work has been proceduralised, in both the private and public sectors, thus removing a degree of autonomy. While accepting that some internal control is necessary, he advocates that “Intelligent trust in expert judgement must flourish” (p.62); we must rely on honest professional opinion, even accepting that this might be wrong, if we wish to avert a serious failure, or ‘black swan event’. Indeed, most organisational models work well in predicting the predictable, or white swan events, but do not respond well to swans of other colours (Hommel and King, 2013). Professional discretion and expert judgement are necessary to identify that which cannot be captured by standard statistical models (Posner, 2013); if all that an actor does is follow a procedure, the most serious failures – such as to the world financial systems in 2008 – will not be

averted (Beunza and Stark, 2012). The expert judgement of professionally autonomous actors is necessary, especially in complex environments where outcomes may not be predictable.

There are interesting tensions between autonomy, control and bureaucracy; while some form of coordination is required to meet the definition of an organisation, a judgement is required about how flexible these parameters should be: "Wouldn't it be more effective to integrate a rules- and values-based system that provided appropriate guidelines while giving people the flexibility and encouragement to follow their best judgment?" (Buono, 2003, p.548). Gladwell cites a former manager of Enron, who said: "They were there looking for people who had the talent to think outside the box. It never occurred to them that, if everyone had to think outside the box, maybe it was the box that needed fixing" (Gladwell, 2002). The structures and rules in place were clearly ineffective in guiding action, resulting in a plurality of individual decisions – which ultimately led to the failure of the organisation.

For the individual actor, there is a need to negotiate the conflict between the organisational needs for control (and associated formal structures and rules) on the one hand, and the benefits of flexibility and professional autonomy on the other. This involves risk for both parties – for the organisation, that an empowered individual might operate outside agreed parameters, and for the employee, that they might fail (Mills and Ungson, 2003).

2.4.2 The relationship between professional autonomy and personal motivation

"The deep sense of personal fulfillment (sic) that Western culture encourages individuals to expect from the domain of work often runs counter to the structures and practices that work organizations (sic) deem practical for achieving their goals" (Berg, Grant and Johnson, 2010, p.991). There is considerable evidence that employees whose role permits a degree of autonomy are both more motivated (Tims, Bakker and Derks, 2013), and more successful in meeting the expected job outcomes, than those who strictly follow rules set down by the organisation. Benefits can include improved work efficiency, teamwork, and process improvements (Bruning and Campion, 2018; see also Tims and Bakker, 2010).

Staff tend to be more engaged when they have a higher degree of autonomy, and have "an internal perceived locus of causality" (Gagne, 2018, p.91), so there is a logic to devolving certain amounts of decision-making autonomy, and there is corresponding evidence that this leads to improved performance (Maus, 2018), as long as there is some continued engagement with managers and the wider internal structures so that individuals or teams do not become isolated (Perriton, 2018; Haas, 2010).

On the other hand, there is evidence that workers who have very limited control over their environment are much more likely to engage in "deviant workplace behavior (sic)" (Sloof and von Siemens, 2019, p.2). This can include ignoring instructions or absenteeism; within the HEI, some aspects of deviant behaviour such as violence may be unlikely, but considerable harm could be rendered by staff members who are disengaged and who ignore instructions and/or do less than is required of them, either through absence or lack of commitment, undermining strategic intent through their actions, or potentially through engaging in more serious activity such as careless practice which might enable cybercrime.

This highlights that an individual has the opportunity to shape certain aspects of their role: they may not strictly follow the agreed job description, but can, either deliberately or unwittingly, deviate from the expectations which are set down. This might involve disruptive behaviour as described by Sloof and Siemens above, but can also include positive extensions to the role. This form of 'job-crafting' is discussed in the next section.

2.4.3 Job crafting

One aspect of professional autonomy is job-crafting, which is defined as "an individually initiated strategy to optimize the work environment and achieve personal, self-serving work goals or outcomes" (Renkema et al, 2022, p.3). The process of job-crafting reflects the same desire for work-place fulfilment, even in roles where the need for expert professional judgement is necessarily very limited.

Job-crafting is a proactive process undertaken by the individual which results in changes to the way in which they work; this is often, although not always, intended to make the job more personally meaningful (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). In many cases there is no explicit authorisation of the change, which may not be formally recognised, as long as it remains consistent with organisational mission and broad role expectations; job-crafting reflects instances where an actor modifies the boundaries of the role so that it better meets their own preferences (Tims and Bakker, 2010).

The literature suggests that actors who perceive themselves to have limited professional autonomy are most likely to engage in job-crafting to make the job more rewarding and to secure better outcomes, or to reduce their accountability risks (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Job-crafting, whether it is intended to make a job more meaningful or to reduce potential accountability, can provide the sense that an actor has some control over how they approach their work which those in more senior positions gain through the nature of their role and the associated legitimate position power. This is a tactic not required by an employee who already holds sufficient social power to have a degree of freedom in their role, but may be an attractive solution to one who would otherwise regard themselves as merely a cog in a machine (Harvey et al, 2013).

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) claim that a wide range of employees engage in a process of job-crafting. This includes roles such as nurses and hairdressers, which are not jobs where, to follow the Hackman and Oldham definition, an employee would be given substantial discretion in scheduling work or determining how it should be carried out. Even so, employees may choose to extend their role to generate the benefits (both personal and organisational) which arise from greater autonomy; and they may do so by extending the task boundaries, relational boundaries or cognitive boundaries of the role, depending on the nature and level of the work (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001).

Much of the literature focuses on the use of job-crafting for positive reasons, through which the employee creates greater meaningfulness in work (Sanchez-Cardona et al, 2018) and is disposed to craft a job which best meets their skillsets and interests and will lead to the best outcomes (De Gouw, 2018). However, there is also evidence that some actors will seek to modify the boundaries of the role to make it less demanding (Tims, Bakker and Derks, 2012) or to reduce perceived accountability pressures, for example in healthcare settings (Renkema et al, 2022). This is a way of minimising the

personal risk of failure highlighted by Mills and Ungson (2003). Indeed Grant and Ashford (2008) show that proactive behaviour to modify a job role – whether for positive or negative reasons – is much more likely when employees are held accountable – "Given that they are already in the spotlight, they may as well anticipate, plan, and act in advance as much as possible" (p.14) to bring about the desired outcome, whether that is to enhance their own experience, promote their abilities, or reduce the risks associated with their performance.

An interesting example of job-crafting within higher education is noted by Vican, Friedman and Andreasen (2020), who found that academic staff are increasingly seeking to create areas of activity that are not 'of the institution', which are kept below the radar so that they will not be co-opted as part of organisational structures, and that have increased as academics perceive themselves to have less professional autonomy. This might be expressed, for example, through debates about the ownership of intellectual property or copyright, which became particularly prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in relation to lecture-capture. The creation of autonomous spaces seeks to create greater meaning in work, but it is unlikely to bring (or to be intended to bring) organisational benefit (see also Hannah, 2004). Another example is provided by McNaughtan et al (2022), who demonstrate that cognitive framing can make an important difference to the ways in which academic staff approach tasks they are expected to undertake; their commitment is markedly higher when they cognitively connect the task to the overall vision of their work, rather than as an obligation imposed by a central management team (see also Martin, Lord and Warren-Smith, 2020).

Job-crafting is thus not just, as Langfred and Rockman describe, "a process by which employees are given discretion and freedom to redesign their jobs to create a better fit between themselves and their jobs" (2016, p.640). There may be scope, in many organisations, for the "bottom-up redesign" of job roles to bring favourable outcomes for the individual (Demerouti, 2014, p.237), but actors can also engage in such proactive behaviour without explicit discretion and freedom to do so, for their own reasons, and this may not bring positive benefits for the team or organisation (Langfred, 2005). To be effective, job-crafting also has to take place within organisational parameters.

Job-crafting may therefore offer the individual an opportunity to establish a sense of professional autonomy which is not explicitly foreseen by the job description. As discussed above, this sense of professional autonomy can be important in establishing motivation. Nevertheless, the most significant point for this study is the importance of enabling experts to use their judgement to respond to complex demands, rather than simply following pre-ordained rules. This is part of the definition of a professional, and the exercise of professional autonomy is a key consideration of the thesis.

Having reviewed the literature relating to social power and the value of professional autonomy in the preceding sections, the following section considers the interaction between them, and how this interaction may be affected by organisational structure.

2.5 The relationship between organisational structure, social power and professional autonomy

The interrelationship between the types and level of social power (influence over others) and professional autonomy (limited influence from others) that an individual has is an important element of the theoretical framework for this study. In considering the role played by Heads of Quality, and in particular the extent to which they are autonomous practitioners, it will be important to be able to locate the dimensions of social power and autonomy exercised by them within this framework.

There is considerable evidence in the literature that organisational structure will impact on employee behaviour (Maus, 2018). Rank within an organisation may be one determinant of the level of social power available to an individual (Berg, Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2010; Cilliers and Greyvenstein, 2012), but the use of softer bases of social power, such as expert or referent power, may also provide a degree of influence which is unrelated to formal position. Berg, Wrzesniewski and Dutton also found that those in higher-ranked roles could accrue greater autonomy if they built trust with their fellow employees (ibid.), again highlighting the significance of the softer bases of power, both expert and referent.

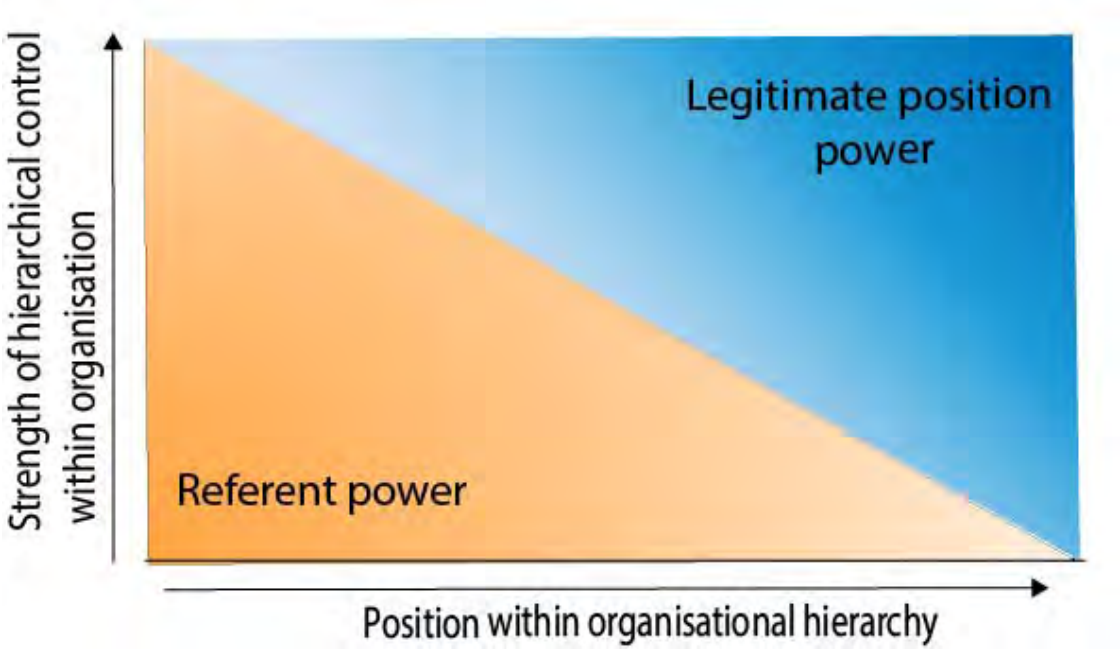
The exercise of professional autonomy maybe encouraged, permitted, or indeed actively discouraged by an organisation. In hierarchical organisations, there is likely to be a high degree of task

standardisation (Langfred and Moye, 2004), even though it is rare for an organisation to parade its strong hierarchy. Innovation and creativity are prized, but "most organizations talk a better game of design innovation than they actually play" (Felin and Powell, 2015, p.81). Local autonomy can also be hampered by centralised systems of control, with little devolution of responsibility: either in the form of a machine bureaucracy, with powerful central coordination, or a professional bureaucracy, where standards are set centrally but overseen and monitored locally. If the system is too tightly controlled, there may be a risk that an informal shadow system is developed to meet local needs where the hierarchy does not do so (Furstenau et al, 2017). However, the obverse is also true: the extensive use of informal networks can normalise deviance (Sheaff, 2007), and giving full decision autonomy to unaccountable individuals will result in the organisation spinning out of control (Felin and Powell, ibid.) – or, in the words of Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson (2000), ceasing to be an organisation at all.

The location of the job role is also relevant. In a machine bureaucracy or a professional bureaucracy, greater legitimate position power is held by an actor who has a role within the central services (which are responsible for setting and monitoring standards, and in some cases for oversight of the work). An actor in one of the functional units receives these standards for implementation, and the level of professional autonomy is thereby reduced. In the divisionalised form, where much greater decision-making responsibility is devolved to the functional units, an actor in one of these units may have considerable autonomy based on either legitimate position power or expert power. The actor in the central service may be responsible for setting broad performance standards, but has limited influence over how these standards are delivered unless they are able to deploy either expert power or referent power (or a combination of both) to engage with local actors. The level of authority they can exert is likely to be a complex negotiation depending on the circumstances (Bourgoin, Bencherki and Faraj, 2018). It is in situations where the level of autonomy an actor is afforded by the organisation does not match their own expectations or interests that job-crafting is most likely to emerge.

The relationship between organisational structure, and the most typical bases of social power used to deploy professional autonomy might thus be expressed diagrammatically as in Figure 1:

Fig. 1: Relationship between organisational structure and the available bases of social power



An actor who holds a very senior position is most likely to exercise their professional autonomy by deploying legitimate position power, and this will be strongest in an organisation which itself has strong hierarchical control. Actors who occupy a less senior position will have weaker legitimate position power available; and this would also apply in an organisation with weaker hierarchical control. Conversely, an actor at a junior position in the hierarchy is most likely to deploy referent power; this will be strongest in an organisation with weaker hierarchical control. Expert power may be available as a supplementary or alternative base to any actor within a defined field, if they can demonstrate this expertise effectively. Where an actor has not been able to access the relevant base of social power, they may seek to develop a sense of professional autonomy in other ways, through job-crafting.

As a closing comment, it should be noted that the level of professional autonomy perceived by the individual does not always tally with the view of their supervisor, who is likely to believe that the employee is less autonomous (Breaugh, 1985). It is unclear whether this is because the supervisor does not accurately understand how the employee is spending their time, or alternatively because the autonomy which is valued by the employee is actually something the

supervisor expects and ‘factors in’ as part of job requirements. This will be considered further in Chapter 5 as part of the discussion on the findings.

Having reviewed the operation of social power and professional autonomy within different organisational structures, the next section considers the organisational structures of universities, and the exercise of social power and professional autonomy within such an organisation.

2.6 Universities as organisations

The literature shows that there are particular features of HEIs which mark them out from many other types of organisation, such as multiple and competing missions, a wide array of stakeholders and a particular history of academic autonomy. As an organisation the HEI is not completely unique, but it is also “not completely the same as anything else” (Ruben and Gigliotti, 2017). It is evident from the literature that many HEIs within Europe, the United States and Australia share a number of common features; while the focus of the thesis is on the English HEI, these wider references are also used to provide the international context for the position in England.

2.6.1 The operating context for English HEIs

As described in Section 1.2, English HEIs operate in an increasingly competitive, resource-constrained and regulated external environment. Organisational form is dependent on a wide range of factors including history, strategic priorities, and the need to engage with external regulation to protect both reputation and, in the most extreme case, continued registration with the regulator. Each HEI must therefore determine the most appropriate balance between central authority and local flexibility to achieve the necessary outcomes.

The context is important, as it has played an important role in shaping organisational priorities and will have influenced some decisions about organisational form. Alongside their traditional priority of the creation and dissemination of knowledge, English HEIs have had to navigate a changing political context with an increasing focus on competition and efficiency. National

policy since at least the late 1980s in the UK has prioritised the adoption and implementation of free market or neoliberal principles across a wide range of public services, based on a belief that private sector management models will make services more businesslike and hence more efficient (for instance see Hood, 1990; Olssen and Peters, 2005). National policy frameworks which encourage greater market competition within the public services have included higher education policy (Marginson, 2011a; Marginson, 2011b). Naidoo and Williams (2015) suggest that increased marketisation in higher education is a widespread governmental response to growing and increasingly complex systems, following the logic that increased competition will improve both efficiency and effectiveness; therefore this has become an international trend (Lomer, Papatsiba and Naidoo, 2016). Indeed, Jones and Young (2004) suggest that governments tend to see market forces as a natural solution to the challenges facing higher education (see also Neave, 2004). Competition has been "fetishised", to the extent that policy development is "trapped in a kind of magical thinking which results in the belief that competition will provide the solution to all the unsolved problems of higher education" (Naidoo, 2018, p.3).

At the same time, governments internationally have sought to align their significant investment in higher education with greater regulatory control, especially as participation numbers have grown (Bleiklie et al, 2017; Anderson, 2016; Brown and Bekhradnia, 2013). In many countries, this has been achieved through indirect means: policies or funding opportunities have been introduced which encourage particular modes of behaviour or organisational priorities, while respecting and even explicitly endorsing the formal autonomy of the HEI (Naidoo, 2008; Jayasuriya, 2014 and 2015; Bleiklie et al, 2011; Brennan, 2008).

The regulatory changes in England since 2010 have been among the most dramatic. As discussed in section 1.2, both government policy and sector regulation has placed increasing emphasis on competition (with the intention that this should enhance the quality of education); a declining unit of resource; and compliance with an increasing range of national and sector-specific policies and regulations. The higher education environment in England has thus become a more complex and demanding space. The regulatory regime has been strengthened, but equally a number of measures have been introduced which effectively require action of

institutions to build ‘capital’ (Bourdieu, 1993) to maintain their position within the market, be that through league table position or something more nebulous, such as prestige (Naidoo, 2016; see also Brown, 2018; Paradeise and Thoenig, 2013), or based on their own strategic imperatives, which may be focused on national, regional or even local factors. There is an additional challenge affecting HEIs, which is the society in which they operate and from which they cannot be entirely divorced. Higher education is positioned within an overall societal model of greater flexibility and change (Whitchurch and Harvey, 2015; see also Timms and Heimans, 2018). The shifting nature of the external environment, and the greater democratisation of many walks of life brought about by the rise of new technologies and, in particular, social media, must necessarily impact on the staff who work in these organisations, as well as their students (Heymann, 2018).

2.6.2 HEIs as loosely-coupled organisations

HEIs are often described as loosely-coupled (see for example De Boer, Enders and Leisyte, 2007; Bleiklie, Enders and Lepori, 2015): that is, they are made up of distinct units which interact, but are not individually affected by this interaction. It was Weick (1976) who suggested that this might be a useful way of describing HEIs, which may have very limited central control or directive strategy, echoing the divisionalised form described by Mintzberg (1980). Individual divisions – in higher education, academic faculties or schools – have historically had a level of autonomy in their activities, within broad parameters or against performance targets set and monitored by the centre. This state of affairs could be characterised as “an entity of differentiated components whose actions are reflections of power dynamics” (Paradeise and Thoenig, 2013, p.196).

This form of loose coupling, which can provide for greater flexibility of operation and facilitates adaptation to local circumstances, offers space for ‘self-determination’, which is likely to be welcomed by academic staff who strongly value their autonomy (widely reported in the literature, for instance Calhoun, 2009). In addition, coordination can be a resource-intensive process, and it is therefore cheaper to manage without tighter coupling unless it is necessary

(Weick, 1976); that point remains valid, although the "cost" may have changed significantly in the last fifty years.

For an HEI to respond effectively to the demands of significantly increased competition for staff and students, tighter regulatory control, and incentives for certain behaviours, tighter organisational control is at least desirable, and possibly essential. The loosely-coupled organisation presents a risk; divisions may be too remote from the centre, and too independent in their actions, to enable the HEI to respond effectively to changing expectations – there is little chance of collective action in the loosely-coupled organisation (De Boer, Enders and Leisyte, 2007). The HEI thus exemplifies the dichotomy described by Eisenhardt, Furr and Bingham (2010), with pressure to operate as a professional bureaucracy, with centralisation of authority, in response to regulatory demands; but equally, pressure towards a divisionalised form, which responds to the complex environment by creating a flexible structure which permits everyone to deliver according to local needs, as well as meeting local expectations of academic freedom. Commentators have suggested that the rapid changes in the operating environment mean that new structures and leadership models are required within contemporary HEIs (Conway, 2013 and Graham, 2013).

For HEIs, there is an additional challenge that academic staff, in particular, may feel a greater loyalty to their subject discipline than to their employer and thus resist attempts at organisational change (Deem, 2004; Watson, 2009), engaging only superficially with central demands (King, 2011). For an HEI which requires a whole-organisation approach (for example, in response to national regulatory requirements, or to maximise its response to forms of audit, or even just in terms of managing its reputation globally), it is inevitable that there will be pressures to bring the divisions closer to the centre, and manage them more closely – the "strengthened steering core" described by Clark (1998, 2004). For this to be successful, the steering core has to comprise a team, with the centre working with academic departments (Clark, 2001). "University reform agendas are aiming at enhancing…organisational hierarchy, through introducing or strengthening organisational central authority that steers the actions of the organisational staff members and strongly improves the internal coordination and control features of university governance (Maasen and Stensaker, 2019, p.459). Where it can be achieved, coordination is

preferable as it more likely to encourage honesty and shared accountability, whereas: “An attempt by the king to squeeze the last surplus out of the kingdom for his own use will induce his subjects to hide their gold rather than invest it and to shirk rather than work productively to produce revenue that the king will only take away” (Miller, 1992, cited in De Boer, 2002, p.47).

An HEI is too large and complex to operate as a simple structure (Mintzberg, 1980); and in practice, “the overt use of command and control justified solely by hierarchical position is rare” (Bleiklie, Enders and Lapori, 2015, p.889). Organisational structure is rarely simply imposed (Hyman, 1987). In addition, not all HEIs are the same – they have different priorities and different structures, as well as different histories and path-dependencies (Cooper et al, 1996). Working within the framework of New Institutional Theory, Shields and Watermeyer (2020) identify three different types of ‘organisational logic’ which are prevalent in UK universities, seeing them respectively as the site of autonomous intellectual enquiry, as agents in the knowledge economy, or as hierarchical, bureaucratic and competitive organizations (p.5). Berg and Pinheiro comment that organisations may change their priority logic, for example in response to the changing external environment; but even where they do so, organisations often tend towards logic coexistence rather than logic replacement (2016). Greenwood et al (2011) demonstrate that organisations are able to persist for some considerable time with what they call “competing logics”, without this necessarily harming the overall organisational project – even where these logics are incompatible (see also Kodeih and Greenwood, 2014; Kleimann, 2019), which may involve a degree of “organisational hypocrisy” (Reed, 1991, p.560). At a local level, staff will prioritise their academic freedom as they understand it, regardless of organisational direction (Calhoun, 2009), but this may not damage the HEI’s overarching policy. It is worth noting that in Mintzberg’s divisionalised form, the divisions themselves are expected to be muchly more tightly coupled internally (a professional bureaucracy), despite their looser coupling to the centre. This might not meet the expectations of academic staff who value their autonomy; where the instruction comes from may not be the most significant factor. It should also be recognised that many coordinated activities do still take place within an HEI which is proud of its loose-coupling. Lutz suggests that academia is “not so fragile” (1982., p.668) and that tighter coupling would not necessarily harm the project, although he was writing in 1982, and it may be that the changes in the last 40 years would moderate this opinion.

2.6.3 Typologies of HEIs

The existing literature offers several attempts to categorise HEIs into types. For example, Paradeise and Thoenig have developed a model which outlies four broad types of HEI, based on the twin axes of reputation, and focus on league table position. They categorise these as Top of the pile, Wannabes, Venerables and Missionaries (2013, p.198), but go on to describe them in terms of internal management structures. Top of the pile HEIs are highly decentralised and encourage autonomous decision-making, but within a shared and strongly-held set of values. The Wannabes are highly centralised, with strong internal leadership and hence very limited autonomy. The Venerables prize collegiality at any cost among academic staff, and there is very limited hierarchical control (although the status of academics as superior to professional services is sacrosanct). Finally, the Missionaries also have only a weak hierarchical structure, but exhibit a "juxtaposition of specialist silos" (p.207), and operate almost as an organised anarchy. No HEI will represent a perfect example of its type, but one configuration will be dominant in most cases. In a subsequent paper, Thoenig and Paradeise re-state these categories and acknowledge that national policies tend to view one model as the benchmark, whereas they may be more successful if they took account of the full range of categories (2016, p.321; see also Stensaker et al, 2019.)

Drori, Delmestri and Oberg (2016) suggest a different typology, based on the social role of the University, but that offers a less promising approach for this thesis as there is no obvious link between the social role of the University and its organisational structure – hence the operation of social power and autonomy which are the focus of this study.

Barbato, Fumasoli and Turri (2019, p.4) offer a typology based on the twin axes of 'centralisation' and 'formalisation' (which equates to hierarchy and the role to which managers – as opposed to individual actors – make decisions). They note further variables in terms of institutional size (smaller organisations find it easier to balance the competing pressures) and identity (historical factors and subject mix can affect decision-making). Their final variable relates to geographic location, but is of less relevance to this study. Strategic positioning will be

affected by internal organisational structures and procedures, but also by “informal practices, routines, of sense-making processes” (ibid., p.13), which again indicates the potential for the use of referent power by any actor in an organisation.

The models of organisational types in both sections 2.3 and 2.5 can be synthesised into one diagram (Figure 2) which combines the key features of each, based on the extent to which they operate hierarchically, and centralise their operations.

Fig. 2: Exploratory typology of HEIs as organisations

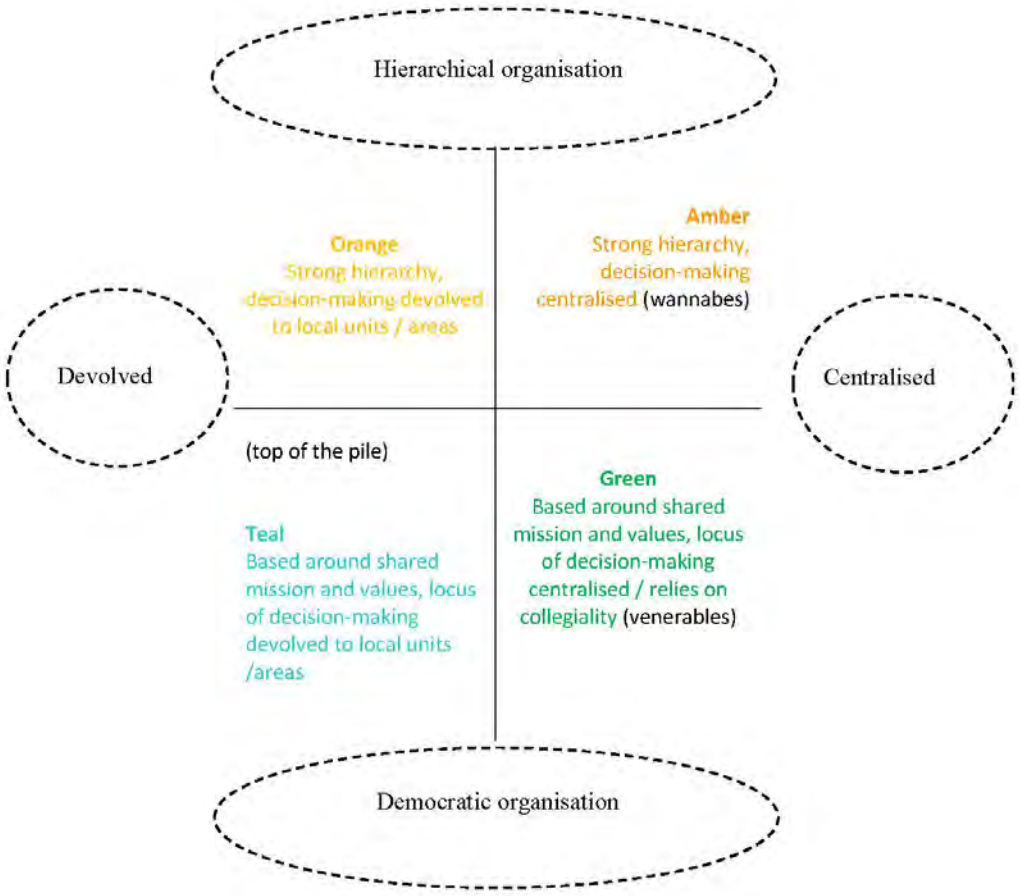


Figure 2 follows Barbato, Fumasoli and Turri (2019) in using the axes of hierarchy and centralisation, which are two defining features of organisational structure. This creates four broad quadrants. The ‘types’ identified by previous researchers can be mapped quite effectively into this diagram, which creates an exploratory typology of HEIs as organisations. The top-right

quadrant reflects organisations which have strong hierarchical control, and centralised decision-making. This corresponds to either the machine bureaucracy or the professional bureaucracy described by Mintzberg (1980); the Wannabes described by Paradeise and Thoenig (2013); and the Amber organisation described by Laloux (2014). (The distinction between the two categories described by Mintzberg is likely to depend on scale; in both the machine and professional bureaucracy, standards are determined centrally, but the professional bureaucracy devolves oversight – not, crucially for this model, decision-making). The top-left quadrant also has strong hierarchical control, but decision-making is devolved. In Mintzberg's model this represents the divisionalised form; and Laloux would describe it as Orange. None of the four types identified by Paradise and Thoenig neatly fit this category. The bottom-right quadrant, which has centralised decision-making but is democratic rather than hierarchal, based around shared values, could be a simple structure as described by Mintzberg. The focus on collegiality reflects the Venerables described by Paradeise and Thoenig, although it should be noted that the Venerables might also be described as devolved: there is an emphasis on consensus and collegiality, but individuals (not faculties) may still take decisions which are unrelated to any sense of overall organisational strategy. As a co-operative, it would be described as Green by Laloux. Finally, in the bottom-left quadrant are organisations which have both a devolved structure, and a democratic approach to decision-making. For Mintzberg, this could be another version of the divisionalised form in which the control mechanisms are much weaker. It reflects the Top of the pile organisations described by Paradeise and Thoenig; and for Laloux, this would be a Teal organisation. As no HEI will be a perfect exemplar, some judgement has to be made in identifying the quadrant in which they belong (and their precise location within this quadrant). There are also some types which are not represented. For example, the Missionaries described by Paradeise and Thoenig are omitted as they are neither hierarchical nor democratic, but are in a sense more chaotic; individual actors have certain freedoms, but their actions are not necessarily aligned to organisational values or a shared sense of the HEI.

2.6.4 The introduction of tighter coupling within HEIs

Twenty years ago, both Lauwerys (2002) (then Registrar at the University of Southampton) and Salter and Tapper (2002) predicted that professional services staff would become increasingly important to universities, given the range of demands being made of them as organisations, and the need for more centralised management to improve internal coordination and control (Barber, 2007). The prediction was accurate; an increasing number of professional services managers were recruited over the following decade (Hogan, 2011) and this continued to a high-point in 2018/19, although numbers have fallen slightly in subsequent years[5]. This would suggest an attempt to move the HEI towards the right-hand half of Figure 2: to bring about tighter coupling, and greater central control.

All organisational actors are subject to internal rationality and rules which reduce the level of flexibility actually in play (March, 1991). This highlights what Michel (2011) calls one of the "knowledge economy's great paradoxes", namely that "knowledge workers perceive their effort as autonomous despite evidence that it is under organizational control" (p.325) and how "unobtrusive controls regulate behaviour" (p.355) (see also Lukes, 2005). Ricard (2020) defines a knowledge worker as someone who "'thinks' for a living instead of performing physical tasks", and derives value from their knowledge; and by this definition, many staff working in HEIs, both as academics and as professional service managers, would qualify as knowledge workers. Thus, it is important to consider the ways in which organisational control affects the ways in which actors operate. The locus of authority, and the extent to which individual actors have professional autonomy, will be determined or at least strongly influenced by organisational type and the extent to which the HEI centralises authority, and / or operates a hierarchical decision-making model. As described in Figure 1 (section 2.5 above), in hierarchical HEIs, an actor with very limited autonomy may still gain social power and hence authority through the relationships they are able to build.

Increasingly, staff within English HEIs have been appointed to roles which might be considered "hybrid": professionals who "undertake an interpretive function between the various

[5] Source: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff/working-in-he#acempfun

communities of the university and its external partners" (Whitchurch, 2004, p.280), but equally who may be working in roles demanding specialist higher education expertise and judgement. Typical roles in higher education have changed, as HEIs respond to external demands (including quality management, learning development, human resource development and research management, to give some obvious examples). Not all staff working in the professional services have an equal responsibility for the greater coordination of University activity; many continue to work solely within their functional area. However, there is an increasing body of higher education staff with a hybrid function (Baltaru, 2019). Whitchurch (2008) was the first to adopt the terminology of third-space professionals for these roles, and the next section of the chapter considers the typical characteristics of a third-space professional and the context into which they have been appointed in English HEIs, leading on to describe the role they now play.

2.7 Third space professionals

2.7.1 Introduction to the third space

The term 'third space' has been used in a variety of contexts to describe an environment where apparently distinct roles come together, moving beyond historic binaries and strict categories to create a hybrid 'other' (Soja, 2003). Boundaries, and identity, are contested and renegotiated; the third space is built on hybridity and diversity (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López and Tejeda, 1999). It is characterised as "a rebuttal or corrective to regulating, rigid views and suggests that identity is a complex, ambivalent, negotiable, and somewhat contested space where polarities do not apply" (English, 2005, p.87). It can be a challenging space, where individuals do not have a sense of belonging within a particular team, but it can also be positive as it provides the chance to form new hybrid identities (Fronek and Chester, 2016), who can hold influence across "multiple organisational realms and could become key players in the development of an organisation", and work across the differing institutional logics (Ackesjo et al, 2019, p.896). The concept of third space can be used for any environment where diversity is welcomed (O'Meara et al, 2018), and for example was identified as a useful concept for Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in schools as they sought to form a new identity, as a hybrid group of subject specialists who were neither pure teacher nor pure administrator

(Fitzgerald and Radford, 2017). The third space works where its members believe in it, and are comfortable within that space, acknowledging the logics and practices of different professional identities to create something different (Routledge, 1996).

2.7.2 Definitions of third-space professionals

The concept of a third-space professional is not, of itself, tied to any particular organisational structure or logic, or any specific profession. Hybrid professionals who occupy a liminal space in the 'gaps' between existing professional groups (Croft, Currie and Lockett, 2015) are identified in the literature in a number of fields, including education, social work, healthcare and even the law, although in this latter case it is usually a temporary position (Gustafsson and Empson, 2018). Llewellyn (2001) describes these hybrid professionals as viewing the organisation through "two-way windows", seeing an issue from the perspective of each group and hence better able to identify a solution to complex interdisciplinary problems.

The definition of the third space is itself fluid (McIntosh and Nutt, 2022). It refers to "an in between space" between different knowledge and practice domains (Lock, 2022, p.94); as spaces are created by the boundaries around them, it may be more accurate to speak of third spaces in the plural (McIntosh and Nutt, 2022, p.80). The role played by the professional working in these spaces is similarly varied. Denney (2022) describes how third-space professionals might act as bridges – bringing different communities together and reducing the space between them – or as translators, who are able to understand and communicate effectively in different domain 'languages'. In so doing, they might create a new, distinct area of specialism. However, it is a feature of this definition that the individual must have some sense of agency; they are bringing about results which are more than simply the application of pre-existing rules (see section 2.4.1 above). A professional identity relies on both a body of expertise, and the ability to practise with autonomy (Cohen-Scali, 2003; Wiles, 2014). As such, genuine third space professionals must have a degree of professional autonomy and a freedom to make decisions. To be effective, they must also have sufficient power for those decisions to be translated into action. This may be legitimate position power (as an individual with the authority to implement the solution) or

expert power (as an individual who is recognised as holding superior knowledge), but they cannot merely be functionaries.

Simply operating within the third space is not sufficient to be considered a third space professional. For example, the nurse practitioner (NP) role in the United States was introduced to operate in the gap between registered nurse and qualified doctor (Weiland, 2015), and is sometimes described as operating in the third space, intentionally filling a gap between the two professions. However, actual levels of professional autonomy accorded to NPs vary significantly across states (Wang-Romjue, 2018). Those practising in isolated rural areas are likely to have greater prescriptive and practice autonomy (Spetz, Skillman and Andrilla, 2017), leading to higher job satisfaction. Other practitioners lack the most important aspect of professional autonomy: agency. This distinction, and the importance and extent of agency, is a key consideration when reviewing the role played by actors within higher education and whether they should legitimately be called third-space professionals or whether they would be better described as third space practitioners, recognised as operating between two existing fields of practice but nevertheless following prescribed rules and without the autonomy to generate new knowledge, and this is discussed in the following section.

2.7.3 Staffing structures within HEIs

Historically, staff working in higher education have been divided into two groups: academic faculty, and "the others", now used usually termed the "professional services" (Lauwerys, 2008, p.5) but previously described using a range of titles including "non-academics", "the administration" or "the general staff" (particularly in Australia). These terms are intended to cover the full range of staff who do not hold an academic contract, including administrative, technical, student services, Library and information, estates, catering and accommodation, and potentially others including learning developers. The relationship between these two groups is not always harmonious, with faculty often critical of the professional services, who are considered the key agents of centralisation (Dobson 2000, Dobson and Conway 2003, Greatrix 2014, Greatrix 2018a and 2018b, SRHE 2018).

The codification of national expectations in relation to quality management, as discussed in section 1.2.2, is one example of the changes which have required greater internal coordination within the HEI, and the evidence suggests that most academic staff do not feel comfortable with this increased centralisation (Harrison, 2018). Indeed, academics are more likely to believe that to deliver creativity "you need to accept an untidy structure, a certain amount of chaos and anarchy" (Becher and Trowler, 2001, p.204; see also Deem, 2004). (Deem had previously recognised that a level of anarchy might encourage risk-taking which was ultimately dangerous to the overall organisational endeavour, even though it might bring some benefits (Deem, 1998). Given the pace of change in the intervening years, it is hardly surprising that this sentiment has been reported in subsequent research, both in the UK and elsewhere in Europe (Magalhães et al, 2013; Stenseker and Vabo, 2013). In the UK, Kolsaker found that academic staff believed that they were losing power and were being deprofessionalised by the changes to institutional governance, even though the professional services staff considered themselves to be no more than "knowledgeable and skilled functionaries" (2014, p.136). Similarly, McGovern (2016, p.49) argues that there has been "a decisive move toward centralised, hierarchal, managerialist decision-making structures in UK universities"; interestingly, Carvalho and Videira, examining the Portuguese case, found that the introduction of revised expectations, a demand for greater efficiency, and the associated changes to governance had also left professional staff feeling that their autonomy had decreased (2019). A cautionary note is struck by Bleiklie et al (2011), who note that this argument is too simplistic: increased centralisation may only be one contributory factor in the "reconfiguration of academic power" (p.26). Nevertheless, this does not fundamentally challenge the fact that the balance of authority has been reconfigured, and that most academic staff believe that they now have less than previously. Indeed, Erickson, Hanna and Walker (2020) suggest that while many academic staff in the UK appear to have accepted the new accountability framework, they do object to "central, all-powerful bureaucrats" and morale, always low, has now reached a level which may have serious consequences for staff mental health.

Academic staff may feel further removed from the key decision-making processes and that this has reduced their legitimate position power. However, there was never a golden age where all members of the academic faculty were closely involved in strategic decision-making

(Macfarlane, 2015; Gornitzka, Maassen and de Boer, 2017; Carvalho and Videira, 2019; Shattock, 2017). “Let us not fool ourselves about the glories of collegiality in traditional universities” (Clark, 2001, p.18; see also Deem, Hillyard and Reid, 2007). Watson asks who runs the University, concluding that the “bottom line is that universities are quintessentially membership organisations”; the members have their own demands, and “it is the duty of university governance, leadership and management to analyse, adjudicate and steer through such choppy waters” (Watson, 2012, p.45). Historically, by far the most important members were academic faculty, but not all academic staff were members of the senate, which tended to be dominated by professors (Lapworth, 2004); more recently, senior academic bodies have been likely to include some professionals with management responsibility for relevant operational areas (such as quality, or research). “Self-governance of scholars, by scholars, for scholars is no longer enough” (Taylor, 2013, p.91). While it is obvious that organisations may change over time, in response to their operating environment, it seems that in the case of the English HEI there has been insufficient habituation: to use Tuchman’s metaphor, the frog can tell that the water is heating up (Tuchman, 2009, p.202; on speed of change in organisational identity, see Corley, Gioia and Nag, 2011; and Calhoun, Starbuck and Abrahamson, 2011). Enders and Naidoo (2022) highlight the appointment of staff in a variety of areas, including quality management in education, in direct response to changes to the operating context. They use the term ‘new professionals’ for these staff, and recognise that at least some of these new professionals can be seen to operate in a hybrid third space. The next section discusses the concept of the third space within higher education in greater detail.

2.7.4 Third space professionals within higher education

When used in higher education, ‘third space’ is used as an umbrella term to describe those staff who are appointed to roles which span the two historic banks of the HEI river, between the purely academic and purely administrative / technical (or “non-academic”). This may include those who are responsible for policy or the interpretation of regulation, but also those working in areas such as learning development, or curriculum management. As such it is distinct from both academic and traditional professional services and can be considered a category in its own right (Blum and McHugh, 1971).

The rise in appointments of third space professionals within higher education was discussed extensively by Celia Whitchurch in the early part of this century. Typical roles in higher education were changing, and the boundaries between faculty and professional services were becoming more permeable (Whitchurch, 2004 and 2006); the professional services were no longer the 'academic civil service' as they had been described in previous decades (Whitchurch, 2006, p.160) or 'docile clerks' (Scott, 1995, cited by Whitchurch, 2004, p.284). These appointments were responding to an expectation that the successful HEI of the future may focus more strongly on relationships than structure (Veles and Carter, 2016). New ways of working would be required for the new context (Veles, Carter and Boon, 2019) which would meet the needs of both managers, and desire for collegiality (Bacon, 2009) – breaking down the false dualisms of 'collegiality / management' and 'academic / non-academic' outlined by Macfarlane (2015). As described above in section 2.6.2, it is for each HEI to determine how much third-space practitioner autonomy can be tolerated, and the degree of the resultant distributed leadership with which it is comfortable (Jones, Harvey and Lefoe, 2014).

HEIs have seen it as imperative "to professionalise the roles which are central to the realization (sic) of the modern-day multiversity" (Knight and Senior, 2017); to appoint someone to understand the steering calls from government or regulators, and translate them into action at institutional or local level. New appointments have been made, or existing roles converted, to establish a group of professionals working in the third space, often to tighten the links between parts of the organisation; employed by and working ostensibly for the centre, but with the academic staff (see for example Middlehurst, 2013). The highly trained specialists described by Mintzberg are these third space professionals, who bring specific expertise to their role, rather than the traditional model whereby the academic staff were the experts, being served by a civil service (Whitchurch, 2006). The rise of third-space professionals marks a "shift from managers being gatekeepers of institutional knowledge to actively interpreting and creating new knowledge" (Rixom, 2011, p.23). The creation of new knowledge – actively operating as a translator of demands, or a bridge between areas of knowledge – is a crucial part of the definition of the third-space professional (Zahir, 2010). Recent literature discusses other potential examples of third-space activity, for example within international student services

centres (Castiello-Gutiérrez et al, 2020), and academic libraries (Berkovich and Wasserman, 2019).

The change is not limited to those working in professional roles. Macfarlane has described the rise of the 'para-academic' who specialises in one specific area of academic, or academic-related, work – and may come from an academic or a professional services background – (Macfarlane, 2011), but no longer fits the traditional identity of an academic as a researcher with some teaching commitments (Whitchurch, 2019). The whimsical image of HEIs as portrayed in *Brideshead Revisited* has long since been overtaken (Watson, 2009, p.6). Indeed, Dowd and Kaplan ask whether academics are "Rapunzels trapped in the ivory tower, or are they wizards who have created a separate space to do their own work?" (2005, p.700). They refer to ''boundaryless'' academic staff who perceive freedoms rather than restrictions, and are committed to managing their own careers rather than relying on others to do this for them – a point echoed in three more recent studies (Watermeyer, 2015; Brew et al, 2018; Whitchurch, 2019).

Hogan (2011) explicitly notes the transfer of work from academic to professional services staff, as faculty in the UK come under pressure to deliver outcomes for various national assessments of performance (see also Deem and Brehony, 2005). He notes, in particular, the rise in regulatory compliance (especially in relation to quality assurance, as discussed in section 1.2.2, but also requirements such as Freedom of Information); the development of new income streams; and the transfer of decisions, as well of processing, of admissions. This rise in the number of professional services staff is not just a UK phenomenon, for international examples see Stensaker and Vabo, (2013); Carvalho and Videira, (2019); Moran and Misra, (2018); Dobson and Conway, (2003) and Beckman, (2017). Professor John Taylor, writing from a research-intensive University in the UK, notes that research, for example, does have to be managed, in some form – resources have to be distributed and selected projects supported, and preparations have to be made for the Research Excellence Framework (REF), even if the HEI does not introduce a highly directive research strategy (Taylor, 2006). HEIs might describe their activities in different ways, but all of them do in fact manage research, however they present this (see also Greenhalgh, 2013). In doing this, professional services staff might be seen as

exercising control over an academic priority (Enders and Nadioo, 2018; SRHE, 2018). Seyfried and Pohlenz, for example, describe universities where academics accuse quality management professionals of being "both a bureaucratic burden and an illegitimate interference from a central management… which holds too much managerial power in its hands in order to 'regulate and discipline academics'" (2018, p.259); these third space professionals are seen to have invaded the "secret garden" of the life of the individual academic (Shattock, 2017, p.390).

Not all professional roles within HE can be described as third space. These are explicitly roles which "undertake quasi-academic functions" (Whitchurch, 2008a, p.379); Enders and Naidoo identify as exemplars those staff who work in decision-making roles within educational enhancement, academic and student services, teaching and learning services, and quality assurance (2018). Staff in research management roles might be added to this list (Swijghuisen Reigersberg, 2022). Each of these would historically have been fields where academic staff were the key actors. Other professional services roles fall outside the scope of the third space. Those specialists who perform a function which is part of a profession in its own right – human resources and finance being the most obvious – are on the administrative bank of the river. Moran and Misra (2018, p.79) quote an employee saying, "I don't see myself as a higher education anything. I see myself as a HR professional who manages the employee life cycle. It's as simple as that". Specialists may not identify with the third space, and may view their professional identity as lying outside higher education. In contrast, third space professionals are generally based in areas where their competence is not certified or credentialised by an external body, and their expertise is likely to be learned 'on the job' within higher education. Examples include those working in general school or faculty administration, or centrally in a Registry or quality assurance environment, as well as those in learning development or learning technology roles (see White, White and Borthwick, 2021). However, third space professionals often become specialists in their own right, with expertise in a complex area of work – they are not just "interchangeable extras from 'Universal Casting'" (Graham and Regan, 2016, p.601). Manoharan describes the importance of these staff being 'polymaths' who are skilled at "creating connections between specialist areas, building common understanding and driving inter-disciplinary solutions" (2020, p.57). To do so, they need to become "fluent in multiple expert languages" (ibid.).

Whitchurch describes three categories of third space professionals (2009), noting that the concept may reflect how staff interpret their roles, and not just their formal job descriptions (2007 and 2008b): *cross-boundary, unbounded* and *blended professionals*. The categories are inevitably more fluid in practice (Birds, 2015), but the typology can be useful to describe the roles which are undertaken. For the purposes of this study, the most relevant are the *cross-boundary professionals*, who negotiate their job role across the different territories of the workplace; and *unbounded professionals*, who effectively disregard boundaries and operate in a space where they are constantly negotiating and redefining the rules (Whitchurch, 2010). Whitchurch describes the unbounded professionals as being comfortable with ambiguity, and constructing their own networks to deliver added value (Whitchurch, 2009; see also Vabo, 2013). The third category, the *blended professionals*, are usually working in dedicated project roles, and hence are not the subject of this study. Baltaru (2022) uses the concept of 'borderlessness' to refer to both academic and non-academic professionals appointed to senior roles within the HEI, discussing how the boundaries between these fields of work are no longer distinct, but this categorisation is too wide for this thesis, which is focused specifically on those working within the third space.

It has proved difficult for third space professionals to gain legitimacy or credibility with academic staff; they may be viewed as "traffic wardens" (Szekeres, 2011, p.689). Enders and Naidoo express the point more forcefully, suggesting that new professionals might be seen as "helpful service staff or part of a bothersome bureaucracy; a hybrid logic creating third spaces beyond the traditional academic–administrative divide; or a managerialist logic undermining traditional academic values and powers" (2022, p.96). This brings an additional challenge for someone appointed to the third space. They are required to take account of two (or more) bodies of knowledge – of the HEI, and of their specialism – and need to do so to be effective in their role. In consequence, they cannot operate with the 'authority' of either knowledge base, as this may not be accepted by the other. To establish credibility, and achieve success in the role, they will need to deploy at least one base of social power. As with the nurse practitioner discussed above (section 2.7.2), this may also depend on the way in which their position in the organisation is subject to managerial authority (Muzio and Kirkpatrick, 2011). The challenge is

therefore to develop authority which enables the deployment of professional autonomy and avoids the risk of being marginalised by their position in between disciplines of knowledge.

There are many instances where third space professionals appear to be effective in working with academic colleagues (Whitchurch, 2007; King, 2011). There is often considerable goodwill for individual, named professional service staff, even when the professional services as a whole are denigrated (Gray, 2015; Hogan, 2011; Watson, 2009), but one should be mindful of Weick's advice that there is a tendency to over-rationalise, and to attribute greater meaning, predictability and coupling than is actually present (Weick, 1976). It is interesting to note that academic staff in institutions with higher levels of research funding tend to view their institution as autonomous (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020) but are most likely to think of third space professionals as "audit-market intermediaries" (Enders and Naidoo, 2018) who reduce the autonomy of the individual of the academic. For all the criticism levelled by academic staff about increased managerial control, or the appointment of staff who may have power over what were once considered purely academic matters, no viable alternative has been presented "that would balance the sanctity of academic freedom and self-governance against the rigorous demands of institutional governance in a higher education system where public funding is becoming increasingly scarce and contingent and the global sector has become a competitive marketplace" (Gray, 2015, p.547).

More recent research has concentrated on the backgrounds or motivations of those who work in these third space, or their career trajectories – actual or potential (e.g. Whitchurch 2013 and 2019). There has been little attention given to the professional autonomy which is held by third-space professionals working within higher education, and the bases of social power on which they draw. A recent anthology (McIntosh and Nutt, 2022) offers contributors the opportunity to provide individual narrative case studies in which they reflect on their practice and impact, with a strong focus on identity, but the theoretical space in which this activity takes place is not considered in depth. Individual practitioners describe their own experiences, supported by synthesis from the editors, but there is no consideration of the reasons for differences in the deployment of professional autonomy, or how this may be shaped by organisational structure. There is similarly no discussion of the bases of social power which are available to be deployed.

This thesis is particularly concerned to address this gap in the literature. It seeks to explore the role which Heads of Quality, as a specific group of third professionals, play within HEIs, the ways in which they deploy professional autonomy, and the bases of power available to them to be effective in their roles. It also considers the significance, or otherwise, of organisational structure and how this may influence the work of the third-space professional. As regulation by the Office for Students is increasingly focused on compliance with certain conditions, and the Head of Quality has a responsibility for responding to some of these conditions, the role is increasingly critical within HEIs. How Heads of Quality carry out this function is thus an important subject for exploration.

2.8 Heads of Quality as third space professionals

By definition, third space professionals take responsibility for making the decisions which others have to abide by (Kolsaker, 2014; Watermeyer and Olssen, 2016); they enjoy a reasonable level of professional autonomy, which is part of the definition of being a professional expert as opposed to a powerless functionary (McInnis, 1998, p.170). Indeed, Ryttberg and Geschwind suggest that these staff "might not strive for too many scripts in their roles" so that they can retain freedom to shape these for themselves (2019, p.1072). As discussed in section 2.7.4, the designation of third space practitioner can be applied to a range of roles within the HEI; it identifies those whose role sits "between" the purely academic and the administrative or technical. The focus of this thesis is on the role of the Head of Quality. As discussed in section 1.2, the Head of Quality is playing an increasingly important role within the English HEI in response to the new regulatory framework introduced by the Office for Students, but there has been little consideration of this group, and the role that they play within their organisations.

2.8.1 The role of the Head of Quality

The Head of Quality holds organisational responsibility for understanding the national quality assurance framework and infrastructure, how it is regulated and monitored, and for ensuring that their HEI responds effectively to these requirements. The significant changes to the national arrangements for quality assurance in England over the last twenty-five years have necessarily

resulted in a changed role for the Head of Quality, as discussed in section 1.2.2. Head of Quality might be an increasingly important role within the English HEI; but this is an arena which is contested. Heads of Quality are contributing to – and in some cases have sole responsibility for making – decisions which were once considered the sole preserve of the academic; "experts, not machines" are required to make the necessary judgements (King and Brennan, 2018), but in taking on this responsibility, Heads of Quality have invaded the "secret garden" of the life of the individual academic (Shattock, 2017, p.390).

The Head of Quality is not an academic role, although some postholders were previously members of academic staff; but the role is heavily involved in decision-making around matters of academic governance and will often need to make judgements about whether (for example) institutional practice meets national expectations. The postholder needs the specialist knowledge of these expectations, and to translate these into local practice which takes account of the demands of different subject disciplines (which may vary, in part in response to the requirements of different professional bodies) (Zahir, 2010). Heads of Quality hold a clear, specialist higher education identity, acting as a translator and potentially as a bridge between internal actors (Denney, 2022); and to be effective, they will require a level of professional autonomy to develop and implement internal policy (Wiles, 2014). As such, they meet the definition of third-space professionals.

2.8.2 Use of professional autonomy and bases of power by Heads of Quality

The role of the Head of Quality, then, may be challenged by academics; the charges laid against professional managers (see Section 2.7.3 above) are made equally against quality management professionals. Seyfried and Reith (2019) discuss the "seven deadly sins" of quality management, listing common criticisms such as formalisation, standardisation, benchmarking, control and scrutiny. The Head of Quality can be seen as restricting academic control over areas which were once, indeed, their secret garden.

The Head of Quality is a reasonably senior role within an HEI; it is not usually a member of the senior management team, but the post holds an organisation-wide responsibility for delivery of

key priorities, and acts as the line manager for a team of professional staff. This accords them a certain degree of professional autonomy based on their position within the organisation, deploying legitimate position power. This is likely to be essential in a complex regulatory environment where expert judgement is required. However, there is currently insufficient understanding of the ways in which Heads of Quality deploy their professional autonomy, and whether this is shaped through the use of particular bases of power. The environment is dynamic; external requirements have been revised regularly over the last decade, making this expert judgement even more important, with a need to translate new expectations into action for the HEI. However, the autonomy to make judgements does not, in itself, result in action; that requires a further lever, and some form of social power to implement those judgements, sometimes in environments where their position may not readily be accepted by the academic community.

As discussed in section 2.3.2, legitimate position power is likely to be most effective in more hierarchical organisations. In a more democratic organisation, the scope of legitimate position power is reduced, although an element of hierarchy will remain in all organisations. Similarly, where an organisation has more limited central coordination and control, the authority of an actor within a central service such as quality management is necessarily reduced, and it will be necessary for them to deploy one of the softer bases of power – expert or referent – to deliver the outcomes envisaged by their job role.

Seyfried and Pohlenz (2018) found that some Heads of Quality did have autonomy to act and were supported in doing so by senior management, but that others reported that they were merely carrying out procedures over which they had no influence or control; and this latter group reported much lower levels of effectiveness in the role (with quality management seen as a 'toothless tiger' (ibid.,p.268). Perceived effectiveness was also enhanced through networking with other HEIs. Where both senior management support and external networking was absent, Heads of Quality lacked both effectiveness and autonomy. Seyfried and Pohlenz suggest that it is only the former group who can be considered to be working in the third space: bringing together different practices and identities to create new knowledge. Where this is not the case, and one specialist language is adopted and simply applied to other scenarios, it is at least

arguable that this is not an example of third space (and if it is simply the application of given rules, it does not meet the definition of professional autonomy). While the findings of Seyfried and Pohlenz's study are important, the authors did not seek to evaluate the organisational context or structures which might affect the levels of effectiveness as described.

Following Oliver (1991), Reith and Seyfried (2019) discuss how Heads of Quality perceive and manage resistance to their professional autonomy. They highlight the three possible strategies of compromise: balancing, pacifying and bargaining. Balancing is evident primarily in conflicts between external demands and internal interests; but it can also refer to a need to navigate internal structures, and it is interesting that the authors find that decentralised structures can be useful "because they relocate certain conflicts inside the departments" (p.85). Pacifying tactics involve engaging proactively with other organisational actors, typically by reference to external requirements, and potentially finding ways to address these while making the fewest possible demands on those academic staff who object. Bargaining overlaps somewhat with both balancing and pacifying, but refers to situations where the Head of Quality shows how they can reduce opportunity costs or otherwise assist local actors (pp.86-7). Heads of Quality "require some sort of dialogue and exchange of information, which is at least necessary for a strategy of compromise" (Reith and Seyfried, ibid., p.88), indicating again the importance of sense-making and the use of the softer bases of power – expert and referent – to deliver successful outcomes. If Heads of Quality seek to use bargaining, showing the mutual benefit which could accrue, this could be an example of the use of reward power, although in a comparatively weak sense.

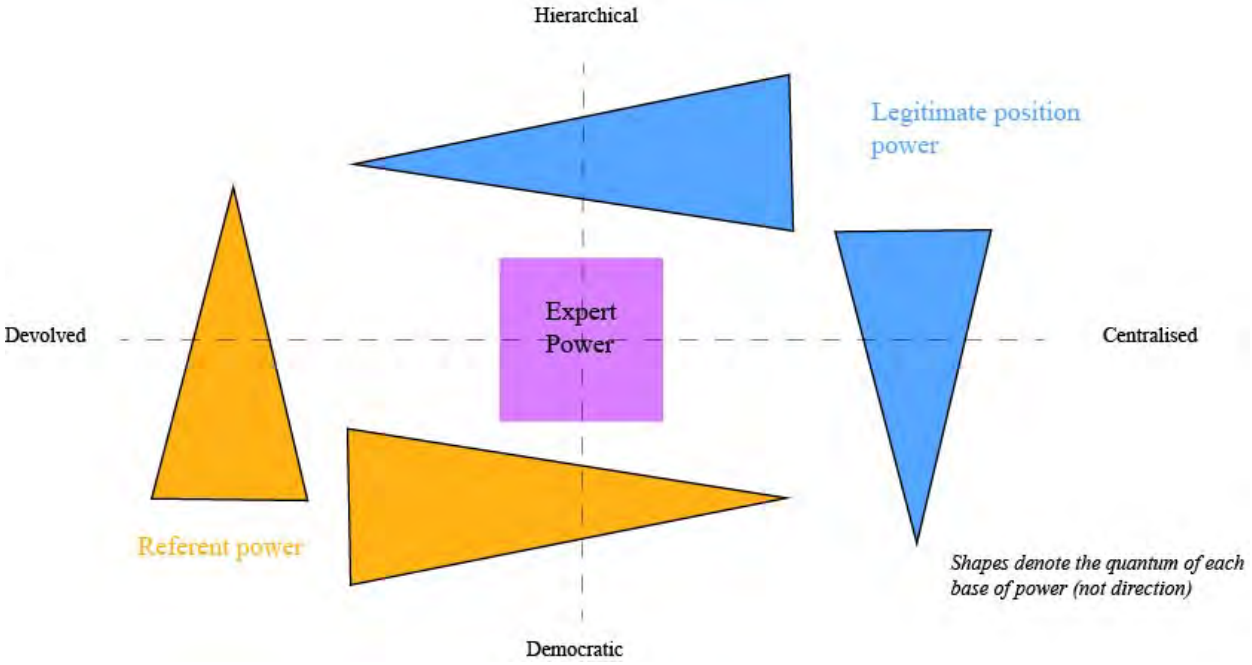
Reith and Seyfried suggest further research on conflict resolution in quality management, especially as Heads of Quality have "nothing to offer than more work and further restrictions on academic freedom" (p.87). However, apart from noting that balancing may benefit from devolved structures, they do not consider how internal structures may affect the approaches available to Heads of Quality, or why certain approaches are likely to be more effective. This is an important practice-led area for consideration.

2.9 Gaps in the current literature this study seeks to address

While there have been recent papers on quality management in German universities (e.g. Seyfried and Pohlenz, 2018; Seyfried and Reith, 2019 and 2021; Reith and Seyfried, 2019), research into the role of Heads of Quality as third space professionals within English HE is a subject on which research remains comparatively limited. From a theoretical perspective, this study has the potential to inform an understanding of the operation of professional autonomy for third space professionals within English higher education, whether this is achieved, and if so how. In addition, there are no studies which have sought to consider whether organisational structure affects the deployment of professional autonomy and the available bases of social power specifically within higher education. This is a gap which this study seeks to address. The study also has implications for professional practice, for both providers and prospective Heads of Quality, in seeking to understand how job roles which may appear similar (in terms of title and core expectations) may require very different skillsets and approaches.

Figure 1 (see Section 2.5) outlined the available bases of social power dependent on the strength of hierarchical control, and level of seniority within an organisation. Heads of Quality hold broadly similar levels of seniority, and they also work for a central service, which means that they are likely to have greater professional autonomy in a centralised organisation. The literature thus suggests the following model of the available bases of social power for Heads of Quality:

Fig. 3 Available bases of social power for Heads of Quality by organisational type



The diagram indicates the bases of social power which are most likely to be available for Heads of Quality within each organisational type. The quadrants are not mutually exclusive; organisations are rarely a perfect example of their type, and all Heads of Quality have access to some legitimate position power (based on seniority) and some referent power. The diagram however indicates the bases of power which are most likely to be prevalent in each case. Legitimate position power is most likely to be deployed in the centralised, hierarchical organisation. In a democratic, devolved organisation, referent power will be required to deliver successful outcomes. The top-left and bottom-right quadrants offer the opportunity to deploy both these bases of social power, but both are likely to be weaker (and hence both may be required to be successful). Expert power remains available in each of the quadrants, but it is likely to be highly context-specific. If job-crafting emerges, it is likely to be in situations where an actor is not successful in deploying these bases of power, and therefore seeks to find an alternative (or extended) internal locus of causality.

The research questions for this study reflect the gaps in the literature in relation to both social power, and the deployment of professional autonomy, as follows:

1. How does organisational structure affect the roles played by Heads of Quality, as third space professionals, and the bases of social power they deploy:
   1.1. in relation to the strength of hierarchical control;
   1.2. in relation to centralisation or devolution (of organisational structure).

2. How are Heads of Quality, as third space practitioners, professionally autonomous?
   2.1. Do Heads of Quality have autonomy over their decisions and actions? (Are they rule-makers or rule-takers? Is their judgement shaped through the wider influence of institutional values or power hierarchy, and how can they approach this most effectively?)
   2.2. How does professional autonomy interact with organisational structure in the role of Heads of Quality?

2.10 Conclusion

A review of the current literature has enabled the construction of the theoretical framework for this research project. This framework combines an understanding of the bases of social power and the situations in which they are most likely to be available to an actor; the nature of HEIs as organisations; and the concept of the third space within higher education in England. This provides the context in which Heads of Quality operate, and in which their professional autonomy is deployed.

The thesis seeks to investigate gaps in the literature in relation to the ways in which the role of the Head of Quality is affected by organisational structure (both levels of hierarchical control, and devolution of decision-making authority), and the bases of social power which might be used in response to these different structures. It also reflects on the deployment of professional autonomy by Heads of Quality, and whether organisational structure influences the type and level of autonomy they display.

The next chapter will discuss the research methodology for the thesis, explaining the empirical investigation which was undertaken, the decisions which were taken at each stage, and the reasons for these decisions to secure reliable and valid findings.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a rationale for a research methodology and design appropriate to answering the research questions posed at the end of Chapter Two. It first outlines the ontological and epistemological assumptions guiding the choice of methodology, then proceeds to explain the comparative case study research design, providing a detailed explanation of the method of sample selection; the choice and design of research instruments; and the process of data collection. It argues for an applied thematic analysis approach as consistent with these assumptions, noting the key features and benefits of such an approach, and then discusses both ethical considerations, and how reliability and validity will be assured.

3.2 Epistemological and ontological considerations

The study adopts a post-positivist stance, and a critical realist approach to ontology; that is to say, it accepts that knowledge is conjectural (Reichertz, 2014), and evidence may be fallible, but it seeks to use evidence to develop "relevant, true statements, ones that can serve to explain the situation of concern" (Creswell, 2009, pp.6-7). It recognises the importance of the personal understanding and interpretation of events and situations (see for instance Corbin and Strauss, 2015) and that each individual actor constructs meaning (Silverman, 2001). However, the critical realist approach was adopted because, while it acknowledges that epistemologically knowledge is fallible, it nevertheless holds that not all narratives are equally valid: that "something is going on out there and there may be better or worse ways of addressing things" (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007, p.1265) and that "the world does not tolerate all understandings of it equally" (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p.11). Critical realists accept that interpretation of the world is complex and that some facts may not always be evident; but they do not agree that all interpretations of the same reality are equally valid. Kirk and Miller give the example of someone who believes they can stop a speeding train with their bare hands; however genuine the belief, it is unlikely to be borne out if they act upon it. With reference to this project, the critical realist perspective accepts that an individual may believe that they have a high degree of professional autonomy, possibly including the authority to determine organisational policy or

practice, but similarly contends that this individual can be wrong. Triangulation, using evidence from other sources, might demonstrate that in fact an individual has very limited autonomy or authority, or that this is contingent on a number of other factors outside the control of the individual. While it may not be possible to quantify precisely the level of autonomy or authority an individual has, and while this may vary according to the specific situation, the validity of competing explanations is independent of the beliefs of the individual.

The critical realist acknowledges that our understanding of the world is imperfect, and that causation, in particular, may often be difficult or even impossible to determine. An event may have a number of causative factors, of varying strengths, and different interpretations of the causal weight are possible (Sayer, 1992). The "what" – what is happening – might be obvious, but the "why" or "how" is not directly observable, so relies on inductive reasoning and interpretation. The critical realist position was adopted for this study precisely because it holds that these interpretations are not all equally valid, and that 'something is going on out there' which can be understood and described, however imperfectly, with the recognition that any conclusion may be subject to revision as further evidence becomes available. Some interpretations may be shown to be inaccurate and, "however accuracy is construed, researchers don't want to be inaccurate" (Stake, 2005, p.453).

3.3 Methodological approach

The intention is to understand the types and levels of professional autonomy which Heads of Quality – as a type of third space professionals – hold within a complex organisation (an HEI), and what factors may affect this, including the way in which different bases of social power may be used in different organisational types. A mixed methods approach was adopted, whereby initial quantitative data collection and analysis was followed by a series of qualitative interviews. Mixed methods research is becoming increasingly common as an approach when responding to research questions which relate to social relationships (Morse, 2017). The use of explanatory sequential design (Ivankova, Creswell and Stick, 2006; Ivankova and Creswell, 2009), with the separate conduct and analysis of each step, reduces the force of the charge that combining qualitative and quantitative methods is illegitimate (the 'incompatibility thesis') because of their

different ontological and epistemological assumptions. The methods were selected as they were the most appropriate way of responding to the research questions (Doyle, Brady and Byrne, 2009).

The approach was to follow the Participant Selection Model of mixed methods design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; cited in Doyle, Brady and Byrne, 2009, p.181). The two methods were integrated through connecting (Fetters, Currey and Creswell, 2013; Klassen et al, 2012): using the quantitative data from the survey to identify participants for the qualitative stage. A purely quantitative approach would be inconsistent with the ontological stance of the study, it would rely on the responses of individuals, with no form of checking or triangulation to ensure that data is not reliant on one single observer (Noble and Heale, 2019). It could provide a 'snapshot' of what is happening, but would be unable to articulate how or why this is the case (Yin, 2018; Creswell, 2009). Qualitative methods are required to gain a deeper appreciation of behaviours, influences and authority, and to make aspects of the world visible (Gephart, 2004); they have the goal of making sense of complexity, and are characterised by a commitment to explain, discover and explore (Richards and Morse, 2012). Thus, the qualitative research elaborates on and explains the results from the quantitative element of the research (Migiro and Magangi, 2011) by yielding richer data, answering "questions that involve variables that are difficult to quantify (particularly human characteristics such as motivation, perception, and experience)" (Seaman, 2008, p.36). Primacy was therefore attached to the qualitative interview data, which had the greater weighting in this project (Creswell, 2009).

A qualitative approach is ideal for "situations for which there is limited theory and on problems without clear answers" ((Eisenhardt, Graebner and Sonenshein, 2016, p.1113), but it nevertheless requires the researcher to engage in thoughtful, rigorous reflection throughout the process of research design, data collection, and analysis. Verification in qualitative research can be achieved by checking phenomena against other indicators, potentially including other participants or even the same participants, asked different questions and/or at different times, and notes that these more interrogative data can also provide compelling evidence of the "rightness of the analysis" (Morse, 2017, p.1398).

A mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative survey with qualitative interview data, is appropriate for this study because it provides the opportunity to identify suitable cases, and then gain deeper insights into these cases. Through a deep understanding of these complex cases, it is possible to achieve what Lincoln and Guba (1986) refer to as trustworthiness, rather than seeking to secure generalisability through the numerical representation of a large sample size. The emerging theory must be coherent and logical, but must also meet the challenge of providing fresh insights (a "high bar") (Eisenhardt, Graebner and Sonenshein, 2016, p.1121).

The study was designed to be inductive; that is, to base its conclusions on observations of a sample of cases, aligned to the theoretical framework. "Induction observes individual parts of the unique diversity of the world and attempts to determine rules and laws to order its infinite manifestations" (Reichertz, 2014, p.130). One of the key points about qualitative research is that it is, in an important sense, open-ended; prior to the data collection, the researcher cannot be sure about what they will find and hence what the end-point will be (Bansal and Corley, 2012). Indeed, it is essential that the researcher does not pre-judge the outcomes, and is prepared to amend or even discard initial theories or concepts during the course of, or because of, the evidence which emerges (Reichertz, 2010).

3.4 Multiple case design

The research design was guided by the research questions and sub-questions, and the most appropriate means of securing the rich data required to answer them. It included considerations of researcher neutrality, and the need to produce reliable and valid data which would support conclusions which could contribute to knowledge in this field. As the intention was to conduct a cross-case thematic analysis based on Heads of Quality in representative HEIs, a comparative multiple case study approach was adopted (Hunziker and Blankenagel, 2021), which provides a strong base for building theory "because the propositions are more deeply grounded in varied empirical evidence" (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, p.27). Investigating a phenomenon through multiple cases provides a more insightful perspective (Cruzes et al, 2015): a deeper understanding of the common themes of social power and professional autonomy and the differences which may emerge in varied situations. Eisenhardt, a leading proponent of multiple

case design, recommends its use in cases where there is little pre-existing theory or evidence, noting the importance of careful case selection (2021). The approach to sample selection and to data collection instruments was informed by the requirement for rich but reliable data, with one case selected by survey data analysis from each of the organisational types identified through the literature review. As the research was focused on considering the impact of specific variables, a heuristic case study approach was adopted (George and Bennett, 2005). This enables the researcher to "explore, explain, describe, evaluate, and theorize about complex issues in context" (Harrison et al, 2017). There was also an element of pragmatism, in that the field was necessarily restricted to those who agreed in principle to participate. The final selection was therefore determined by a combination of academic requirements, and practical considerations.

In summary, a scoping survey was undertaken to identify possible exemplar cases, and from this a sample deemed to be representative of three different organisational types was identified. Semi-structured interviews were then held with the identified Heads of Quality, and with a representative group of their colleagues, to provide a rich data set for analysis. The following sections set out the process of sample selection, and of the choice and design of research instruments.

3.5 Sample selection

3.5.1 Approach to selecting the sample

The selection of institutional cases for analysis was careful (Eisenhardt, 2021) and purposive (Silverman, 2005),"based on their ability to illuminate and extend relationships among constructs or develop deeper understanding of processes" (Eisenhardt, Graebner and Sonenshein, 2016, p.1114); and to provide "the opportunity to shed some empirical light on some theoretical concepts or principles" (Yin, 2018, p.38).

The aim of the sampling strategy was to identify Heads of Quality who were working in HEIs which appeared to exemplify the four types of organisation which emerged from an initial analysis of the literature (see Figure 2, section 2.6.3). Ideally, one would select a paradigmatic

or typical case for each type (Suri, 2011), but these cannot be identified in advance (Flyvberg, 2011) and the study therefore adopted segmented case sampling. A high-level scoping survey was selected as the means to identify candidate cases to create this sample; it was recognised that the responses to the survey questions might also inform the interview questions, but the primary purpose was sample selection.

The scoping survey for case selection was carried out online, since it is the simplest and least resource-intensive way of securing high-level data from a large group which is geographically dispersed, making face-to-face or telephone interviews impractical. Especially where respondents are known to be regular email and internet users, this method of data collection makes comparatively few demands of the respondent group. Even so, the use of internet surveys is not unproblematic. The researcher has limited control over who will respond to the survey invitation; whether they will answer all the questions and complete the survey; and the extent to which the respondent is concentrating fully on the survey and not distracted (Vehovar, Manfreda and Koren, 2012). There may also be issues with the design of the survey: respondents may be more likely to select the first answer, especially in a drop-down list, and it is important that any scale is balanced (with a similar number of possible answers either side of the neutral point).

To address these potential concerns, the scoping survey questionnaire was short; after initial categorical questions to secure participant information, there were seven questions using a Likert or Ranking scale, followed by one open-ended question which provided respondents with an opportunity to provide any further reflections on the research topic (see appendices 1 and 2). The questions were constructed using the theoretical framework with the expectation that the responses would enable institutions to be categorised against the theoretical typology (discussed in detail below). Keeping the survey short was expected to reduce the risk of drop-out (Best and Harrison, 2013).

In the pilot questionnaire (see below), a 4-point Likert scale was used, with two positive and two negative answers. As well as removing the neutral option (which was later included in the final version) this reduces the demands made of respondents, as it requires less reflection than five or more points in the scale; and it also increases the comparability of responses as answers are more

likely to be clustered (Fink, 2011a). The survey closed with one open question which offered the opportunity to add any further information a respondent considered was relevant; with one final option asking whether the respondent would be willing for their HEI to be included as a possible site for interviews. The open question reduces the risk that researcher-bias overly influences the answers, and leaves respondents free to mention topics or ideas which have not previously been discussed (Fink, 2011b).

3.5.2 Pilot survey (PS)

The survey was piloted with colleagues at Welsh and Scottish institutions, who work within many of the same parameters as their English colleagues, but who are subject to different regulatory frameworks and were thus outside the scope of the main study. The questionnaire used for the pilot survey is provided as Appendix 1. The initial categorical questions focused on the role held by the respondent, to ensure a degree of comparability when identifying cases. These were followed by three questions (PS7-9) related to professional autonomy; and four questions (PS10-13) related to organisational type. The final question in the main questionnaire was an open-ended opportunity to provide any additional information which was not captured in the foregoing. Respondents were then asked a further three questions about the clarity of the questions and ease of completion, again with a final open-ended question for further comment.

The pilot survey feedback enabled the questionnaire to be refined prior to its circulation to English colleagues (Yin, 2018). One important change was the decision to include a neutral answer ("neither agree nor disagree") in the final survey. It had originally been decided not to include this option so that respondents were encouraged to select a 'best-fit' answer, acknowledging that experience is rarely one-dimensional and that the neutral answer might therefore be selected disproportionately (Fink, 2011b). However, a third of those who participated in the pilot expressed a strong preference for this to be included as they considered that their experience often included some instances which would not fit the general pattern.

Fifteen responses were received to the pilot survey; all respondents answered each question. They also expressed a genuine interest in the topic through the free text comments. However,

the need for a more rigorous focus on the central concepts of the study entailed a thorough review of the questions so that they were more closely aligned to the theoretical framework and the research sub-questions, where appropriate. The categorical questions were retained, together with the questions about having autonomy to design and implement processes (PS 7&8). However, while the pilot survey had asked about individual autonomy and then about the institutional approach to administrative processes (PS 9-12), these questions were insufficiently theoretically-linked and the results left scope for doubt about interpretation. The questions were thus reframed in the revised survey questionnaire (NS) with a much more direct link to the theoretical concepts: both autonomy and job-crafting (NS 10-11), but also the levels of hierarchy and centralisation within the HEI (NS 12-16) which informed the typology. This resulted in a slightly longer questionnaire, but one which was designed to produce more reliable and usable data. The final questionnaire is attached as Appendix 2; it was the response to this questionnaire which informed the selection of cases. (The theoretical references were not included when the survey was published.)

3.5.3 Sampling strategy for the survey

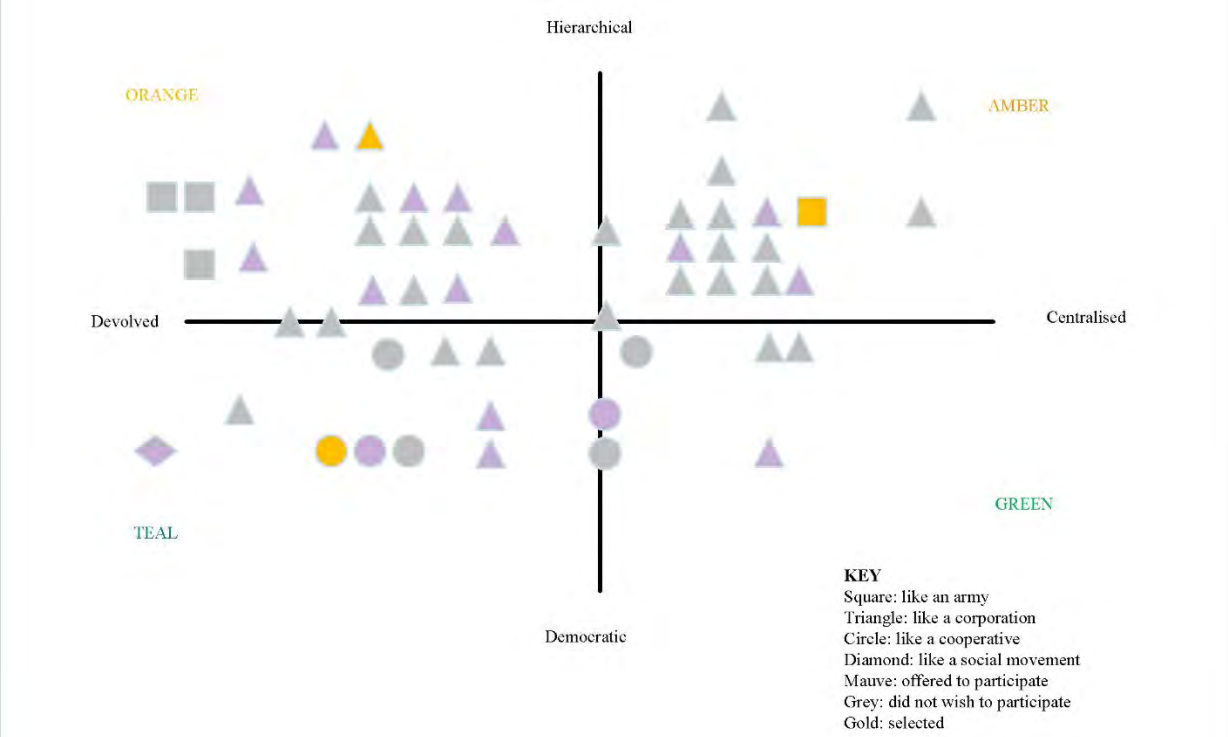
As the reference group for this study is Heads of Quality in HEIs in England, the scoping survey was sent to pre-existing contact lists for this group. These contact lists are extensive and cover the whole of the sector, although they may not be fully comprehensive. In total, the contact lists contain approximately 350 members, although there is some duplication between them. Similarly, it was not possible to determine whether contacts in each institution would respond to the survey, or alternatively whether more than one might respond from some institutions. By collecting participant data, it was possible to determine where this had occurred, and to take this into account in the analysis. There were 52 responses, and the fact the actual respondents represented a good cross-section of the sector, including a reasonable proportion from each HEI mission group (Russell Group, Million Plus, Guild HE), suggests that responses were broadly representative of the 123 HEIs with ‘university’ in their title registered with the Office for Students; a more homogenous respondent group would have made it illegitimate to draw any such conclusion (Vehovar, Manfreda and Koren, 2012). In fact, as the primary purpose was to identify an institutional case sample, issues of representation were less important, although the

high-level results provided an interesting overview of the territory which supported the development of the interview schedule, as discussed in the next section. The survey was confidential but not anonymous, both so that duplicate responses could be identified, and so that potential cases for detailed research could be determined.

3.5.4 Determination of case-study institution sample

The results of the scoping survey were analysed to identify suitable candidate cases. A grid was created, with the axes corresponding to those in Figure 2, and respondents were placed within the grid according to their responses. The initial positioning was determined by responses to NS 12-16 (plotting against hierarchal control, and centralisation), and NS 8, 9 and 17 were used as a sense-check that these responses were consistent. The shape of each marker denotes the response to NS 18: respondents denoted by a square reported their organisation to be like an army; a triangle, like a corporation; a circle, like a cooperative; and a diamond, a social movement. Figure 4 below shows an anonymised version of the mapping. NS 10-11 were not used for this analysis, but informed the development of the interview questions.

Fig. 4: Survey responses plotted against typology grid



The initial criterion for selection was that the respondent HEI indicated that it was willing to participate in the interview stage of the research; and the second, accordingly, was the need to generate a range of cases which exemplified the four organisational types derived from Figure 2. The grey shapes in Figure 4 indicate respondents who did not wish to be considered as possible cases.

As is demonstrated by Figure 4, there was an uneven distribution of responses across the quadrants. Notably, the Green quadrant included only one available candidate; but this respondent works at an HEI which is atypical of the sector (with largely distance learning supported by flying faculty, delivering exclusively at postgraduate level and with a high proportion of executive short courses) and would have introduced a wide range of variables which would have limited its usefulness to the research. In consequence, it was concluded that 'Green' organisational type is highly unusual in the English HE sector, so case-study HEIs were selected only from the other three quadrants.

The preference in the sampling strategy was to identify a respondent in each quadrant with strong consistency of interpretation. This suggested the selection of respondents to whose response to Q18 ('like an army', 'like a corporation', 'like a co-operative' or 'like a social movement') placed them in the same quadrant as their responses on strength of hierarchical control and levels of centralisation / devolution of authority. In the top-right quadrant, this was straightforward as only respondent matched the criterion. As there were several candidates in both the top-left and bottom-left quadrants, secondary criteria were required to determine the final selection. Within the parameters of this study, alternative sampling strategies (such as maximum variation sampling) would not be possible, given the small number of cases to be considered. However, to maximise the validity of the findings, the approach was to use the selection process to control extraneous variables which might have a significant influence upon the outcome (Sahoo, 2019; see also Kish, 2017). Therefore it was decided to exclude, if possible, smaller providers (Barbato, Fumasoli and Turri, 2019, see section 2.6.3); and to select only providers which were largely campus-based. In addition, providers were selected where the Head of Quality had been in post for a similar length of time.

One interesting feature of the selection was the size of the case study HEIs by student population. None of the providers was small (the student populations range from 13,500 to 25,000), but the HEI from the top-right quadrant was the smallest, followed by the HEI in the top-left quadrant, and the largest came from the bottom-left quadrant. However this was coincidental: there were HEIs with larger student populations in both the upper quadrants, and indeed some quite small HEIs (with populations below 5,000) in the bottom-left quadrant, so it would not be valid to conclude that organisational type is merely a function of size.

The sample selection process thus resulted in the identification of Heads of Quality at three English universities.

3.5.5 Identification of interviewees

An important component of credibility is triangulation between sources (Silverman, 2001; Yin, 2018), and this played an important role in determining the interviewees within each HEI. As well as interviewing the Head of Quality, it was important that additional evidence was secured through interviews with staff who were well-placed to comment on the authority and autonomy of the Head of Quality.

At each HEI, interviews were conducted with the same categories of staff (in accordance with the purposive sampling strategy); and the same interview schedule was used for all interviewees within each category. At each case, the Head of Quality was interviewed first, although the remaining interviews were arranged according to the availability of participants.

The initial intention was to conduct interviews with the Head of Quality; the line manager for the post; a senior academic (Dean or equivalent); and another academic member with responsibility for aspects of quality management (such as member of the Quality Committee, or Chair of validation panels). It was anticipated that this would provide the necessary triangulation from a range of perspectives. However, a pilot interview phase was also conducted, again with representatives from Welsh and Scottish HEIs, and the pilot interviews demonstrated that the two members of academic staff, in practice, had very similar perspectives. Their engagement

with the Head of Quality, and the processes for which they were responsible, was in each case was very similar; and this meant that their understanding of the role was comparable. While recognising that this was a small sample size, there was a risk that the inclusion of both categories would add only limited value. The pilot interviews with these individuals were fascinating and a privilege for anyone interested in higher education, but they also suggested that one of these interviews would be sufficient within each case. Overall work demands are likely to be higher on a Dean, meaning that their availability was likely to be more limited, and hence it was decided to retain the interviews with the member of academic staff with responsibility for quality matters.

A fourth interviewee was thus required to provide strong evidence within each case study HEI. Consideration was given to interviewing another professional colleague within the HEI with whom the Head of Quality might be expected to have regular contact, but the responses to the pilot survey demonstrated that this would not be helpful. Heads of Quality have a varying range of responsibilities, with some focused solely on quality management and others holding a wide portfolio (including areas such as registry services or student services), so their key contacts would necessarily be very different. HEIs also have very different internal structures and reporting lines. The introduction of another professional colleague for each contributing Head of Quality would have introduced a further range of variables which it would not have been possible to control, which would have weakened the usefulness of the evidence for comparison. It was therefore decided to interview one of the direct reports of the Head of Quality, who in each case had been in post for at least one year and therefore had a good understanding of the workings of the HEI and the role played by the Head of Quality. Regardless of their precise responsibilities, the status as a direct report gave each of these respondents a similar formal relationship with the Head of Quality.

It was recognised that some interviewees held senior positions within the HEI, but it was considered unlikely that any would be considered ‘elite’. Nevertheless, as an interviewer it was essential to treat them with respect, and care was taken with the most senior interviewees to ensure that questions were open-ended, and the interview concluded in timely fashion (Harvey, 2011).

The position of line manager was vacant at Amberville at the time of the interviews; for an interim period the Head of Quality was reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor, but it was clear that this was a temporary arrangement which would come to an end as soon as a new postholder had taken up the line manager role. The final list of interviewees was therefore as follows:

Table 1: Summary of interviewees (and code used when cited)

	Code used when cited
Amberville:	
Head of Quality	HQ/A
Academic working regularly with Head of Quality	AC/A
Direct report	DR/A
Orangetown:	
Head of Quality	HQ/O
Academic working regularly with Head of Quality	AC/O
Line manager	LM/O
Direct report	DR/O
Tealborough:	
Head of Quality	HQ/T
Academic working regularly with Head of Quality	AC/T
Line manager	LM/T
Direct report	DR/T

Of the eleven interviewees, six were female and five were male. As noted in section 3.5.4 above, each of the Heads of Quality had been in post for a similar length of time (18 months to two years). All the remaining interviewees had been in their role for longer: three of them for around three years, three for 5-8 years, and two for over ten years. Further detail is not disclosed, to preserve the anonymity of the case study HEIs.

3.6 Choice and design of research instruments for institutional case-studies

3.6.1 Interviews as the method of data collection for case studies

Interviews are the most common method of data collection in qualitative research, representing a way of learning about people's opinions or understandings of a situation (Punch, 2009, p.144), so were selected as the instrument by which to collect data in the institutional case-studies. The interview represents a method of enabling participants to give their views and to respond to carefully structured questions. It is consistent with the epistemological and ontological assumptions made in this study; and it also enables the same questions to be put to staff in similar roles across each HEI, thereby strengthening the potential for cross-case comparison.

The semi-structured interview is an opportunity to understand the respondents' experiences and their interpretations of these experiences (Warren, 2001). The interviewer can enquire about motives, and the more open format of the interview – as opposed to a survey – allows for responses to be explored in greater detail (Hopf, 2004), and for the interviewee to explain the meaning they attach to their experience (Alsaawi, 2014). Consideration was given to the value of supplementing individuals interviews with a group interview or focus group, but this can bring challenges in relation to group dynamic, and participants may be led by others, especially if some members of the group are more powerful; focus group discussions can also lack depth (Jupp, 2006). A skilled moderator can mitigate this, but this requires considerable experience and training (Kvale, 2007).

It was recognised that interviews are themselves not unproblematic. The interview is a social interaction (Silverman, 2001), and it is important to be aware of the possible pitfalls; Punch (2009) points out that there can be issues about the validity of responses, with the risk of dishonesty and self-deception or, perhaps more commonly, a tendency towards social desirability. Interviewees are "politically conscious actors" who are likely to treat the interview, in part, as a social setting (Alvesson, 2003, p.169-70). Silverman outlines three possible ways of understanding the interview: as *giving facts about the world* (the positivist position), as *descriptions of authentic experiences by subjects who "actively construct their social worlds"*

(the emotionalist position), and as *a mutual construction of reality* (the constructionist position) (Silverman, 2001, p.86ff). As this study adopts a post-positivist, critical realist position, it assumes that the interview is able to explain something about 'what's really going on out there', although it acknowledges that this is not a value-free position. The researcher is "a fish in the water", which has advantages in terms of understanding the field, but may result in some assumptions remaining untested or unchallenged (Clegg and Stevenson, 2013, p.7). The focus on thought and language can result in a neglect of the emotional aspects of knowledge, or of action (Kvale, 2007). It is also important to be aware of the challenges which are inherent in language. Greenhalgh (2013) uses the concept of the language game, introduced by Wittgenstein, to explain that it may not be possible to identify a context-free analysis, because each speaker brings their own meanings to the words: "The qualitative researcher is situated in any given study and should be aware of the fact that he/she is part of the scene being observed" (Watt, 2007, p.90). One cannot create the "view from nowhere" (Pillow, 2003, p.178), as a completely detached and objective observer; but knowing this enables, indeed requires the researcher to be conscious of their own role in the process.

3.6.2 Researcher positionality

There is value to considering briefly the role and positionality of the researcher. As the researcher works within the field of quality management and sought participants using network mailing lists to which he himself also subscribes, he might be considered an 'insider' to the field, although not to the case-study institutions. This can bring both benefits and disadvantages. Aside from a genuine personal interest in the research, and a strong professional interest in the implications for practice, it means that there is a strong understanding of the research field, and the typical interactions and processes in real-life settings (as encouraged by Gephart, 2004). Against this, as Watt describes (2007), the presence of the researcher can influence the nature of the knowledge generated. It was therefore important to develop an interview schedule which responded closely to the research questions, encouraged open participant reflection, and did not assume any particular findings. It would have been impossible for the researcher to use their own place of work as a case: both in terms of interview participation, and interpretation of results, the critical distance necessary for independence would not have been available.

However, this distance can be maintained for outside organisations through careful reflexivity (Roulston, 2014) in which the researcher is consistently aware of their own position. As Merriam and Tisdell comment, researchers are rarely "total participants" or "total observers" in the research; and there is no specific theoretical advantage to being either an insider or outsider, as long as the researcher has the perspective necessary for studying the phenomenon (2015, pp. 145-6). The researcher also had no preconceptions about potential findings, and was interested to understand each HEI as presented, recognising that no two organisations are ever identical, or perfect models of a type. However, an element of pre-understanding was acknowledged which informed the fieldwork through a close familiarity with the broad operational context (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2022).

3.6.3 Developing the interview schedules

The pilot interview schedules (PQ) were constructed with close reference to the theoretical framework and the research sub-questions, to ensure that each sub-question was addressed in each interview (Yin, 2018, p.107). The schedule for each of the four interviewees, including the mapping, is given as Appendix 3. The schedule for the Head of Quality (3a) was developed first, and the schedules for the remaining interviewees were developed to enable each interviewee to offer a perspective on the same issues, also addressing each research sub-question.

The interviews with each participant were semi-structured (Yin, 1981), with open-ended, "big and expansive" questions which enabled them to articulate their views on the decision-making processes within their HEI, both formal and informal (Jacob and Furgerson, 2012, p.3) and the option for further probing questions on particular issues. All participants were also asked about the role played by the Head of Quality, the authority that they held, and their involvement in broader institutional activities. The fact that the Head of Quality was the first interviewee in each case enabled any specific examples they raised to be reflected in the conversation with their colleagues.

As the interviewer, it is important to acknowledge the status of both the interviewer and interviewee – who has been recruited as a representative of a category, but is addressed directly in first person terms – and also, that both parties have a stake in the subject of the research. This is self-evident (or they would not be involved in the research), but the interviewee is typically treated as a neutral informant (Potter and Hepburn, 2012). Consequently, where possible, the interview questions were designed to focus on perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes (POBA), which rely less on detailed memories or potentially complex analysis of a situation; POBA are logically different states, but they encompass "the fluidity of everyday experience" (Puchta and Potter, 2004, pp.66ff) without relying on the interviewee's interpretation of the actions of others (see also Fink, 2011b).

3.6.4 Piloting the interview schedules

Pilot interviews were originally scheduled for Spring 2020, but the COVID-19 crisis rendered this impractical. There were severe travel restrictions imposed across the UK, and the imposition of physical distancing rules had serious implications for universities, which had to transfer activities to be delivered remotely in a very short timeframe, as well as planning for the remainder of the academic year. Heads of Quality were central to this process, and were not available for interview in line with the original timescale (this was also true of the researcher). In consequence, it was decided to conduct the pilot interviews remotely, which eliminated the need for travel, and also allowed for greater flexibility in timing (as interviews could be held over 2-3 days, rather than all having to be scheduled for the same day). There was still an unavoidable delay in arranging these interviews, but they took place in June 2020.

3.6.5 Changes to the interview schedules as a result of piloting

The pilot interviews demonstrated that the initial questions were less successful than anticipated. For example, when asked to reflect on areas where they had less authority and autonomy (PQ 7 and 8), and on their relationship with academic colleagues internally (PQ 11 and 12), Heads of Quality displayed a tendency to respond in quite a formal manner. It is possible that the setting and the formulation (using formal job titles, and talking about institutional structures and

process) linked the questions too closely to the individual's professional identity and encouraged a more formal response. In consequence, the final interview schedule (NQ) included some questions which focused on similar territory (professional autonomy and the crafting of a professional identity) but were phrased in a very different way (NQ 7-10). Each of these new questions shifted the focus of the question onto the individual, and their own POBA, and away from formal structures and relationships. The use of metaphor of being the ruler (NQ7), and the subsequent emphasis on how they saw the job they do (NQ8-10), offered the opportunity for deeper insights into both professional authority and autonomy, and job-crafting.

The final interview schedule is given as Appendix 4, together with a grid which shows how each question links to the research sub-questions. This ensured that each sub-question was covered, and that no interview question was extraneous except for those which provided some general background information about the participant. The opportunity was also taken to invite each interviewee to reflect on where they would place their HEI within the organisational typology given in fig 2; with those who had previously responded to the scoping survey, this was based on their survey answer, whereas other participants were shown the grid. Where interviewees from different categories within the same HEI gave different answers, there was the opportunity to explore their reasoning in greater depth, which provided an additional form of triangulation of data.

3.6.6 Drawing exercise in pilot interviews

There is an interesting body of research about using drawing to elicit information from interviewees. The act of creating a simple drawing or diagram requires the participant to reflect, and spend what Gauntlett calls "creative time" thinking about the research issue (2005, p.3; see also Gauntlett, 2004; Kitzinger, 1990). The benefit of this approach is not just the creative time, but the opportunity to encourage a non-linear set of reflections, as opposed to a set of verbal, instant responses to questions. This approach was used in the pilot interviews; with Heads of Quality being asked to take a few moments to draw a diagram of the approval process for a recent change to academic governance arrangements. They were asked to indicate where the proposed change originated, and to trace its journey on a continuum, noting who influenced it

and how final approval was given. No assumptions were made about the accuracy of the diagram when compared against the verbal responses (Buckingham, 2009), but it was possible that different sets of reflections might emerge as this type of creative task does not just require reflection as opposed to instant responses, but might in consequence lead to additional ideas which are triggered by the extended time for reflection (Gauntlett, 2005).

The approach, while not typical in interviews, was not expected to represent a hindrance to participating, and such a simple visual approach would fall within the normal experience of most individuals (Banks and Zeitlyn, 2015). However, in practice, this did not prove a valuable exercise. While the intention was clearly not to put interviewees under pressure, it was an unexpected request to do something atypical in the role (which tends to be strongly based on the written word, or direct verbal communication). As such, nothing was gained from the resulting diagrams which could not have been explained at least equally well in simple question and answer format; there was no evidence of 'non-linear reflections'. This was disappointing, but it was not a valuable use of time and hence not included in the final interview schedule.

3.7 Data collection – interviews

It was originally planned to hold the formal research interviews in person. However, as with the pilot interviews, the ongoing restrictions both on travel, and on in-person interaction, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that this was not possible within a reasonable timescale. The interviews were thus scheduled to take place remotely.

In research conducted before the global COVID-19 pandemic, Hillman et al (2015) note some potential disadvantages of remote interviews, including the potential unreliability of the internet connection, and the lack of familiarity which some interviewees may have with the technology, although they recognise that this latter will likely improve as video calling becomes more common.

Johnson, Scheitle and Howard Ecklund (2021) conducted more recent research into the quality of remote interviews compared to in-person, first published online in 2019. They recognise that

remote interviews can be much more convenient, for example when participants may live in different countries, but they also report a widely-held perception that telephone interviews, in particular, result in lower quality conversations. However, their own research found that, while there were fewer narrative turns in remote conversations, meaning that the interviewer was more likely to follow the script leading to less interaction, remote interviews "do not clearly lead to differences in interview ratings or substantive data codes generated or used from (sic) analysis" (p.1143).

This provided confidence that remote interviews would be a reasonable and pragmatic solution. All HEIs had been required to work remotely for some months, with video calls a standard means of communication, and all interviewees would be very familiar with the technology; video conferencing had become a routine part of daily work, including for communication with colleagues, sector seminars and conferences, and even interviewing job applicants. Participants were highly familiar, and comfortable, with virtual communication as a suitable alternative to meetings in person. There were also significant advantages in terms of timing and organisation: interviewees from the same HEI did not necessarily have to be interviewed on the same day, although the interview with the Head of Quality was scheduled first in each case. An audio recording was made of each interview, with the consent of the interviewee, to enable transcription and analysis. There were some very brief interruptions (where interviewees had to pause); and two instances where the audio recording was insufficiently clear for transcription. These were very brief and did not interrupt the coherence of the interview. Hillman et al (2015) comment on the risk of interruptions, but as noted above, remote video communication had become a standard part of daily routine and all participants, including the researcher, had become familiar with the possibly of interruption and this minimised any impact.

Obviously, while visual contact was maintained throughout, there was a risk that body language could not be picked up as easily; and the slight delay on the call might have resulted in a more stilted interview. The familiarity of all participants with this mode of communication reduced this risk, and in practice each interview flowed as a conversation. The transcript recorded all the content faithfully; hesitations or repeated words, which frequently occur in speech, have been removed from any citations out of respect (Roulston, 2014).

3.8 Data analysis

Analysis of quantitative survey data was undertaken solely to identify institutional case studies and is described in section 3.5, resulting in the institutional mapping in fig. 4. This section will therefore focus on the analysis of qualitative interview data.

As discussed above (section 3.7), the interpretation and analysis of interview data can be challenging. It is imperative that the researcher remains aware of their own role within the process and recognises that they cannot create the "view from nowhere" (Pillow, 2003, p.178). This is of particular significance when it comes to analysis of the data. Roulston (2014) underlines the importance of a researcher "remaining open to what is in the data", and not forcing the data to fit a preconceived hypothesis (see also Roulston, 2001, for a discussion of how a researcher can use the data to tell the story she wants, rather than the story which actually emerges). As the researcher is a practitioner working within a similar field (discussed at 3.5.2 above), particular care was required to avoid assumptions, and to review the review the data as it stands, without importing assumptions or interpretations.

The nature of the investigation suggested that cross-case thematic analysis would be the most appropriate method for the data analysis, as it is "an appropriate and powerful method to use when seeking to understand a set of experiences, thoughts, or behaviors (sic) across a data set" (Kiger and Varpio, 2020, p.3), and is particularly suited to applied research into practice (Braun and Clarke, 2014). The purpose of cross-case analysis is to generate knowledge from the comparison of cases, examining points of both similarity and difference (Khan and Van Wynsberghe, 2008).

Thematic analysis is not tied to a specific epistemology or ontology; Braun and Clarke identify three broad versions of the approach, which they term "coding reliability", "codebook" and "reflexive" (2021, p.333-4). These are distinguished by their approach to code generation: the coding reliability approach uses multiple coders to ensure the 'accuracy' of coding; the codebook approach starts with a structured coding framework, although new themes may

developed through the analysis process; and the reflexive approach recognises the researcher's role in generating themes: "Coding is open and organic, with no use of any coding framework. Themes should be the final 'outcome' of data coding and iterative theme development" (ibid., p.334). Guest, McQueen and Namey suggest that this distinction is too sharp, and instead propose "applied thematic analysis", which can be used either in an exploratory or confirmatory way (2014, Introduction). An exploratory approach is most appropriate when responding to research questions, where the researcher starts by carefully reading (and re-reading) the data prior to commencing the coding process, the development of themes, and finally the analysis; it is focused on the data, and the themes which are generated from that data. Thematic analysis "uses existing theoretical constructs to look at data while also allowing emerging themes to 'speak' by becoming the categories for analysis" (Joffe, 2011, p.21). Applied thematic analysis was therefore adopted as for the approach to coding interview data, and for developing themes and sub-themes.

The initial theoretical propositions used to guide the coding process (Yin, 2018) were drawn from the theoretical framework described above in Chapter 2; the goal was "a skillful expedition executed with forethought, appropriate tools, and systematic planning prior to entering unexplored terrain" (Guest, McQueen and Namey, 2014., Ch 3). Care was taken to avoid researcher-bias and not to code according to pre-conceived assumptions about what was to be found or using pre-determined categories (Pillow, 2003). Consequently, the codebook was not developed in advance of the coding process. Coding was an iterative process, with first-level codes identified in the data but remaining subject to review; and there was always the option of using new codes where the data required this (Reichertz, 2010). Each interview was coded; and this process was then repeated, both to check that the meaning of codes had not 'drifted' over time, and to ensure consistency where, for example, subsequent codes had been introduced which might also apply to data which had been coded previously. Some segments had been allocated to more than one code, and the subsequent readings enabled this to be checked to ensure that the coding was accurate, and the segmentation appropriate. First-level codes were combined into families, which were then used to construct themes. These themes enabled the building of theoretical propositions which could be tested against the model. The three main themes to emerge from the analysis were *Perceptions of Organisational Type*; *Perceptions of the*

Head of Quality as 'Ruler'; and *Perceptions of ways in which the Head of Quality has personalised the role*. A table of the first- and second-order themes which were developed from the coding process is provided in Table 2 (see section 4.1), the full codebook is provided as Appendix 5. The first- and second-order themes were also mapped against the research sub-questions to support the process of analysis, and to confirm that the data collection and coding process had produced relevant results for consideration (see Appendix 6). An extract from three coded interviews is provided as Appendix 7.

As the coding was theoretically informed, there was sufficient relation between codes to enable the development of families and ultimately themes. All themes were reviewed carefully to ensure that they were correctly allocated; no data were removed from the analysis process. One theme was ultimately discarded; this covered all references to activity in the external environment (outside the home HEI), but these were too disparate to be considered a cohesive and meaningful theme. The data reported under this theme were all allocated to more than one code, so the decision to disregard the theme did not impact on the data reported.

Each interview, while semi-structured, followed a common interview schedule for each category of interviewee, with each schedule structured to address the research questions (see section 3.3-3.6 above). Many of the processes which were described by respondents would be familiar to anyone working within quality management in higher education; the Head of Quality, broadly defined, works against the same national framework and regulatory requirements. However, it became evident through the coding process that there was less commonality than might have been anticipated in the way in which their work was described in detail, which resulted in more first-order codes than had been expected even though none of these first-order codes was surprising. The bringing together of these codes into families was an important step to support the subsequent analysis. An element of this process was essentially deductive, as the final codebook was to form the basis for an explanatory analysis against the research questions (Guest, McQueen and Namey, 2014, Ch2); and as the interview schedules had been prepared against the research questions, the creation of families and ultimately themes did not require theoretical judgements to be made.

The analysis took account of all the evidence. Particular care was taken to consider instances where one interviewee offered a different account to the others from the same HEI, and to triangulate this response against data points to ensure that it did not represent evidence a possible negative case (Yin, 2018). In practice, there were very few examples of contradiction, and each of these was related to a very specific context (such as where there were individual instances which did not affect the overall pattern of reported behaviours).

3.9 Ethical considerations

The study adopted a rigorous approach to ethical considerations. At both the survey and interview stage, an initial introduction explained the nature and purpose of the project, confirmed that all responses were confidential but not anonymous, and explained how data would be stored and used. Informed consent was secured from all interviewees; following the initial introduction to the project when they were invited to participate, all interviewees were also provided with a summary of the proposal prior to the start of the interview and asked to sign a written consent form, with the opportunity to withdraw if they wished. They were reminded of this at the end of the interview. Interviewees were not vulnerable in the formal sense, and the overall approach ensured that they were participating voluntarily (Sieber, 2009). This was not just a matter of ethics; unwilling participants are less likely to engage meaningful in the interview process, which would provide less reliable outcomes.

It was made clear to all participants that the HEIs and individuals concerned would be anonymised. It was important to reassure all participants that there would be no reputational risks from participating in the research project, either for themselves personally or for their employer. As the researcher also works within the sector, there was a possible risk that interviewees might have a greater tendency to behave as politically conscious actors, as described above. This emphasised the importance of asking about perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes (POBA), but it was also important in this research that the identification with a particular quadrant, or certain internal structures, does not hold negative connotations. The intention was to investigate, and to contrast, but there was no judgement about the ‘best’ or ‘ideal’ arrangement.

To ensure anonymity, all the HEIs were given pseudonyms which correspond to the quadrant of the diagram in which they were initially classified (Amberville University; Orangetown University; and Tealborough University). A very general description of institutional type is given, but with sufficient generality that this description could apply to many HEIs. The individual interviewees are referred to only by job role; and for ease of reference, as well as to secure confidentiality, these job roles have been standardised across all three HEIs and are referred to as Head of Quality, Line Manager, Direct Report, and Academic. Similarly, the titles of any other HEI named in interviews were redacted; and all internal bodies such as committees were standardised.

Each interview was audio-recorded, and the recording transferred as soon as practicable to a secure server. Similarly, all transcripts and coding were stored in password-protected documents. All transcripts and coding used the project names and job titles of those involved; only the researcher had access to the actual identities.

3.10 Validity and reliability

The qualitative researcher must demonstrate that the research study is reliable: that is, that the results are stable and consistent (Punch, 2009). Issues of reliability are no less significant in qualitative research than in quantitative (Silverman, 2001). Two different methods were used to secure reliability:

1) The approach to data collection was designed to minimise bias (Eisenhardt and Graeber, 2007). Both the survey and interviews were subject to a pilot phase at institutions in Scotland and Wales, with an opportunity to discuss the questionnaire and the interview after the fact with the interviewee to ensure that respondents had understood the questions in a consistent way, and as intended by the researcher (Silverman, 2001). This allowed questions to be revised and improved where necessary. The interviews were semi-structured and followed a common script which linked directly to the research questions and

sub-questions. All the interviews were then transcribed verbatim to allow an accurate reading by both the researcher and others (Yin, 2018).

2) As noted above, coding was an iterative process which allowed the codes to emerge from the data, rather than following a preconceived pattern. There was a regular check that the meaning of codes had not 'drifted' over time (Creswell, 2009, p.190) and they were discussed in detail with thesis supervisors.

To maximise validity, the emerging theory should be coherent and logical, emerging from the data (Eisenhardt, Graebner and Sonenshein, 2016). Lincoln and Guba suggest that validity can be confirmed through trustworthiness, which is established through four components: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (1986, pp.76-7). *Credibility* is demonstrated through techniques such as triangulation between sources, and negative case analysis (an active search for any cases which negate the theory): the sampling strategy for interviews was designed to enable triangulation; and the selection of cases, representing staff at organisations of different types, as well as the inclusion of colleagues in the interview process, was intended to maximise the chances of identifying a negative case. *Transferability* relates to the extent that the results can be transferred to other settings, so might be enhanced by appropriate purposive sampling and clear narrative description of the context. In this case, the sampling strategy was purposive and linked directly to the theoretical framework. *Dependability* requires a reliable method of data collection such that were the study to be repeated with the same cohort of interviewees, the same results would emerge; a common set of questions was used with each interviewee, in a semi-structured format, to provide consistent and reliable data. *Confirmability* refers to the likelihood that a different group of researchers would reach the same findings from the data, so the transparent coding strategy (see above) was designed to address this. It was important that all the data which had been collected were reviewed rigorously (Silverman, 2005; Yin, 2018). Analysis must take account of evidence which appears contrary (Creswell, 2009), and the researcher must be aware that one or more of the cases might deliver unexpected findings. Such findings may appear to be 'deviant', and a close analysis of these cases might suggest the reasons why this was so (Silverman, 2005).

3.11 Conclusion

The research questions were devised in response to the literature review and the theoretical framework which was developed from this review. The study adopts a critical realist approach to ontology; epistemologically it accepts that knowledge is provisional, but nevertheless holds that 'something is going on out there' which is independent of the perceptions of individual participants. Within an overall mixed methods approach, whereby a quantitative survey was used to identify institutional cases, this study employed a comparative multiple case study design. A sample of key staff – Heads of Quality, their line manager, an academic colleague and a direct report – was identified for each of the case-study HEIs selected to represent different quadrants of the typological model; and interview schedules were developed which were closely aligned to the theoretical framework. Interviews were conducted with the sample Heads of Quality, together with a small number of their colleagues, to support triangulation. Both the scoping survey, and the interview schedules, were first piloted with colleagues in Scotland and Wales to enable them to be refined prior to use. The resulting data was then coded using an applied thematic analysis approach, which created a detailed codebook to support the process of analysis. The findings are provided in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the key findings of the study. The chapter is structured by case-study HEI, reviewing the themes which emerged through analysis of the data to analyse issues of social power and authority in the roles played by each of the Heads of Quality in relation to organisational type. Data relating to each second-order theme is recorded under the relevant first-order theme. The chapter concludes with a cross-case comparison, which summarises the key findings in relation to organisational type, authority and social power, and the establishment of professional autonomy.

Three main themes were identified through the analysis of the data, as described in section 3.8. The main themes and sub-themes are summarised in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2: Main themes and sub-themes emerging through analysis of the data

Sub-Themes	**Main theme 1: Perceptions of Organisational Type**
T1	Centralisation / devolution of power and responsibility
T2	Organisational positioning on hierarchy-democracy continuum
T3	Factors determining type
	Main theme 2: Perceptions of the Head of Quality as 'Ruler'
R1	Head of Quality as ruler within the quality management realm
R2	Locus of decision-making authority
R3	Development of quality management policy or process
R4	Quality management team as enforcers, or as part of a collaborative effort
	Main theme 3: Perceptions of ways in which the Head of Quality has personalised the role
P1	Freedom of the Head of Quality to determine the way in which the role is performed

P2	Key internal relationships
P3	Head of Quality's independence of their Line Manager
P4	Head of Quality's activity which falls outside their specific brief

The full codebook is given as Appendix 5. It is evident from the codebook that some sub-themes have a much larger number of constituent codes than others. This was anticipated; as demonstrated by the mapping of the research sub-questions against the interview schedule (Appendix 4), there were more questions for each interviewee relating to the authority and social power of Heads of Quality (Main Theme 2) than for Main Themes 1 and 3, reflecting the centrality of these concepts to the research.

4.1.1 The case-study HEIs

As described in section 3.5, three HEIs were selected to provide comparative case studies of the role of the Head of Quality, based on the organisational structure of their HEI as reported in the answers given to a scoping survey completed by English Heads of Quality. The selection was purposive, with the case HEIs identified as a representative of three of the four organisational quadrants derived from a synthesis of models (Mintzberg 1980, Paradeise and Thoenig 2013, Laloux 2014, Barbato et al 2019) (see Figure 2, section 2.6.3). The two axes which define the quadrants in Fig. 2 are centralisation and hierarchy. The bottom-right quadrant, representing centralised and democratic organisations (labelled as 'Green') was excluded as the only HEI assigned to this quadrant by the analysis of survey data was atypical (with a high proportion of remote learners) and would have introduced a wide range of variables which are unrelated to the focus of the study. The case selection can be summarised as in Table 4 below:

Table 3: Summary of organisational types and selected case HEI pseudonyms

Position in Quadrant from Figure 2	Description of quadrant	Case HEI pseudonym
Top-right	High degree of centralisation and hierarchy	'Amberville'

Top-left	Low degree of centralisation but high degree of hierarchy	'Orangetown'
Bottom-left	Low degree of centralisation and hierarchy; more democratic	'Tealborough'

As described in section 3.8, each case HEI has been given a pseudonym as above, and all role titles or other potential identifiers have been standardised. The interviewees, and the codes used when cited, are given in Table 1, section 3.5.5, and repeated below for ease of reference:

	Code used when cited
Amberville:	
Head of Quality	HQ/A
Academic working regularly with Head of Quality	AC/A
Direct report	DR/A
Orangetown:	
Head of Quality	HQ/O
Academic working regularly with Head of Quality	AC/O
Line manager	LM/O
Direct report	DR/O
Tealborough:	
Head of Quality	HQ/T
Academic working regularly with Head of Quality	AC/T
Line manager	LM/T
Direct report	DR/T

For ease of reference, the abbreviation HoQ is used throughout when referring to the Head of Quality in the main body of the text.

The key characteristics of the case study HEIs are set out in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Key characteristics of case study HEIs

	Amberville University	Orangetown University	Tealborough University
Total student population	13,500	17,500	25,000
Overseas students	18%	20%	38%
Proportion of PG (PGR)	40% (3%)	23% (4%)	34% (6%)
Typical UCAS offer	120 points	120 points	150 points
Subject coverage	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	Comprehensive
Location	Urban (several sites)	Largely campus-based	Largely campus-based

4.1.2 Similarities across case-study HEIs

There are certain features which are common to all cases, which are set out briefly here for reference.

1) As discussed in section 2.5, it is typical within organisations that the voices of senior staff will carry more weight than those of junior staff, and that there is a line management structure through which a line manager has the legitimate authority to direct the work of their staff, if they so choose. This is part of the definition of an organisation. While the levels of legitimate position power may vary across different organisations, there is inevitably some degree of hierarchy. The thesis focuses on the strength of this hierarchical control.

2) All three cases are universities, with degree-awarding powers. This entails that, alongside the formal management structure, there is a senior academic committee (Senate), chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, supported by a deliberative committee structure through which representatives of the academic community shape and agree academic policy. This typically includes an Academic Standards Committee or similar, chaired by the Pro-Vice

Chancellor Academic, and this is true for all three of the case study HEIs. The thesis focuses on the operation of these senior committees, and how often they vote down, or make significant revisions to, proposals made by the HoQ.

3) A common academic framework, agreed centrally and applied to all students and all faculties, is one of the features which binds an organisation together as a University, rather than a collection of standalone academic units. This framework may be very permissive and based on high-level principles, or may be quite rigid and demand high levels of consistency. The notion of a shared framework is therefore common to all the cases, and the focus is on the level of prescription or permissiveness within this framework.

4) It is part of the role of the HoQ that they are, in some sense, the "keeper of the rules". Once a particular set of policies and procedures has been agreed, the HoQ holds institutional responsibility for ensuring they are implemented; some of the operational work will be carried out by the Quality team, but in accordance with the approach set out by the HoQ. The focus is on how this responsibility is enacted in each case.

5) Within any organisation, there are likely to be a range of activities which span a number of functional departments. This may include working groups to consider specific issues, but can also involve more complex cross-functional teams or indeed naturally cross-institutional activities such as staff recruitment. Within each HEI, some level of engagement outside the 'home' department is inevitable. The focus is on the extent to which the HoQ is engaged in this activity, which might be a useful indication of the availability of referent power, through the relationships they are able to form and influence they might exercise on other functional areas of the University.

4.2 Case Study 1: Head of Quality at Amberville University

4.2.1 Amberville: Description of the Case

As described in Table 4 above, Amberville University is a medium-sized campus-based University of about 13,500 students. This places it almost exactly halfway in a list of English

HEIs with degree-awarding powers, ranked by size. About 18% of its student population is from overseas; 40% are studying for postgraduate awards, although only 3% are studying for a research degree. The University is based across several urban sites (all in close proximity), and the typical UCAS offer for undergraduates is 120 tariff points making it a relatively inclusive, low-tariff institution. In the scoping survey, the HoQ characterised the University as both centralised and hierarchical. As its name implies, it was selected as a representative of the Amber quadrant in Figure 2.

The position of line manager was vacant at Amberville at the time of the interviews; for an interim period the HoQ was reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor, but it was clear that this was a temporary arrangement which would come to an end as soon as a new postholder had taken up the line manager role. Therefore there is no interview for the line manager role at Amberville (LM/A).

4.2.2 Amberville Main Theme 1: Perceptions of Organisational Type

When considering how centralised an organisation is, one obvious consideration is the location of the staff responsible for delivering the professional services, who might be either in a central unit, or based within facilities. At Amberville, the former is the case: “We have quite a large central quality unit, there’s over 20 of us, and out in the faculties they don't really have a dedicated quality manager” (DR/A). Responsibility for much of the quality management work thus rests with the central team under the HoQ. While there is a level of work which has to be undertaken locally (for example, it is for the individual course team to prepare regular evaluations, or to consider and respond to external examiners’ reports), operation of processes rests with this central team.

The academic framework at Amberville does not permit much flexibility:

> “Once the process has been designed, really, it's down to [the Head of Quality] to say, actually, this is what's in place. This is what you have to do” (DR/A).

Exceptions or variations can be approved by the HoQ, but there is an expectation that the central service will be aware of – and approve – any variations in implementation across the HEI.

Within the deliberative committee structure at Amberville, some voices are recognised to be more powerful, and hence to hold sway. Both the Vice-Chancellor and the Chair of the Academic Standards Committee (when in post) were identified by all interviewees as individuals whose voice is hard to counteract. The Academic member of staff interviewed noted that there are instances where compromises are reached to accommodate the needs of specific disciplines, commenting that "the faculties are able to contribute to discussion, and are heard" (AC/A). However, even within the deliberative committee structure, there is little expectation that members will dissent: "That's… kind of the culture of the institution, I think… I mean, policy decisions are made at the top and filter down" (HQ/A); this was a view expressed more than once during this interview, with a recognition that other members of staff often make limited contributions because "something is just going to be imposed anyway, so what's the point in… you know, inputting into it?" (HQ/A). In a formal sense, policy is agreed by a committee with cross-University representation, but there is little expectation that this results in changes to a proposal.

Interviewees were asked to consider the factors which might have led to the classification of Amberville as falling within the 'centralised and hierarchical' quadrant of Figure 2, as this would both provide some validation of the analysis of survey data which led to its categorisation and frame the context within which the HoQ has to operate. The response was remarkably consistent; each interviewee described Amberville University as small (one described it as "very small… and by the nature of small institutions, you… do centralise more and, and I guess that's just how that has evolved" (HQ/A). This is an interesting perception because, as discussed in section 3.5.4, the scoping survey showed that there are larger providers described as centralised, and much smaller providers which identify as devolved. This suggests that being a "small HEI" is part of the sense-making narrative of the University. Interviewees also commented on the fact that there had been few external senior appointments; until recently most senior appointments have been internal, under the auspices of a long-standing Vice-Chancellor. This continuity may have encouraged the persistence of the institutional narrative of a small HEI, even as Amberville

grows in size. A new Vice-Chancellor has recently been appointed, but at the time of the interviews, Amberville retains a sense of itself as a small HEI.

4.2.3 Amberville Main Theme 2: Perceptions of the Head of Quality as 'Ruler'

The HoQ at Amberville did not consider themselves to be the 'ruler within the quality realm', and nor did the senior academic interviewed. The direct report gave a very specific example in support of this perception: "I'm quite sure that if the vice chancellor suddenly decided that they didn't like something [the Head of Quality] was doing, or wanted to change it, then they, they would have the power to, you know… take that action or change things" (DR/A).

The HoQ was identified by all respondents as the leader of the Quality team. The Direct Report has some specific areas of responsibility and would expect some work to be delegated to them, but the team would not proceed with activity without the knowledge and approval of the HoQ: "I wouldn't consult on something without running it past them… I wouldn't just carry on regardless if they felt it was a bad idea" (DR/A). Consequently, the Direct Report ensures that they keep the HoQ well informed about their activities. They also recognise that the HoQ is in a position to intervene or engage with other senior staff in the event that they themselves are finding it difficult to secure the expected levels of engagement. The HoQ anticipates a corresponding arrangement with their own manager; it is unfortunate that this post was vacant at the time of the interviews, but the HoQ confirmed that they would routinely discuss their work with their line manager in normal circumstances, and would not proceed without agreement.

This authority within the Quality team does not extend across the wider University. While the Academic recognises the importance of working in liaison with the HoQ, there is no real sense that the HoQ at Amberville is recognised as the ultimate authority in decision-making about quality management matters. The HoQ was referred to as an "enabler and facilitator" (AC/A). The HoQ can "make suggestions and sway things. Um, but ultimately… whether the university adopts them or, or takes them forward is always a, a kind of collective decision" (HQ/A).

The interaction between professional autonomy (having an internal locus of causality) and social power (influence over others) is a focus of this thesis. Despite being the University lead for quality management matters, including compliance with external regulation, at Amberville the HoQ's autonomy is restricted; they can make proposals or influence discussion, but they have no power of overrule or veto, which limits their opportunity to implement. However, despite this restriction, they are in a strong position: they explained in the interview that it is likely at least half of the faculties would have to be opposed to a proposal to prevent it being implemented (or to be implemented against the advice of the HoQ); and that if it were a proposal which has to be implemented by the Quality team, even this may not be sufficient. While only the Pro-Vice Chancellor Academic or the Vice-Chancellor has the ultimate power of veto, the centralised and hierarchical nature of the HEI places greater emphasis on the view from this central service.

Similarly, while proposals relating to quality assurance or enhancement might in principle originate from any part of Amberville University, it is clear that, in practice, proposals are most likely to be developed by the central Quality team, especially if they are in response to external requirements. Issues raised by faculties are in a minority: "I'm not sure I can think of something that I would say directly arose from a suggestion from academic staff" (DR/A).

The normal process of policy development is that the HoQ prepares a draft and circulates this for comment at faculty level; the HoQ reported that this approach is comparatively new: "the response coming back was that people had never been engaged in that, in that way before" (HQ/A). Nevertheless, the HoQ reported that feedback is usually very limited. If this feedback indicates disagreement, a compromise may be agreed, such as a "rewording of text within a policy in order to accommodate what we need to do" (AC/A). The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Academic, as Chair of the Academic Standards Committee, has the power to block a proposal they disagree with. Beyond the Chair, however, there is little evidence that the Committee is likely to challenge a proposal which has reached approval stage, and there is evidently some scepticism from the Quality professionals that the faculties will use the power they held:

In other words, despite the lack of recognition of their status, at Amberville the HoQ's view is quite unlikely to be challenged. They can exercise their professional autonomy to develop

responses to quality management matters, and hold sufficient legitimate position power to implement these solutions. Such changes to policy or process might be proposed for a wide range of reasons. These include reference to the external environment (changes to regulatory expectations, or introducing a feature such as external benchmarking), but can also be the result of an internal perception that the existing process is overly burdensome or is ineffective, perhaps in recognition of a more effective process operated at other HEIs. Formally, changes must be considered and ultimately approved by Academic Standards Committee or, in the case of major changes, by Senate; but there is little expectation that these senior academic committees will dissent from any proposals.

The HoQ recognises their own professional responsibility for operating an effective quality management framework and designing the implementation of any changes. They are able to exercise their professional autonomy in relation to quality management and have sufficient legitimate position power for their proposals to be agreed. However, they are also aware of the limitations to this power, commenting: “tell people that you're not going to have to write an annual report on everything, suddenly, you know, everyone's on board with it” (HQ/A). Later, this interviewee went on to say: “if I went and said, ‘well, you know, we need to introduce this, it will result in more, not less, work for people’, I would expect to, to have to justify that very, very carefully” (HQ/A).

Indeed, the HoQ has been overruled on some recent occasions: “There have been cases… in the past years where …we've [the Quality team] not thought something was a good idea, but it has gone ahead regardless. And sometimes we end up saying, ‘we told you so’.” (DR/A)

At Amberville, with a prescribed common framework and limited flexibility, this can lead to a sense of enforcement: “people still perceive us a bit as like this central service who are like, making them do things” (DR/A). Despite this perception, the HoQ recognises that some form of audit function is required to ensure that the agreed policies or processes are being implemented. In a centralised and hierarchical organisation like Amberville, this is relatively straightforward:

> "Once the process has been designed, really, it's down to [the Head of Quality] to say, actually, this is what's in place. This is what you have to do. This is what we've said we're going to do. And that's final." (AC/A)

It is part of the responsibility of faculties to act in accordance with agreed policy and process, and it is not uncommon for faculty staff to contact the HoQ to seek advice or guidance on specific issues: taking responsibility and ensuring that they have understood the policy implications correctly. This sense of shared responsibility was referenced directly by the Academic member of staff interviewed: "In terms of how that's operationalised, we are all managers of it" (AC/A). This does not reduce the authority of the HoQ:

> "there's always conflicts between different faculties as to what does work best. [The Head of Quality] then has to try to filter that out and find ways in which to negotiate that, which sometimes is having bespoke across different areas, or sometimes just saying, well, actually this is what we need to do" (AC/A).

While the HoQ has to endorse any approach which differs from the standard, there has been a concerted effort to encourage greater ownership by the faculties. As noted previously, the view of the Quality team at Amberville is that "there isn't so much… in terms of ideas about how things might work… kind of bubbling up… from within faculties" (HQ/A). This has led to some frustration; the faculties complain that the Quality team is too prescriptive in its approach and request greater responsibility, especially where they find the existing process to be overly bureaucratic, but they then seek detailed additional guidance or templates. "You know, if you step back too far, they almost seem a bit scared and want to tell you how… to do it" (DR/A); "I would say we send out detailed guidance to people on what we expect them to do and we try, we try and do this in a helpful way with worked examples" (DR/A). Even the Academic accepted that, when proposals are circulated, it is unusual for substantive changes to be suggested.

The HoQ agreed that faculties had not "pushed for… any kind of greater involvement in… that kind of thing" (HQ/A); they recognised that this makes certain aspects of the HoQ role more straightforward, as there is rarely a need to justify major changes once the initial proposal has

been made, although they also recognised that with less of a shared responsibility, “we know who carries the can for it” (HQ/A). The HoQ therefore claims greater authority over implementation, rather than policy development, as it is their team which will need to deliver; they also commented that their authority is naturally constrained in those areas where other parts of the university might also have an interest, such as the external examiner process.

4.2.4 Amberville Main Theme 3: Perception of ways in which the Head of Quality has personalised the role

A job description and person specification describe broad expectations of a role; but every role is interpreted and realised by individuals, who may have the opportunity to shape aspects of how the role is performed, within the normal confines of the University organisational and management structure. While acknowledging that the line manager post was currently vacant and subject to recruitment, the HoQ at Amberville agreed that the current organisational structure is reasonably settled and worked effectively, with little scope for the HoQ to disrupt this, for example in the event that a new postholder were appointed:

> “There’s nothing that I do, or the department does that wouldn't be recognisable by someone else in my position coming from elsewhere… Fundamentally the business that needs to be done, would be done”. (HQ/A)

The Direct Report, who has been in post for significantly longer than the HoQ, suggested that the structure is more accidental than designed. The HoQ also recognised that this is how the structure has evolved; it is not the result of a deliberate strategic decision by the University. If this structure were ineffective, it is likely that the HEI would have taken steps to resolve this (HQ/A), so it is reasonable to suppose that the current arrangements allow for successful delivery. While the HoQ was assured on appointment that they could “change things”, this was in relation to quality processes rather than the overall responsibilities of the role or its place within the University. In fact, the HoQ is the first holder of this specific post and so, while it falls within some agreed parameters, “there was a strong element of me shaping it” (HQ/A), and they only took the job having received assurance that they would be supported in bringing about

some changes to existing processes “because I wasn't going to be the [person] that just oversaw what went on before” (HQ/A). This gives them the opportunity to determine how to approach some elements of the role, for example the decision to circulate draft policy or procedure to faculties for comment, which was not typical previously.

As would be expected of a relatively senior role within the organisation, the HoQ has a degree of freedom in how they design and deliver their work. They routinely reported to their line manager until the role fell vacant, and while the line manager had a broad overview of the work, this was not usually detailed. The HoQ also confirmed that none of their activity would be a surprise to their manager; they would expect their line manager to be aware of, and interested in, the work they were doing. In fact they often found their line manager to be a useful source of advice, or a sounding-board.

The HoQ reported that they have a good working relationship with senior staff. However, they appreciated that some of the Deans are relatively new in post and the relationships has “not really been tested very much” (HQ/A), with a suggestion that these new appointments may be more willing to challenge than their predecessors. The position with other academic staff is more nuanced. The HoQ spends much more of their time dealing with relatively senior staff, but they maintain good professional relationships with other academics: “that's really important to me, to maintain that connection” (HQ/A). They might have a chat over coffee, or on the phone. This is usually at the instigation of the academic (“Unidirectional I think is the phrase” (HQ/A)), because the HoQ is mindful of how precious the time of academic staff is. However, in discussion, they confirmed that these were mostly contacts from previous roles they had held within the HEI: “There isn't really a kind of a network of people that that you'd engage with regularly… on quality issues, for example” (HQ/A). The HoQ has obviously developed relationships with senior staff since their appointment to this role, but not more widely across the University.

When considering their engagement with activities beyond the core quality management role, the HoQ at Amberville reported that they engage “to an extent” (HQ/A) when they are invited to do so, which will usually arise when the group organiser sees a natural link between the group

remit and the HoQ's role, such as when discussing the inclusive curriculum. The HoQ confirmed that they could probably invite themselves to join such a group if they wish: "if I felt that… you know, there was a role to play there" (HQ/A). Neither of their colleagues was aware of the HoQ engaging except "with the hat of quality" (AC/A), although they also both commented on the breadth of this role and the consequent range of activity that this covers. The HoQ was also mindful of the need not to add to the workload of academic colleagues: "I tend to think, you know, if I'm going to take up the time of… an academic member, I need to have a reason for it" (HQ/A).

4.2.5 Summary of findings at Amberville University

The findings above provide strong evidence for Amberville's classification on the basis of the scoping survey as a centralised and hierarchical organisation. The central quality team undertakes much of the work associated with quality management, with comparatively little engagement from the faculties. Policy is generally centrally determined; there is a sense that feedback on proposals will be limited and - even if forthcoming – it is unlikely to impact on the final decision, although some compromises might be reached for discipline-specific reasons.

The HoQ is seen by all interviewees as exercising their professional autonomy within the quality management field; there is only limited engagement from faculties, and the HoQ can deploy legitimate position power to introduce proposals which are likely to be approved. They hold particular authority over implementation, which is executed through their team. However, there are restrictions to this: while the HoQ is a relatively senior position, there are others who are in more senior roles in the hierarchy and thus who can deploy their own legitimate position power to overrule or to challenge, most notably if the proposal would have an impact outside the central Quality team.

The HoQ has had little opportunity to personalise the role beyond setting parameters for the work of the Quality team, and seeking faculty views on proposals (albeit with limited success). The HoQ has a formal place within the University structure and operates within that space in the way they determine, but they hold very limited influence beyond that defined role.

4.3 Case Study 2: Head of Quality at Orangetown University

4.3.1 Orangetown: Description of the Case

Orangetown University is a medium-sized campus-based University of about 17,500 students, placing it at the lower end of the fourth quintile in a list of English providers with degree-awarding powers, ranked by size. About 20% of its students are from Overseas; 23% are on postgraduate awards (4% studying for research degrees). It has comprehensive subject coverage, and is largely based on a single campus. Typically, undergraduate applicants receive an offer of about 120 UCAS tariff points, making it a relatively inclusive, low-tariff institution. In the scoping survey, the HoQ characterised the University as hierarchical but devolved; it was therefore classified within the Orange quadrant of Figure 2.

4.3.2 Orangetown Main Theme 1: Perception of Organisational Type

Staffing arrangements at Orangetown University are less centralised than at Amberville. The Direct Report commented that, "In an ideal world, I would have the central quality team dealing with central quality matters, working with [the faculties], each faculty having a faculty quality officer with an almost exactly… the same job description as the other six quality officers" (DR/O), but evidently this is not the case, and faculty arrangements are largely dependent on how the faculty chooses to organise them.

The academic framework at Orangetown is also more flexible than at Amberville: "it is more principles. I think there is an expectation as to the fact that certain things are now fed into… curriculum development. But… how those aspects might be interpreted by colleagues and course teams will, could and probably should vary course to course" (AC/O); "We can have variations in a theme, if you like, as long as the general principles are adhered to" (LM/O). The Direct Report agreed: "We have a central structure… and there are some regulations that all faculties have to follow. And there are regulations which all faculties have to align to… in the way that

works best for their faculty" (DR/O). During the pandemic, this became more pronounced, with faculties accorded greater flexibility to deliver against the centrally agreed principles.

There continues to be a degree of central oversight: "so we came up with checklists, and we've got a framework" (HQ/O), and indeed the Line Manager noted that this was important because some faculties have interpreted the framework more flexibly than was intended: "We like to maintain equity across all of it, because otherwise the students will start complaining" (LM/O). However, there is a consistent view that within this framework, faculties are responsible for interpreting their own response, and implementing that response.

All interviewees agreed that an element of hierarchy was inevitable:

> "Most organisations have… an element of hierarchy… otherwise it just ends up with chaos… There has to be some level of accountability and structure and people taking increased amounts of responsibility as one moves through… an organisation." (AC/O)

The deliberative committee structure, with the power to make decisions about academic matters, is not free of this sense of hierarchy. Both the Vice-Chancellor, and the Chair of the Academic Standards Committee, are identified as having voices it is hard to counteract, even within the deliberative forum. There is a stronger sense of hierarchy than a straightforward line management structure. One interviewee summarised the position as: "The senior leadership come up with ideas and we have to try and make them work or pour cold water on them" (DR/O). This individual has worked at several HEIs and characterises Orangetown as the one which is most "led from the top": "Sometimes you get the top saying, 'go off and do this' to the faculties… and the faculties then have to then go off and do it, without knowing why they've been told to go off and do it" (DR/O).

This interviewee went on to add that: "You don't tend to challenge… the seniority of people within there", and subsequently stated that, "it's almost a 'know your place' culture. And, you know, don't step out of that. And… that has diminished slightly as I've become more senior in the institution, which kind of adds strength to my argument" (DR/O).

The HoQ shared this view, noting that while Deans have considerable powers within their own faculties, “if they want to… do something that involves more than their own area, then they're very quickly, it’s the VC, the DVC, possibly the PVCs, who will decide whether or not that's going ahead, thank you” (HQ/O). They went on to comment that “There are elements that are very centralised, or it’s a bit like a politburo, the very senior Vice Chancellor’s Group” (HQ/O). They did also recognise that this is not particularly unusual within HEIs, and that while they would be cautious about a direct challenge to senior staff, it could sometimes be possible to make a counter-argument through individual conversations, although “you know when you're on a hiding to nothing and you know where you can challenge” (HQ/O).

The University recognises that people are its most important asset (AC/O), and expects them to be accountable for their work, but within the wider framing set by senior leaders. The HoQ reported that they are keen to be consultative, and to include staff from across the University when developing plans in response to decisions of the central Academic Standards Committee. The detailed plans are thus not centrally imposed. However, the line manager, who also chairs this Committee, is clear that no policy is approved without their personal agreement; and they also recognise the authority which is held by the senior team, who were all appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and are trusted to deliver within their areas, over which they have considerable control (LM/O).

The primary influence over the devolved and hierarchical structure was commonly agreed to be the Vice-Chancellor and, to a lesser extent, the senior management team, some of whom are also long-standing. “[They’ve] fashioned the institution in [their] image over that time” (HQ/O), and the senior team was then given significant authority over the areas for which they were respectively responsible. All interviewees indicated that they would expect quite significant change in the event of a new Vice-Chancellor.

4.3.3 Orangetown Main Theme 2: Perceptions of the Head of Quality as 'Ruler'

The HoQ at Orangetown does not consider themselves to be the ruler within the quality management realm – a view endorsed by the Direct Report – but their line manager disagreed, commenting that this was "because [they've] probably got more depth of knowledge than I have" (LM/O). There are obvious limits to this authority, in that the line manager themselves will intervene if they disagree with a policy approach. The HoQ confirmed that they are in regular contact with their line manager, and discuss their work openly; this is important because the line manager is willing to intervene to halt any proposal they are not comfortable with. The HoQ does not proceed with any activity which the line manager is not aware of.

There is a shared view that the HoQ is the leader of the Quality team; each of their direct reports has dedicated responsibilities, but they do not proceed with an activity without the knowledge and support of the HoQ: "No, they are my line manager" (DR/O). All the direct reports keep the HoQ well informed about their activities, and there is recognition that the HoQ is in a much stronger position to intervene or engage with other senior staff if required – they can use their "clout" in getting things done (DR/O).

The HoQ is described as "the strategic lead for all Quality functions within the university… they're the person who is responsible for making sure that our office runs the way it should do and it does what it's meant to do… their role is… to carry the can for the whole office" (DR/O). This demonstrates a certain level of authority and accountability; the line management of the team is one area where the HoQ has considerable autonomy and independence.

The HoQ has an essential role in ensuring statutory compliance. The HoQ also commented that faculties "do tend to look to the central services to solve it for them" (HQ/O). This suggests a reasonable degree of legitimate position power, potentially supplemented with an element of expert power which depends on the credibility of the HoQ, or referent power if the HoQ has built good relationships across the HEI. However, the recognition of the authority of the HoQ within their own field does not translate into absolute authority to act. Theirs is a view to be taken seriously, so they can exercise their authority in developing proposals or influencing

decisions, using both their position and their expertise, but they do not have the authority to determine an outcome. The HoQ described themselves as a "very influential stakeholder" (HQ/O); their authority is restricted by the stronger voice for the faculties in a devolved organisation, as well as by the strength of hierarchical control. The University does not seek to implement "without a consensus framework" (LM/O); the HoQ cannot simply ignore a proposal from the faculty, "nor can they just force something through because they think it's a great idea on a Monday morning" (AC/O). Despite this limitation, there is some scepticism from the Quality professionals that the faculties would use the power they hold:

> "I can't think of anything recently that's been thrown out by a committee." (DR/O)

This comparative lack of engagement from faculties extends to the development of changes to quality management policy or process. While all changes ultimately require formal committee approval, and in theory they might originate in various ways, in practice most proposals emerge from the central Quality team. Some proposals might also emerge from University-wide processes involving academic staff, such as departmental reviews, which provide a voice for the wider community. While the central team will be responsible for taking these forward, "I don't think there is opportunity for… HQ just to, you know, kill it, forget about it… because it will come back full circle at some point" (AC/O) through the annual reporting round. If it endorses the general principle, Academic Standards Committee will usually set up a working group, led by the HoQ and comprising members from across the community, to develop the detailed proposal. This is a relatively new development, introduced by the current HoQ; previously there had been a "culture of Quality doesn't listen. Quality just makes up rules and doesn't understand how they have to be implemented in the real world" (HQ/O). There is recognition that the HoQ is "very open, and very willing to hear opinions from elsewhere within the organisation, and therefore… that's welcome, I would say" (AC/O). The HoQ has sought to ensure that "we work much more collaboratively and ideas can come from anywhere" (HQ/O). This was supported by the Academic staff member interviewed, who commented that "if something is open to consultation, then it *is* a consultation. You know, I've seen some places a consultation might be called a consultation, but there's limited consultation that actually goes on" (AC/O). There is scope for compromise if a proposal is not unanimously endorsed, which might for example

include a pilot in an area which is likely to have less impact. Proposed policy changes are usually introduced in response either to changes in the external regulatory environment, to secure greater consistency across the University, or to bring about enhanced efficiency.

The HoQ is responsible for operating an effective quality management framework, but as described above, their opinion is not always decisive: "If my manager overruled it, and said, 'Well, I don't agree with you, I think this is a great idea' then we'd still be doing it," (HQ/O); this view was endorsed by the line manager, who is also Chair of the Academic Standards Committee so has the power to block a proposal they disagree with. Beyond the Chair, however, there is little evidence that the Committee is likely to challenge a proposal which has reached approval stage, and it would require a majority of faculties to oppose the change for it not to be approved.

Once a policy or process has been agreed, the HoQ (and their team) is responsible for ensuring that it is implemented across the University. As described above, this can lead to a sense that the HoQ is simply imposing the rules, and they described how they are seeking to "move us on from that rather… old fashioned view, you know, of Quality as just some sort of grumpy police force, while I wanted – we *are* sometimes a bit grumpy, and we *do* have to police things. But… we're actually there to provide a service and we're there to facilitate things that need to get done. Just the same as any other service" (HQ/O).

In a devolved but hierarchical organisation, this auditing responsibility takes on a particular character. Greater devolution of responsibility to faculties, together with the adoption of principles or frameworks as opposed to rules, means that: "faculties are quite autonomous. So we can have variations in a theme" (LM/O); "how the course teams implement that framework and those principles...it is not a one size fits all" (AC/O). Faculties welcome the devolved responsibility, with the majority of operational staff based within the faculties, and staffing structures determined by the faculty, but a consequence is that implementation is not always consistent. Faculties are required to provide checklists to demonstrate how the principles have been adhered to, but there is also recognition that offering this flexibility entails a risk that some interpretations might fall outside University expectations, with the result that the HoQ and their

team must audit practice, or review other sources of evidence such as the checklists, to assure compliance with the framework.

Both the method of policy development – with working groups of staff drawn from across the university – and the devolution of implementation to faculties, have the advantage that they underline the shared responsibility for quality management, which is aligned to the University's values: "There's just something about that team-based way of working, that community-based way of working" (AC/O). There is recognition that any policy or process has to be practical for each discipline area, including those which might need to comply with the requirements of professional, regulatory or statutory bodies (PSRBs). Once the central framework has been agreed, it is assumed that faculties will implement this, but this is supported through formal working relationships, such as the participation of members of the central Quality team on Faculty committees. More informally, it is not uncommon for faculty staff to contact the HoQ to seek advice or guidance on specific issues, taking responsibility and ensuring that they have understood the policy implications correctly.

The extent to which the HoQ can exercise their professional authority might be constrained by the extent to which faculties exert their own authority to make proposals, or to challenge the HoQ's views or approach. To date, this has been minimal at Orangetown: "I'm not sure really whether faculties… would have necessarily brought anything very much. They still don't, to be perfectly honest. They bring problems rather than solutions" (HQ/O), although there is an acceptance that this is gradually changing, and "there is opportunity for faculties to… offer real suggestion and really shape things" (AC/O). While the final locus of decision-making on policy and process remains with the central Committees, the devolution of operational responsibility to the faculties means that academic staff can be quite engaged with quality management processes: "Generally the resistance tends to come from people who don't quite understand what it is we're trying to achieve" (DR/O), and there is a broad sense from all interviewees that faculties are engaging more regularly. This engagement is not focused on particular areas of work, and there is no sense that the HoQ holds greater authority in a specific aspect of the role. Nevertheless, both the devolution of power to faculties, and the strength of hierarchical control, necessarily curtail the HoQ's legitimate position power, so they might seek to supplement this

through developing referent power (by building strong relationships with colleagues) or expert power in specific areas to generate greater 'power to act' as an autonomous professional.

4.3.4 Orangetown Main Theme 3: Perception of ways in which the Head of Quality has personalised the role

The HoQ at Orangetown has a degree of professional autonomy facilitated through the structure of the organisation. They are the leader of their team, so have an important role in ensuring regulatory compliance in quality management, as set out in the job description. The management structure is reasonably settled, and the HoQ does not anticipate that a new appointment to the role would result in major changes:

> "There are lots of well-established working practices, processes and systems that would actually, even if you did want to put a bomb under it, would, would stop you from doing anything very quickly." (HQ/O)

The Direct Report, who has been employed at Orangetown for longer than the HoQ, is unclear whether the current structure has been deliberately designed or has evolved, but confirmed that the University would have changed it had it not considered it effective.

Within that structure, the HoQ has taken some deliberate steps to personalise the role, or make it their own. They commented that, "the way that my predecessor did the job was clearly very different… I've definitely done things my way, since I've come in, and effected quite a lot of changes as a result of that… what I'm talking about having made my own is much more around the interpersonal side" (HQ/O). This was endorsed by colleagues, who reported that the current HoQ is much more "willing to hear opinions from elsewhere within the organisation" (AC/O), "collegiate" (DR/O), "interactive" and "flexible" (LM/O) than their predecessor; and indeed "there's no reason for them not to make the role what they want it to be" (LM/O).

The HoQ has positive working relationships with senior staff, although "if you've done something that they like, you're flavour of the month. If you've had to tell them off because

they're not compliant with something… then of course you're all, all things bad" (HQ/O). Engagement with other academic staff is more limited: "I don't tend to have *that* much contact with the more junior members of academic staff in faculties" (HQ/O), although there could be contact through working groups or student casework; this is more contact than their predecessor may have had. Relationships are described as professional and respectful. There are also pre-existing cross-faculty networks for specific areas of University work such as research with which the HoQ can engage when required.

More significantly, the HoQ has established a regular meeting between their team and the local faculty managers, "because I felt that that was an area where comms weren't all that they might have been. And again, there was very much an 'us and them' sort of approach when I first came into post" (HQ/O). This is intended as a forum for honest conversation on each side, and an opportunity to share any concerns and agree solutions: "it's very informal, but it seems to be working" (HQ/O).

The HoQ has also identified ways of taking actions forward which will not be universally popular. "What I would do in that situation is work with others" (HQ/O); this might include securing support from those Deans or other senior staff who are in favour of a proposal and using this as a base to achieve results, even with the recognition that other Deans may not be in support. The HoQ also has two other professional services heads with whom they meet regularly: "sometimes…you just want another pair of eyes on it, don't you, just sensible, critical friends" (HQ/O). These three heads can create quite a powerful alliance if required, which can drive forward specific actions. Creating alliances can be valuable as a way of negotiating ways through the hierarchical structure.

The HoQ spoke enthusiastically about the opportunities to engage more broadly across the HEI:

> "Yeah, absolutely. It's that last bit on the job description about anything else we decide is appropriate, isn't it? It's great, that's the bit I probably like best, because that's where you get into all the interesting challenges. I'm always talking my way into meetings

> and… onto working groups and things just because… I like to know what's going on out there" (HQ/O).

This might be the result of an invitation to join a group, but might equally be initiated by the HoQ. This approach was explicitly endorsed by their line manager who, when asked whether the HoQ would regularly get involved in activity outside the formal remit, responded:

> "Oh, of course they do. We all do. And that's what I say, we're very agile. We're very nosy. Umm, and we like to stick our fingers in things. So, we do! [laughs]" (LM/O)

By contrast, both the Academic staff member and the Direct Report expressed doubt that the HoQ would engage more broadly in this way, expressing the view that the role is already very demanding. This suggests either that they are less familiar with the range of activities which the HoQ undertakes, or that they already see the role as extremely broad, with almost any activity being a legitimate area of interest for the HoQ.

4.3.5 Summary of findings at Orangetown University

Orangetown University operates a devolved structure, with most of the staff responsible for the implementation of policy and process based within the faculties. The academic framework is common, but is principles-based, which allows faculties flexibility in implementation. Under the influence of the HoQ, there has been an increase in faculty engagement, and a belief that consultation responses will be taken seriously. However there is still a strong sense of hierarchy, with the most important decisions made by the senior leadership, without whose agreement proposals are unlikely to be approved.

The HoQ at Orangetown has less legitimate position power than the HoQ in a centralised organisation, as they are required to consult more widely on proposals, and also have limited control over implementation. Faculties hold greater responsibility, and this necessarily curtails the HoQ's 'power to act' independently within the quality management sphere.

At Orangetown, the HoQ has exercised their professional autonomy to establish different, and more consultative, ways of approaching their role by comparison with their predecessor. This has value in a devolved organisation such as Orangetown, where it may be necessary to influence staff within faculties as well as those who have a formal role on central committees. The HoQ has also identified the opportunity to develop additional social power through the development of good working relationships with key individuals (referent power), or through establishing their expertise and thereby securing a stronger voice than their position would otherwise allow (expert power).

4.4 Case Study 3: Head of Quality at Tealborough University

4.4.1 Tealborough University: Summary of the Case

Tealborough University is a fairly large campus-based University of about 25,000 students, placing it at the lower end of the fifth quintile in a list of English providers with degree-awarding powers, ranked by size. It has the largest proportion of Overseas students of the three case study HEIs, at about 38%; and its typical UCAS offer is also the highest, at approximately 150 tariff points. However, it has a lower percentage of postgraduate students than Amberville, with around 34%; whilst a slightly higher proportion (6%) are studying for a research degree. Tealborough University has a comprehensive subject coverage and is largely based on a single campus. In the scoping survey, the HoQ characterised the University as being values-based and devolved, supporting the classification of it as lying within the Teal quadrant of Figure 2.

As noted in section 3.5.4, this may give the impression that organisational type is simply a function of the size of HEI by student population; however, the results of the scoping survey showed that this is not the case, with larger providers identified in all three quadrants under discussion. It is also noteworthy that all interviewees at Tealborough agreed that its organisational structure has been consistent over many years, including through periods of significant growth; its ethos has always been values-based and devolved.

4.4.2 Tealborough Main Theme 1: Perception of Organisational Type

Tealborough operates a devolved staffing arrangement. The University has a "hub and spoke" model, with a small number of staff working within the central Quality Team who each have explicit links to support a particular Faculty, and who can have "honest conversations" (HQ/T) with professional staff within the Faculty to identify any areas where agreed policy is not being followed. Recently the HoQ has established a discussion forum for central Quality staff and those responsible in the faculties, reporting that "we had about 86 people sign up to the last one" (HQ/T). The majority of quality management work at Tealborough is thus carried out locally.

The academic framework at Tealborough is designed to be flexible and to permit considerable local variation. This is seen by all Tealborough interviewees as desirable, in response to both discipline differences and, potentially, the requirements of external professional bodies, but "when the university makes a policy, we assume departments stick to it" (AC/T). This can bring complications: "It does seem certain policies get interpreted very, very differently in [specific named faculties]" (AC/T). One of the roles of the HoQ in this organisational structure is to monitor any local variations and "work those cases through" (LM/T) to ensure that University policy is being followed. There is some evidence that this approach still has some limitations:

> "Often we find, we get a question coming up from a faculty and I say, well, why are you even asking that question? Because, that's violating our policy and we go back and find out what they've been doing for the last year and they haven't been doing it right". (AC/T)

Attention has been paid to determining where the line is drawn between local and central authority: clarifying what faculties are permitted to do, and where they require University approval. There was agreement by all interviewees that this demarcation has now been set out clearly.

In the view of the HoQ, "Tealborough is highly devolved… it's really impossible, I think, to have command and control at Tealborough" (HQ/T). However, interviewees also recognise that

the extent of local interpretation is not necessarily effective for the student experience, and has created some unintended challenges in areas such as the delivery of joint degrees: “It was one of the things we grappled with a bit… is recognising that we needed a bit more centralisation on, on some aspects where it is important that all students can expect consistency” (DR/T). Tealborough has therefore commenced a process of moving towards a more centralised approach for some aspects of its academic framework.

Overall, there is a much less pronounced sense of hierarchy at Tealborough than at either of the other cases. There are examples of senior management decision-making which overrides the expert advice they have received, but these were cited as individual instances; the ethos at Tealborough is of shared values, with consensus required to make any major changes. This is often time-consuming, but progress will not be made without considerable engagement with the academic community. Some dissatisfaction was expressed with this situation, with a longing for the supposed simplicity of a more hierarchical structure: “I hear about other colleagues coming from or going to other institutions and talking about much more managerial top-down structures and I was thinking, ‘oh, if only’” (DR/T).

Senate is responsible for approving significant policy changes; there is a very definite sense that Senate is independently-minded. There is recognition that Deans can be “considerable players” (HQ/T), especially those in the larger faculties with the associated level of resource, and also that control can be exercised through financial decisions relating to faculty budget plans (“that’s where the lever of power is, is in the finances”) (LM/T). The strongest hierarchy at Tealborough is that “we are very much a university that’s still led by the academy” (LM/T), which can give professional services staff a “credibility issue” (HQ/T).

However, there is also a sense that the professional services are genuinely valued for their expertise, and are not simply overruled as being somehow less important:

> “It's one of the few institutions I've worked at where I don't feel a second-class citizen… People just have the same expectations that you're going to produce, that you're going to know what you're talking about.” (HQ/T)

No proposal, from any part of the organisation, will simply be ruled out; it might still be possible to take some criticism on board, amend the proposal and build a broad consensus.

An interesting feature which emerged at Tealborough related explicitly to the approach which the University is seeking to implement in relation to quality management:

> "I think that there's a longer-term structural change in all QA [Quality Assurance] teams, regardless of where I've worked. They've gone from QA to QE [Quality Enhancement], in effect. They've gone from inputs and means to outputs and ends, umm I think regardless of, of external regulatory requirements" (LM/T).

The line manager later described how staff are moving away from being "the old-style QA form-fillers" or "a team that sits an ivory tower or sits in university house… that sends out templates", and instead are increasingly focusing on partnering with academic faculties: "it's about really genuinely improving the learning experience in the classroom" (LM/T). This suggests a strong commitment to collegial working and the development of a shared vision of quality across the HEI, in accordance with the shared values.

The primary driver of the organisational structure and ways of working at Tealborough is the history of the HEI. Strong devolution of responsibility to faculties, bound to the central departments through shared values, is the essence of the University. There was agreement that this arrangement could be unwieldy, but it is a central ethos. It is unlikely that the Council would appoint a new Vice-Chancellor who would seek to change this, and even if they did so, it would be very difficult: "you're turning an oil tanker round… and there would be… many hard battles to do that" (LM/T).

4.4.3 Tealborough Main Theme 2: Perceptions of the Head of Quality as 'Ruler'

The HoQ at Tealborough did not consider themselves to be a ruler in the quality management realm. Their Direct Report suggested that they were "a co-ruler, with the academic leads"

(DR/T); the Line Manager suggested that HQ was the ruler, but went on to identify at least three other senior postholders who would be involved: “ultimately we are an academic led institution” (LM/T) so the Pro-Vice Chancellor Academic would have the authority to overrule if they took a significantly different view.

The HoQ was nevertheless clearly identified as “being the leader and figurehead for the team” (DR/T) across the University. They “would do more of the leadership work and thinking about where we as a team are going” (DR/T). Three of the four interviewees commented directly on the importance of the HoQ managing the team, directing their work and “making sure that they're doing their job properly” (LM/T); as the line manager commented: “My point is you can pull rank at the end of the day” (LM/T). Despite this recognition, the HoQ was more circumspect: “It's not all about the cult of the personality” (HQ/T). They were keen to stress that, while they might be the head of the team, all members have an important role to play in delivering the work of the office in supporting the quality management framework:

> “Actually, it's about the people that work with you. And I think that if you like, my influence, then, is probably felt better through my colleagues who have that direct relationship [with faculty professional staff]” (HQ/T).

The locus of decision-making power in respect of quality management is quite nuanced:

> “Nothing would be decided without [the Head of Quality]'s input. And often, they are more knowledgeable, so we defer.” “Everyone trusts them explicitly.” (AC/T)

> “[The Head of Quality]’s view would be taken very, very seriously in that... the strength of the opinion is respected very, very strongly… in those sorts of discussions.” (LM/T)

The HoQ themselves recognised this also, commenting that “People just have the same expectations that you're going to produce, that you're going to know what you're talking about... Their expectations are that you will be sufficiently sewn into the system to understand why you're there” (HQ/T). This sense of being respected within the University, and acknowledged as

a legitimate player, was very strong across all Tealborough interviewees. The HoQ has a degree of devolved authority to act, and has:

> "a huge amount of delegated authority to take the lead on behalf of the entire institution on quality matters". "I would expect [them] to use their judgement and discretion, and know when to escalate matters and when not to escalate matters". (LM/T)

This apparently elevated status at Tealborough must be contextualised against the observations made in section 4.4.2. Tealborough is "very much a university that's still led by the academy" (LM/T) where "there's sometimes a credibility issue for folks like us" (HQ/T). The strength of devolution, and the focus on shared values rather than hierarchy, also entails an expectation that the central professional services will lead in their own area of expertise. The HoQ is well supported by their Line Manager, described as "someone who would be there if you needed them to be there" (DR/T), and the HoQ would not seek to operate "clandestinely'" (HQ/T).

This recognition of expertise does not translate into the authority to act. The HoQ is responsible for ensuring that policies are being implemented effectively, and for developing proposals in response to quality management matters, using their professional judgement to determine priorities and approaches. Nevertheless, in terms of policy approval, theirs is a view to be taken seriously, rather than a casting vote: "There's no command and control, umm it's all a process of subtle negotiation, persuasion, individual conversations with heads of department" (HQ/T). Apart from their authority as the leader of the Quality team, the HoQ has very limited legitimate position power. In a democratic organisation, consensus-building is essential, and there is a real sense that Senate can and will vote down proposals; as an academic-led institution, this is not uncommon. The HoQ said that it can be "tempting to sit therefore in the centre of things, make pronouncements and never have to live the outcomes" (HQ/T), but that if a proposal comes forward from a faculty that they disagree with, "the best thing I could do was shape it" (HQ/T), rather than being able to block it, despite the very high regard in which they are held across the HEI. Initial proposals for change might be developed through the Quality team, especially in relation to the external regulatory environment, but they also arise regularly from faculties especially where "existing rules are leading to problems or misinterpretation" (AC/T).

A small group of senior academic and professional staff, including the HoQ, will review an initial proposal and "that's where the real challenge, I think, takes place" (LM/T). There is no involvement at this stage from the wider community. However, once the proposal has been agreed by this group, there will be an extensive consultation period, including focus groups with senior faculty colleagues; faculty education committees; and other University committees which may have an interest. "It's not something we can just develop and roll out centrally and expect everyone to follow. There has to be an awful lot of consultation, and discussion to understand implications… it's time consuming, but… there has to be a lot of engagement across the academic community" (DR/T). Ultimately, a consensus is required: "we need to be careful and make sure we're working collegially" (HQ/T). It is evident that the senior committees, including Senate, are active in their review of proposals and willing to act independently (which necessitates the extensive consultation to reach a consensus position). To secure approval, a proposal must be aligned with the University's values and culture; notably, proposals which will streamline processes or reduce the burden on academic staff are most likely to gain support.

While the HoQ is responsible for implementing an effective quality management framework which meets external regulatory requirements as well as internal University priorities, decisions about quality management matters are always collective. This is not a matter of the HoQ's view being overruled; this would not be an appropriate way of describing the situation at Tealborough, as it implies that a view is reached which is then rejected. The HoQ at Tealborough, despite their standing within the University, does not have the necessary authority to reach that initial view. Their legitimate position power is extremely limited, as no one individual can impose a solution. A proposal will not even start its consultation journey unless it has the agreement of the senior academic and professional staff group – "and we *have* knocked back on things" (LM/T). In addition, any proposal which requires additional resource can be vetoed by the Finance Department, which might view this as a cost rather than an investment (LM/T).

The HoQ recognises that they, in conjunction with their team, hold a responsibility for ensuring that agreed policies and processes are enacted across the University. This audit function is a core element of the role:

> "Often your role is to police and say no... and that's fine as long as people understand why you're saying no. I think that's sometimes a bit of a failing… in administrative roles I've worked in, and I've been guilty of it myself in the past. I've said no and enjoyed the power of the no without the explanation." (HQ/T)

However, the HoQ went on to add that, "Police isn't the right approach for an institution like this one" (HQ/T). At a democratic and devolved HEI such as Tealborough, the process of ensuring compliance with the framework is more complex. "Certain policies get interpreted very, very differently" (AC/T) in different faculties, based on size of faculty or discipline, and this is considered during the policy development process, but this is not a fool-proof process and there have been occasions where it later came to light that a policy was not being implemented as anticipated. In these instances, the HoQ will work "very carefully with them to help them understand *why* we need to do this *in* the way that we need to do it. We've shared with them, if you like, the risks, the benefits" (HQ/T). In addition, the Quality team is expected to "ask questions about 'what does this mean for the students and for the student learning experience?', rather than simply getting assurance that a particular policy has been implemented" (LM/T). The HoQ is expected to account for any deviations from policy, and to support faculties in meeting University expectations by understanding why compliance is a challenge and seeking solutions through difficult, honest conversations, and:

> "That's really what I see the role as. I'm not necessarily taking the load off them, I'm explaining why it should be important to them too." "I try to find ways to allow our colleagues to see where their responsibility kicks in." (HQ/T)

The extensive consultation, both formal and informal, is indicative of a wide acceptance of a shared responsibility for quality management; this was expressed by interviewees. Once the central framework has been agreed, it is assumed that faculties will implement this, with

professional staff within the faculty supported by staff within the Quality team. The shared responsibility was referenced widely: “It's collaborative with the academic leads in the area. So I think it's not a sole responsibility, I think it's more of a shared responsibility” (DR/T); this was also supported by the Academic, who commented that “There's a two-way dialogue” (AC/T). Indeed, there is a strong sense of the HoQ and their team working in genuine collaboration with faculties to identify problems and possible solutions. “They've had to become far more problem solvers” (LM/T), and this interviewee went on to say that Tealborough had sought to:

> “get away from… the people who are very, very much about the means, very much about the processes, if you like, the old style QA form-fillers… Towards people who are enthusiastic and excited about higher education and the student experience… Yes, we can write a policy on peer mentoring… it's not enough to write the policy, you know, you have to partner up with an academic department, say, this is how you do it, this is what works, this… this is what doesn't work… it’s about really genuinely improving the learning experience in the classroom, rather than running a team that sits an ivory tower or sits in university house umm that sends out templates.” (LM/T)

This quote indicates the importance of a shared, University-wide vision of what constitutes success. Unlike in a centralised HEI, at Tealborough the development of policy also requires a process of working through the implications with individual devolved units, providing advice and guidance on how it can be implemented in their context. There is a strong team commitment to developing and delivering policy across the University.

The HoQ also expressed this view, describing the importance of staff having sufficient credibility to work with faculties and act as “the glue, in the most successful of circumstances, that holds it together” (HQ/T), building a close relationship with faculties but not going ‘native’, and still having honest conversations about the challenges. The HoQ is in the process of extending their team to create a unit explicitly to support academic staff on policy, regulation, academic development, learning technology and student engagement, so that “when we were asking academic colleagues to respond to stuff, whether that's external or internal, we triage it. We support them, if you like. So we’ll…be able to take them through the various requirements

in tandem, rather than them feel it's being done to them, if you see what I mean. The best way I think we can achieve that is by working together rather than a set of separate professional services" (HQ/T).

As has been described above, Tealborough has strong academic engagement with quality management proposals. It is reasonably common for proposals to emerge from the academic community. These might come through a variety of routes, including local committees but also direct contact with a senior member of staff, or a member of the Quality team: "it depends on which route they think is going to be most effective" (DR/T). The absence of a command and control structure, and the need for negotiation, means that major policy changes are complex, involving focus groups and senior committees within each faculty as well as various central groups, such that a first draft might be under discussion for an academic term. Considering overall approval:

> "Because that would take 12 months, you're doing these things 12 months in advance. And if you're lucky, you manage to get it for the next academic year and of course, you have to start these things at the beginning of an academic year…". (AC/T)

The Academic who was interviewed reported that some of these processes were fast-tracked in response to the pandemic because of the urgency of making swift decisions – and that this was effective – but there is also recognition that this approach made significant demands on staff time, and is not sustainable moving forward.

This level of academic engagement with quality processes results in a complex process of negotiation in the exercise of authority for the HoQ. Overall, the HoQ considers themselves to hold greatest authority when reporting on the external environment (especially matters of regulatory compliance): "I think it's probably the reason I was hired" (HQ/T). They also hold clear authority when dealing with matters of academic regulation or governance; this was described as "the power to be the arbiter of those regulations" (LM/T).

4.4.4 Tealborough Main Theme 3: Perception of ways in which the Head of Quality has personalised the role

The devolved and democratic structure of Tealborough University offers a clear opportunity for the HoQ to shape aspects of how the role is performed, within the normal confines of the University organisational and management structure. This structure would remain in place in the event of a change of postholder:

> "The responsibilities of the post would remain the same. Fundamentally, remain the same... Whoever is in that post has to be able to fit in with that dynamic." (LM/T)

It is essential that the HoQ should be able to engage effectively with academic leads and work within the parameters of the University structure; the Line Manager reported that the HoQ has particularly brought a much better understanding of the external environment, together with some strong connections with colleagues across the sector. The HoQ themselves considers that this was a key factor in their appointment. They have also brought a clear ethos on "joining dots" (HQ/T) and articulating the quality management framework as a whole, rather than individual policies or processes to be followed; they have proactively supported their staff in developing this greater awareness. In addition, colleagues referenced the HoQ as being "more approachable and friendly" (AC/T) and also having demonstrated "credibility and integrity" (LM/T) in how the role is performed; they also opined that any replacement would probably undertake the role differently again, although also within the same structures.

The importance of building relationships cross the University was emphasised by interviewees because of the devolved and democratic structure of the organisation with a focus on shared values:

> "Quality is managed through people... It's managed through relationships and it's managed through understanding those disciplinary differences… it's through influence, it's through negotiation. And that's why having somebody who's got credibility and integrity in the place like [the Head of Quality] is really, really important. Whereas I

> think it would be, you know, if you have somebody who's just simply very directive but quite remote from the teaching experience and wasn't able to communicate effectively with academics… it would be very, very difficult to get things done." (LM/T)

Internal relationships are vital in a democratic organisation with strong devolution of powers. The Line Manager clearly holds the view that someone who anticipates a central imposition of the rules, without personal engagement and an appreciation of the local differences which apply in a devolved organisation, would not be effective; building the personal relationships across the University is crucial to success.

The HoQ reported that they have good working relationships with senior staff, although they were "still developing" (HQ/T), in part caused by the disruption of the pandemic, although the senior academic confirmed that "there's lots and lots of mutual respect, actually... I mean, everyone trusts [them] explicitly" (AC/T).

The strong sense of quality being managed through people and relationships – rather than through policies and process – is also evident in the way the HoQ described their role in working with academics, initially through engagement in routine quality management practice. This is helped by having participated in a comprehensive staff induction programme and is in addition to being invited to join networks established by the line manager. They are also engaged in some voluntary, University-wide initiatives, which has introduced them to a wide range of staff who they might not otherwise encounter.

The HoQ went on to describe how:

> "I've got a network of professional services colleagues as well, at my level, through… various mechanisms that were already in place. But I think… you find your own allies, you find those who see things similarly to you or actually who see them quite differently, and they're all the more interesting because of it. So I've built my own, if you like." (HQ/T)

In addition, the HoQ has established a more formal network between their team and the faculty administrative staff: “What we try and do is – let's talk through some of the changes that we've initiated. How is it landing? What are the challenges that you've found?” (HQ/T).

As such, the HoQ is remarkably well connected across the University. When asked if they engage with activities outside their formal role, the HoQ immediately responded “yes, because you're actually encouraged to” (HQ/T). They went on to comment on their experience during the pandemic, where “if you throw yourself in and you get yourself involved at the outset, then what happened…was that you would be asked to join other things as a… result of that” (HQ/T). This was supported by the Academic, who commented, “[They] seem to do everything. [They’re] one of those people that I think never says no” (AC/T). However, the Academic went on to suggest that the HoQ has a broad remit and would be unlikely to engage outside their field unless specifically requested to do so; this was a view shared by the Direct Report, who explained that:

> “There are times when we will have a chat about whether… something [we’re] doing is outside of our responsibility – should we be stepping in and making things happen, or being supportive, or should we step back?” (DR/T)

There appears to be a distinction here between ‘doing something’ – actively taking on additional responsibilities or workload – and being engaged in discussion, for example about informing or shaping University policy. The HoQ was clear that they will engage “beyond the natural remit of my role” (HQ/T) when this seems appropriate; this was strongly supported by the line manager who commented that:

> “[The Head of Quality] has a broader view around education. So, you know, if there are debates on our employability strategy, or our widening participation strategy, they'll get involved in that.” “[The Head of Quality] would invite themselves to, because… you might be there wearing a particular hat or a particular job title, but everyone is welcome to comment and challenge everyone else because, you know… nobody has a monopoly of, of opinion or knowledge… So [Head of Quality] would never speak up for the sake

of it. But they would certainly… speak up and offer that challenge, criticism or, or suggestion." (LM/T)

4.4.5 Summary of findings at Tealborough University

Tealborough has strong devolution of responsibility for the implementation of policy and considerable flexibility within the central framework to allow for responses to disciplinary differences. There is also a perception of genuine University-wide consultation on proposed policy changes, which often requires individual discussion and negotiation; policy is never centrally imposed. While there is inevitably an element of hierarchy, this is not pronounced and there is no individual who has a decisive voice, not even the Vice-Chancellor; there is always a need to build consensus about any proposal. This is part of the history and ethos of the University, and there is no sense that it is likely to change.

The HoQ is held in considerable esteem and there is recognition of the expertise of the role in terms of quality management. However, in a strongly devolved and democratic culture such as Tealborough, the authority to decide or to act is restricted; there is no individual who can properly be called a ruler, or who has sufficient legitimate position power to impose an outcome.

The devolved and democratic structure of Tealborough means that *how* the role is performed is of central importance to effectiveness. To deliver successfully, the HoQ must engage regularly and effectively with academic staff across the HEI, developing referent power through the strength of the relationships they establish, and expert power through demonstrating their insight and expertise. The HoQ recognises that strong personal relationships are essential, to support the ongoing need to negotiate and build consensus and to understand any challenges which need to be addressed. They have taken active steps to respond positively to this need, both for themselves and their team. This extensive engagement also offers the opportunity to contribute views on a wide range of issues, some of which are clearly outside the scope of the formal role.

4.5 Cross-case thematic comparison of the role played by Heads of Quality

As discussed in sections 3.4 and 3.8, the value of cross-case comparison is that it enables complex issues to be explored and evaluated in context, leading to a deeper understanding of both behaviours and practices. This final section of the chapter summarises the most significant findings drawn from a comparison of the three cases in relation to the research questions, with a focus on organisational type; authority and social power; and the deployment of professional autonomy. The cross-case themes are discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

4.5.1 Organisational type

The findings provide strong evidence to support the provisional allocation of organisational type according to three of the quadrants in fig. 2. Amberville University, as a centralised and hierarchical organisation, has a central quality unit which is responsible for the operation of quality management processes. It also has a rigid academic framework, with very limited flexibility, under the oversight of the HoQ. While there is a full deliberative committee structure, dissent from the faculty representatives is rare, as summarised in the observation that "policy decisions are made at the top and filter down" (HQ/A). Interviewees at Amberville had a clear sense that it was a small University, despite the number of student enrolments confirming it as medium-sized.

Orangetown University was identified by its interviewees as a devolved yet hierarchical organisation. The implementation of quality management processes at Orangetown is the responsibility of staff based within the faculties; these local arrangements are determined by the faculties themselves. There is consequently much less central control than at Amberville. The academic framework is also more flexible; it is principles-based, allowing for local interpretation according to discipline. However, faculties are required to complete checklists to demonstrate that their practices are aligned to the framework. There is a strong sense of hierarchy and of an organisation which is "led from the top" (DR/O). Detailed quality management proposals cannot be imposed by the HoQ, who will instead work with faculty representatives (for example through working groups) to develop proposals which are acceptable to all participants.

By contrast. Tealborough University was identified by its interviewees to be a devolved and democratic organisation. It has a small central quality unit, with the majority of quality management staff based within the faculties. The academic framework also allows for considerable local variation, so the role of the HoQ is to monitor these variations and ensure that they meet University requirements. There is no sense of "command and control" (HQ/T); Senate is very independently-minded, so even the Vice-Chancellor could not force a policy through which did not have majority support. The ethos of the University is of shared values; consensus is required before changes are introduced. The central quality team is increasingly required to partner with faculties, with a focus on collegial working and the development of a shared vision of quality across the institution.

4.5.2 Authority, and bases of social power

The establishment of bases of social power is central to this study because it provides the opportunity for the HoQ to determine – or at least strongly influence – organisational behaviour in relation to quality management. The findings show that the organisational structures of the three HEIs requires HoQs to approach the role very differently for their work to be effective. The variation in the degree of centralisation – and of hierarchical decision-making – at the three HEISs can either restrict or enable action.

As policy is centrally determined at Amberville, the HoQ has legitimate position power within the quality management field as the key decision-maker. However this is restricted to the quality management field – in particular, to areas of work which fall to their own team to deliver. Other senior players have the opportunity to overrule a decision which would result in greater work for their own teams, which constricts the parameters within which this legitimate position power is effective; the HoQ has authority only within a limited range. The structure of the organisation restricts the opportunity to develop referent or expert power which might extend the HoQ's influence into other parts of the organisation. The HoQ at Amberville is an "enabler and facilitator" (AC/A), rather than someone considered an expert or particular authority.

The converse applies in the strongly devolved and democratic structure at Tealborough. High levels of academic engagement with quality processes, together with the need to reach consensus on proposals, puts the emphasis on negotiation and persuasion, rather than imposition. The HoQ must therefore seek to build referent power; their position does not give them authority, but the focus on collaboration and problem-solving provides a good base to build the necessary strong internal relationships. They may also be able to deploy expert power, as someone recognised as "more knowledgeable" and trusted explicitly (AC/T). Having developed these softer bases of social power, the HoQ might also have the opportunity to influence areas of University work which fall well outside their natural remit.

The situation for the HoQ at Orangetown University sits between these poles. The hierarchical structure of the organisation sets clear parameters for action, whilst the devolved structure reduces the level of legitimate position power held by any individual working for a central service. The HoQ does have some legitimate position power within their expert field – as challenge from academic staff remains comparatively rare – and the HoQ is responsible for ensuring that faculties are meeting requirements. However, they are only a "very influential stakeholder" (HQ/O); theirs is a view to be taken seriously, they can use both their position and expertise to influence the debate and are important members of working groups convened to develop policy proposals, but their authority is restricted by the stronger voice for the faculties in a devolved organisation, as well as by the strength of hierarchical control. The HoQ does have the opportunity to extend their influence through the development of referent power and through building alliances with other internal stakeholders, which may increase both the level of influence they have and the breadth of areas where they can contribute.

4.5.3 Professional autonomy

This study is particularly focused on levels of professional autonomy (having an internal locus of causality, limited external control, and authority for setting goals and defining tasks). Each of the three HoQs demonstrates the deployment of professional autonomy, both through limited external control and an internal locus of causality, but they do so in very different ways.

At Amberville, professional autonomy is largely evident in the level of authority which the HoQ holds for quality management matters. Within the quality management realm, the HoQ has the legitimate position power to determine policy and procedure and to implement these, provided that the proposals remain within a defined scope and do not make excessive demands of staff outside of their team. The HoQ can thus be seen to have an internal locus of causality, in that they are the primary author of most quality management practice within the University.

This is less straightforward at Orangetown, where the HoQ does not have sufficient legitimate position power to exert authority over quality management matters. The devolution of responsibility for implementation to faculties, together with the strength of hierarchical control, both represent significant restrictions. However, the HoQ retains strong influence within the quality management realm, leading working groups to develop policy (potentially using expert power) and developing referent power through working relationships with colleagues. The opportunity to build alliances provides a way of navigating the hierarchy; it thus limits the strength of external control and can provide a sound internal locus of causality.

The position at Tealborough is markedly different. The HoQ does not have the authority to devise and implement policy or practice, even within their own field. While there are no constraints on the proposals the HoQ can make, approval is dependent on negotiation and the establishment of consensus. Professional autonomy is established through the limited external control over the scope of activity where the HoQ might engage; they are free to participate in – and contribute to – discussions on a wide variety of matters, at their own discretion. Through establishing both referent and expert power, the HoQ can act autonomously and influence significant areas of policy.

4.6. Summary of Chapter 4

Overall, the findings show that there are distinct differences between the ways in which the HoQs of Quality at Amberville, Orangetown and Tealborough universities operate. Devolution of responsibility to faculties inevitably imposes restrictions on legitimate position power, which changes the way in which the HoQ must deploy their professional autonomy. The more

hierarchical structure at Amberville and Orangetown reduces the sphere over which the HoQ has direct decision-making authority or influence, but this structure also makes it easier to implement policy and practice once this has been agreed. Even within the hierarchical structure at Orangetown, there is some scope for indirect influence on policy, either through direct negotiation or by creating alliances which can give greater weight to an argument.

Tealborough is distinct as a democratic culture in which there is very little scope for the HoQ to impose policy or procedure, outside the confines of their own team. High levels of devolution, allied to a lack of hierarchy, combine to create an environment where power is generated through personal credibility and, crucially, personal relationships. While there is much less 'power to act', there is correspondingly much greater scope to influence, and across a much wider range of activity, if the HoQ is able to do so.

These themes of authority, use of social power and deployment of professional autonomy in relation to organisational type within the different approaches to the role played by the HoQ will be the subject of discussion against the literature and within the study's theoretical framework in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

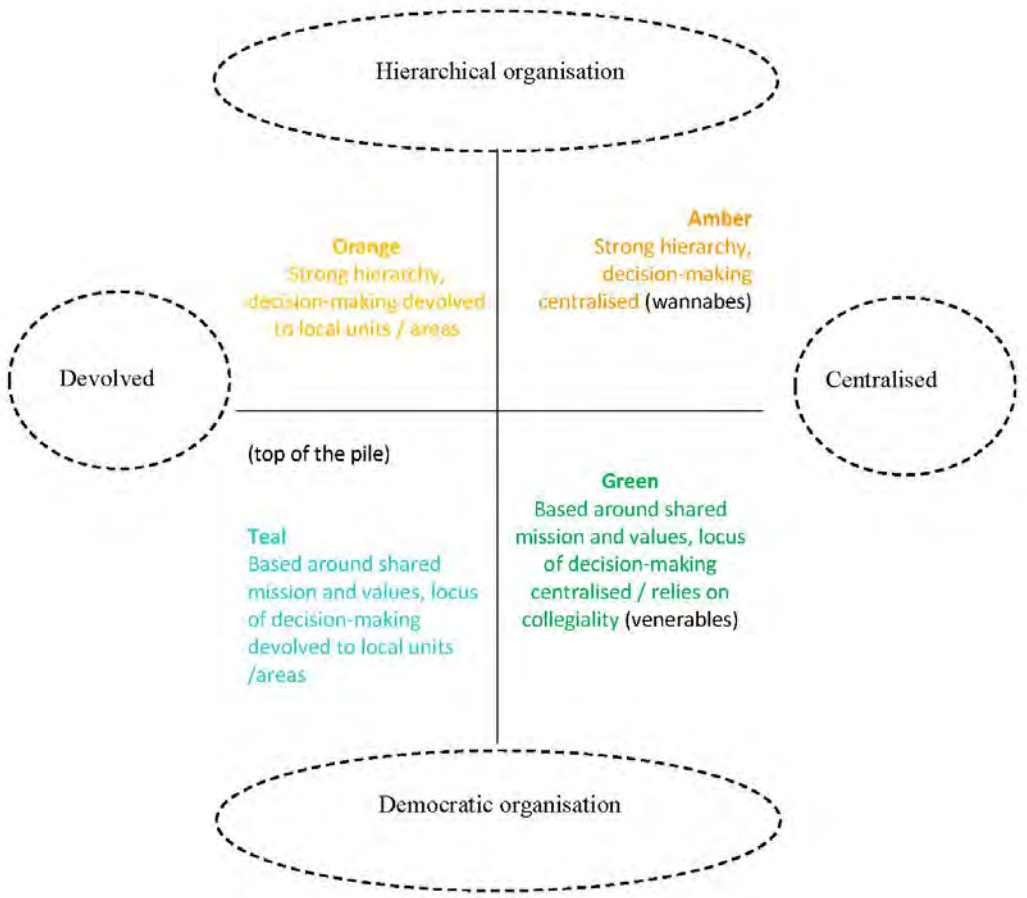
The purpose of the study is to consider how organisational structure affects the role played by Heads of Quality (HoQs), with particular reference to the types and level of professional autonomy they display. This includes the forms of social power available to them to implement decisions they take, and whether they seek to extend or otherwise modify the parameters of their role through job-crafting. Interviews were conducted at three HEIs drawn from three different quadrants from the typology of providers, drawn from Mintzberg (1980), Paradeise and Thoenig (2013), Laloux (2014) and Barbato, Fumasoli and Turri (2019) and set out in the model at Figure 2.

The findings reported in the previous chapter show that organisational type, and the strength of both centralisation and hierarchical control, has a significant effect on the role played by HoQs, and the ways in which they deploy their professional autonomy. This chapter offers a key contribution to knowledge by proposing a refined exploratory typology of HEIs as organisations based on the differing roles played by these senior managers, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the role of third-space professionals within higher education. It subsequently presents a new theoretical model of power and autonomy for HoQs according to organisational type.

5.2 A model of organisation type for HEIs

The original typology of HEIs which was developed for this study and represented in Figure 2 was suggested by a review of the current literature. Figure 2 is reproduced here for ease of reference:

Fig. 2: Exploratory typology of HEIs as organisations



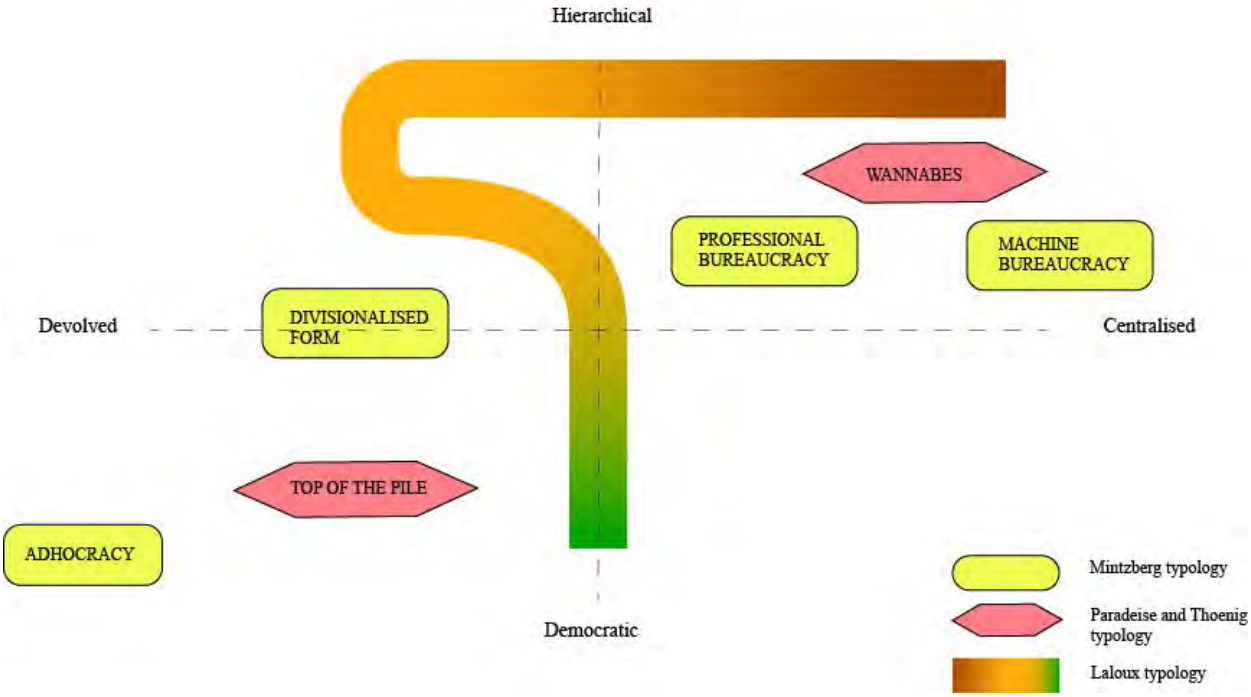
The diagram reflects the common features of typologies proposed in the work of Mintzberg (1980); Paradeise and Thoenig (2013); Laloux (2014); and Barbato, Fumasoli and Turri (2019); these existing models can be mapped broadly (if imperfectly) to the proposed typology. This typology is based on a grid using the axes of centralisation and hierarchy to divide HEIs into four quadrants. The top-right quadrant corresponds to the centralised and hierarchical structure, and is mostly closely associated with the Amber organisation, described by Laloux as being like an army. The top-left quadrant reflects the devolved but hierarchical structure, and corresponds to the colour Orange, described as being like a corporation. The bottom-right quadrant is centralised but democratic and based on shared values, and was identified as Green (like a cooperative); and the bottom-left is devolved and v democratic, identified as Teal (like a social movement). One of the case-study HEIs (Tealborough) was categorised in this quadrant from the scoping survey data, and was named accordingly. Reflection on the characteristics of this organisation, as demonstrated through the findings (see section 4.4) suggests a refinement of the

typological model. An organisation which has a devolved and democratic structure might indeed be like a social movement; but it may also be like a cooperative, with a focus on fairness, community and consensus. Laloux notes that in a Teal organisation, staff "don't try to predict what is inherently unpredictable; they just try to do the right thing" (2014, p.214). The findings place Tealborough within the bottom-left quadrant, with a democratic and devolved structure, but they also position it as a Green organisation (bottom-right), with an emphasis on consensus before policy is introduced.

A Teal HEI would have far less sense of coordination and cross-organisational consensus than Tealborough appears to have; it would permit individual faculties – or even subsets such as academic departments – to reach their own independent decisions and would not penalise them were these to be wrong. Felin and Powell (2015, p.78) provide a quote from the Handbook for new employees of the video game maker Valve Corporation, a typical Teal organisation, which states that "You were not hired to fill a specific job description. You were hired to constantly be looking around for the most valuable work you could be doing". This is very different from the situation at Tealborough University, and in consequence, the findings suggest that Tealborough should actually be treated as a Green organisation. A genuinely centralised but democratic organisation – where staff come together to agree universal policies and procedures, with very limited devolution – is likely to be unwieldy unless it is very small; as Mintzberg (1980) comments, some authority will usually have to be delegated as the organisation grows. However, the characteristics of a Green organisation are such that they potentially cover both democratic types, with Teal representing a much greater level of devolution.

This requires an update to the typology model presented in Figure 2. A typology for higher education in England which seeks to merge the four sources cited above and reflect the findings of this study needs to be more sophisticated and to reflect a more nuanced interpretation, as below in Figure 5.

Fig. 5 Exploratory typology of HEIs as organisations informed by findings from this study



An organisation which is both centralised and hierarchical operates like a machine bureaucracy or professional bureaucracy (Mintzberg, 1980, see upper-right quadrant of Figure 5). Operations are directed and coordinated from the centre, and each part of the organisation has its own function. The coupling in this kind of organisation is tight (Wieck, 1976); specialists are appointed to the operating core to fulfil their own specific role; the function of the HoQ is to ensure that central quality requirements are delivered at a local level. Paradeise and Thoenig (2013) and Thoenig and Paradeise (2016) term these types of HEI as 'Wannabes' who do not currently feature strongly in rankings or league tables, but are striving to enhance their standing, and do so through strong centralisation and hierarchical control to marshal the organisational effort. From the findings, this is the quadrant where Amberville University is positioned.

An organisation which is hierarchical, but has a more devolved structure, is much closer to the divisionalised form (see middle-left in Figure. 4). In the more hierarchical version of this type, authority and responsibility are devolved to individual units, with coordination achieved through performance control measures (Mintzberg, 1980, p.335-6). Laloux describes this Orange type as a situation where bosses set objectives, but are less worried about how they are carried out

(Laloux, 2014). In this scenario, the HoQ does have some legitimate position power because of the importance of effective quality management to the HEI and hence support from the hierarchy, but working with academic staff to deliver the required outcomes is increasingly important. This requires greater collaborative working, as demonstrated through the establishment of working groups to consider issues of concern, and to develop policy proposals. While the HoQ will usually identify the issue (although this is not always the case), solutions are generated through cross-organisational engagement to ensure that there is support from across the faculties; a policy will not normally be approved without a degree of consensus. From the findings, this is where Orangetown University is located.

However, the divisionalised form may also take the form of a democratic and devolved administration, indicated by its straddling of the upper and lower-left quadrants in Figure. 4. In the more democratic version of the divisionalised form (lower-left), control measures are much weaker; it resembles the loosely-coupled organisation to which third space professionals were posited as a response (Clark, 2001 and Whitchurch, 2004 and 2006; see sections 2.6 and 2.7). This is a typical example of the "Top of the pile" HEI identified by Paradeise and Thoenig (2013), which is decentralised and encourages autonomous decision-making, but within a shared and strongly-held value structure. The HoQ in this situation is respected as the expert in their own field, or division, but this does not give them authority over other divisions; the level of legitimate position power is low. The comparatively weak hierarchy also means that they cannot rely on support for enforcement from other senior players, as much of the decision-making is based within the devolved units. Laloux (2014) describes Green organisations of this type as like cooperatives, with high levels of professional autonomy for all, meaning that building consensus can be very time-consuming. The HoQ is recognised to be well-placed to identify a solution to an organisational issue; where they are able to align their proposals closely with the values of the devolved units, they will find it easier to achieve consensus. From the findings, this is where Tealborough University best fits.

In the original typology, the lower-right quadrant in Figure 5 represented the 'Venerables' (Paradeise and Thoenig, 2013 and Thoenig and Paradeise, 2016) because of their focus on "collegiality at any cost" (2013, p.206). The revised typology suggests that the Venerables are

in fact hard to categorise. They share features which might be considered hierarchical (resources might be allocated on the basis of reputation or rank) as well as democratic; and they demonstrate centralisation of decisions (through the strong sense of collegiality) while also appearing to allow significant freedom to individuals, rather than local units – and with restrictions on those able to participate in democratic decision-making. As such, they have been removed from the typology. An organisation which is both centralised and values-based is likely to be small; consensus-building is time-consuming (Laloux, 2014) and as organisations grow they will tend towards a machine bureaucracy, requiring more formal processes and coordination (Mintzberg, 1980).

The Adhocracy (Mintzberg, ibid.) is also placed in the lower-left quadrant of the typology diagram. In this arrangement, there is limited formal structure and teams come together to deliver projects as required; this is typical of a Teal organisation, but Mintzberg notes that adhocracies are most common in new businesses, and generally they also introduce more formal procedures and become bureaucracies as they grow.

Overall, Figure 5 reflects the consistent findings from interviewees in terms of their description of organisational type, as well as the reasons they gave for this (related to organisational size, the personality of the Vice-Chancellor, and the ethos of the HEI). This underlines the significance of historical factors and "informal practices, routines, of sense-making processes" in determining organisational identity (Barbato, Fumasoli and Turri, 2019, p.13). It is recognised that this typology is exploratory; it is well supported by the findings of this study, but its applicability would be strengthened by extending the range of HEIs studied in detail.

An organisation is not a passive system. Each has its own "internal rationality, and their response to external conditions is not uniform" (Scott, 2008, p.213). While the HEI is "not completely the same as anything else" (Ruben and Gigliotti, 2017), and might be described as a membership organisation (Watson, 2012), each individual HEI has its own priorities, histories and path-dependencies (Cooper et al, 1996) and its own specific logics (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020). In due course, it would be interesting to see whether changes in the dominant factor in these three HEIs would lead to changes to organisational arrangements, but

that is significantly beyond the scope of this project. The heterogeneity is significant, in that it suggests that 'higher education' does not offer a consistency and predictable field of enquiry, and that the sector lacks the uniformity which is often assumed.

5.3 Relationship between organisational type and the role played by the Head of Quality

The refined model of organisational type presented in Figure 5 sets the parameters for a discussion of the role played by the HoQ. The findings (sections 4.2.2, 4.3.2, 4.4.2 and 4.5) demonstrate that organisational type is a determining factor in the role of the HoQ. Consideration is given to the implications of both the degree of centralisation or devolution, and the strength of hierarchical control in sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 below. These implications are drawn together in section 5.4.

5.3.1 The degree of centralisation or devolution of organisational structure

The HoQ is a central position; it is a post which has responsibility across the whole university, rather than just one faculty. A more centralised decision-making structure would logically place more decision-making authority with the HoQ than a structure which was more devolved, with many decisions taken locally. This is reflected in the findings (section 4.5.2).

All HEIs have a formal process for the ratification of quality management policy and process; this will usually include approval from the central Academic Standards Committee, and often involves endorsement by Senate. Once approved, the policy or process applies across the whole HEI, with any flexibility also agreed as part of the approval process (see section 4.1). However, the development and implementation of policy is not consistent across all organisational types. The findings in section 4.2.2, 4.3.2 and 4.4.2 confirm that while the HoQ will always have a role in these processes, the extent of their influence is very different. In a centralised organisation (right half of fig. 5), the HoQ holds sufficient legitimate position power that they can identify the new or revised policy they wish to introduce; draft this new policy; circulate this to colleagues for comment but usually with limited response; and steer the proposal through the formal

ratification processes, with the decision-making committees unlikely to raise objections. Indeed such is the strength of the position that the HoQ would probably have the power to block any proposals arising from elsewhere in the HEI which they would subsequently have to implement. This represents a significant level of authority within the quality management field, and a corresponding level of accountability, corresponding to the central team in Mintzberg's professional bureaucracy (1980).

HoQs in devolved HEIs (left half of Figure 5) hold much less authority, as described in Mintzberg's divisionalised form (ibid.). As decision-making is more distributed, the opportunity for one individual to determine and impose the outcome is greatly reduced (Bleiklie, Enders and Lapori, 2015; Hyman, 1987). It may still be the case that proposals are usually developed by the central team, for example in response to the external regulatory environment, but other routes are also available, such as matters emerging from local processes. In a devolved organisation, the HoQ does not have the opportunity unilaterally to block proposals which they disagree, or to refuse to take them forward. The development of detailed policy does not rest solely with the central team; it will involve stakeholders from across the University (either through a working group, or through individual discussion). The HoQ may be recognised as the authority on the external regulatory environment – and as such can exercise influence – but the authority vested in the faculties means that consensus is required before a proposal is approved. This might result in a number of changes to a proposed policy prior to its agreement and implementation.

The need for collaboration and consensus in more devolved organisations is clear in the findings. Organisational decision-making is often complex (Sibony, Lovallo and Powell, 2017) and staff need to work across boundaries to achieve their goals (Prysor and Henley, 2018). Acting as the 'keeper of the rules' is a core part of the role of HoQ; ensuring that University-agreed policies and procedures are implemented effectively. The HoQ in both centralised and devolved HEIs holds this responsibility and has a role in 'policing' and auditing. Enforcement is straightforward in the centralised HEI, where the HoQ is recognised as holding the necessary legitimate position power (although Duncan highlights that there can be risks in focusing exclusively on enforcement rather than enabling) (Duncan, 2014). In a more devolved setting, this work takes on a very specific character. Devolved structures are more likely to have agreed

frameworks or principles, rather than a rigid set of obligations, and the role is therefore to ensure compliance with these principles (Sloof and Siemens, 2019); but even then the HoQ's authority is limited. They do not have the authority to impose, so must instead engage in discussion about why those rules are challenging to a particular faculty and how they could be enabled to comply; the quality team is providing a service to support and facilitate.

Across the case-study HEIs, there is universal agreement that quality management is a shared responsibility, but what this means in practice varies greatly. At the centralised HEI (Amberville), faculties might raise specific issues which can be factored into the final decision of the HoQ; whereas in the devolved HEIs (Orangetown, Tealborough), there is a much more evident sense of co-design of policy and practice, involving both staff and students from across the organisation. This places different demands on the HoQ, and by association their team. The role requires them to be genuine problem-solvers, focused on outcomes rather than process, and working as partners with faculties to understand and find solutions for their context. A centrally agreed policy in itself is 'not enough' to achieve the necessary result. As such, while the HoQ does not have authority to impose the policy decision, they have a pivotal role in ensuring that it is delivered across the HEI in accordance with the Senate's decision.

In a more devolved organisation, building personal relationships across the University is crucial to success (Fligstein and McAdam, 2011; Foss Hansen et al, 2019) – developing referent power, especially at a meso-level. The HoQs at both devolved HEIs have established a dedicated forum for discussion between staff within the faculties and those in the central Quality Team, recognising that this two-way, honest dialogue is vital both in explaining changes which are proposed, but also receiving feedback and comment from faculty staff. They have also made a conscious decision to identify 'allies' from across the organisation, as a way of strengthening and extending their influence. This is less necessary for those in a centralised administration, who already hold legitimate position power through their position (De Andreis and Carioni, 2019), an example of central authority with a strong focus on internal coordination and control (Maasen and Stensaker, 2019). There is a risk that this can result in local shadow systems being developed (Furstenau et al, 2017), but as Barbato, Fumasoli and Turri (2019) demonstrate, smaller organisations are better able to balance this challenge and operate effectively as a

professional bureaucracy (section 2.6.3), with a stronger sense of hierarchical control. The evidence from the findings (section 4.2.2) suggests that a pervasive self-image as a smaller organisation may have the same effect, even where in practice the organisation has grown to medium-sized. This may itself be an example of an organisation persisting with competing, and even incompatible, internal logics (Kodeih and Greenwood, 2014; Greenwood et al, 2011).

5.3.2 Strength of hierarchical control

In considering the influence of hierarchy on the HoQs in different organisations, it is recognised that all organisations have an element of hierarchy (Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson, 2000), so that the HoQ is both a line manager and are themselves line managed by a more senior figure. Within this framework, however, there is still room for significant difference in how different organisations respond to the tension between an instinct for control and the need to allow professionals to exercise their judgement (Abell, 2015). Success can derive from empowering others (Lumby, 2019); strong hierarchical control is not the only way of ensuring that the desired outcomes are met.

In both the HEIs which are characterised as hierarchical (Amberville and Orangetown), the HoQ is aware of the limitations on their authority, even within the quality management field. While they are respected within the organisation and have good working relationships with senior staff, they recognise that this does not translate into a power to act. "As one descends the hierarchy, decision-making power and authority diminish" (Cilliers and Greyvenstein, 2012, p.2); in a hierarchical organisation, position in the hierarchy is more closely related to quantum of legitimate position power (see Figure 3). The findings (in section 4.2.3, 4.2.4) are consistent with this; the choices of HoQs are constrained by hierarchical power. They recognise that proposals which result in a reduction in workload or 'burden' for academic staff are likely to be welcomed, but that proposals which require additional work – even where in their professional view this is necessary – are unlikely to find favour. Decisions are made 'at the top' and handed down, with the result that staff at lower levels are less likely to engage in consultations as they do not anticipate being able to affect the decision. Thus, where the HoQ wishes to implement a proposal which has the support of their line manager, they are likely to have the authority to do

so (exploiting the greater legitimate position power of a more senior player); but without that support, it will be very difficult to make progress. This can even be the case where a recommendation is based on specialist knowledge, demonstrating the strength of hierarchical decision-making.

In the democratic organisation (Tealborough), all staff have a higher degree of professional autonomy (Laloux, 2014) and encouragement to follow their own best judgement (Buono, 2003). There is recognition and expectation of specialist expertise; the less pronounced sense of hierarchy thus affords the HoQ the opportunity to utilise expert power to influence organisational policy, either by introducing their own proposal or in responding to a proposal from others. They are expected to be able lead the discussion within the quality management field, while recognising that no one individual can impose an outcome and that there will be extensive consultation to reach a consensus. This can lead to an element of frustration, as the decision-making process is much slower and there is limited legitimate position power (as discussed by Laloux, 2014); but the nature of the democratic organisation means that arguments can be made, and won, both with academic staff and with others, such as those with responsibility for financial decisions on the basis of shared values. If the HoQ can mobilise expert power, they may be in a good position to succeed in these discussions by "presenting compelling visions of the future that inspire others to follow" (Quinsee, 2022, p.35), especially where this is supported by strong referent power (Savolainen, 2021).

A greater strength of hierarchical control may also encourage actors to seek to extend their influence by developing greater referent power (Langfred and Rockman, 2016; Tims, Derks and Bakker, 2016). One of the HoQs in the hierarchical HEIs in the study had explicitly sought to do this, identifying allies both within central services and across the wider organisation who could be called upon to support a proposal or to join in challenging decisions they believed to be ill-conceived; the HoQ had had some success in this. The other HoQ from a hierarchical organisation had not done so; but the one from the democratic HEI had also taken deliberate steps to build connections across the organisation, with the intention of gaining deeper insights into the HEI and the varying priorities. There was recognition that this could be important when negotiating or seeking to build consensus. This suggests that for actors at this level of seniority,

the determining factor was less the strength of hierarchical control and more the quantum of legitimate position power which was already held; those with more limited legitimate position power sought to extend their influence by seeking additional referent power to support their work. This distinction is less widely discussed in the existing literature, although the value of softer bases of power (Pierro et al, 2013) and the importance of relationships as opposed to individual competence (Janss et all, 2012) are well established.

Being subject to managerial authority might restrict an actor's professional autonomy (Muzio and Kirkpatrick, 2011). As such, it would not be surprising if actors sought to develop at least some of their work without their line manager's knowledge; actually all three HoQs in this study reported that they kept their line manager informed and would routinely discuss their work and progress. The line manager could be useful as a source of advice or, within the more hierarchical structures, as someone who could use their own legitimate position power to enforce when required.

5.4 Heads of Quality as 'third space' professionals: the relationship between this 'space' and organisational type

The findings show that each of the HoQs navigates their environment in different ways, according to the degree of access to the third space offered by the organisational type. Beyond the autonomy bestowed by leading a team and operating at a sufficiently senior level, the engagement of each of the HoQs with the HEI demonstrates the fluidity of third-space professional roles. Each organisation provides its own specific third space and its own key requirements for successful navigation (McIntosh and Nutt, 2022).

Importantly, findings show that HoQs operate very differently, depending on organisational type (see sections 4.2.3, 4.3.3, 4.4.3, 4.5.1). This is not typically discussed within the literature, either about quality professionals or more broadly about third-space professionals. In describing the work of quality professionals, Seyfried and Pohlenz (2018) and Seyfried and Reith (2019) comment on different approaches which may be taken, but do not link this to organisational structure or character. More broadly, there is a tendency to discuss the experience of a particular

group of third-space professionals within higher education (such as educational developers, or research administrators) and to characterise their experience as though it were broadly common. This thesis offers a more structurally embedded perspective on the work of third-space professionals which provides a more nuanced explanation, taking account of organisational structure as a further variable which affects the nature of their third space and may help to explain their experience.

The HoQs who were selected for this study all share a similar set of institutional responsibilities: they are responsible for oversight and effective operation of the quality management framework within their HEI. There are no longer routine 'quality inspections' by a national body, but the Office for Students retains to right to commission an investigation if it considers that there are grounds for concern (either through a review of data or based on student complaint). The purpose of the internal quality management framework is thus to ensure that academic standards are maintained, and that all students receive a high-quality educational experience (however this is defined); if these two requirements are met, the HEI will be deemed to meet national expectations. In part, therefore, the HoQ's role is to identify where existing practice or outcomes do not deliver this outcome; to devise revisions to policy or process which will address the weakness; and to implement these, in liaison with academic staff as required.

HoQ is not an academic role, but these individuals are heavily involved in decision-making around matters of academic governance; it could be regarded as a para-academic role (Macfarlane, 2011). It is a role with a specialist higher education identity (to follow Macfarlane (p.62), it is *de jure* and not *de facto*); postholders need to make judgements – or as a minimum, define the infrastructure through which judgement will be reached – about whether (for example) institutional practice meets national expectations on academic matters, drawing on a range of specialist knowledge. The role is also contested, and academic staff may be critical of those who have invaded decision-areas which were once their "secret garden" (Shattock, 2017; Seyfried and Reith, 2019; Rowlands, 2018). There is a ""ubiquitous threat of boundary disputes" (Knight and Senior, 2007) as each party defines the territory over which it claims decision-making authority. In an organisation where management structure may not be aligned to current or prospective needs (Campbell-Perry, 2022), there is a greater need for boundary-

spanning roles filled by individuals who act as “mediators and brokers between coalitions and needs” (Zahir, 2010), so the HoQ is an agent of multiple principals, including senior management, academic staff, students and others within the central administration (Seyfried and Reith, 2021). The role might be fulfilled by acting as a bridge between communities, or a translator of domain languages (Denney, 2022). The individuals occupying these roles can be legitimately identified as third space professionals (Whitchurch, 2004, 2008), who are required to operate effectively at the interface between national regulation and associated expectations on the one hand, and organisational policy and practice on the other. An important component of their role is to translate national regulatory requirements and expectations about quality management into both language, and practice, which meet the needs of their organisation.

HoQs thus occupy a space which will in part be determined by the organisation in which they work; they will need to negotiate this role accordingly. Third space professionals build legitimacy through their knowledge, and delivery (Moran and Misra, 2018). Enders and Naidoo (2022) suggest that “new professionals”, which include some working in the third space, can derive their legitimacy from a range of sources, including a need to meet external requirements, delegated authority from more senior figures, and a deployment of expert power. However, the space in which they operate is still organisation-dependent. Their success will depend on how they navigate the community in which they are working, and are successful in developing and deploying one or more bases of social power; by not belonging to one obvious discipline or category of staff, they risk being marginalised (McIntosh and Nutt, 2022, p.81). “If [they] pursue an agenda supporting the interests of their academic colleagues in the ‘academic heartlands’, they are at risk of being accused of ‘going native’ by their colleagues at the centre. If they pursue a corporate line, they may be seen as prioritising what are perceived by academic colleagues as managerial concerns” (Whitchurch, 2007, p.56).

In a centralised and hierarchical HEI such as Amberville, the HoQ has legitimate position power and freedom from influence, based on their role within the organisation. Within their own field of authority, they have the opportunity to propose institutional policy and practice, as long as this is consistent with the views of those at more senior levels in the hierarchy (Seyfried and Pohlenz, 2018). The HoQ is, in effect, the central rule-maker as long as their proposals do not

impact on the areas of responsibility of other senior staff. In this setting, the HoQ acts primarily as a translator, using their expert knowledge of the external regulatory environment and their understanding of requirements to translate this into institutional practice. This responsibility is largely uncontested, allowing for considerable professional autonomy as long as decisions remain within the agreed scope and do not require additional resources which are held by others.

Where a hierarchical HEI operates a devolved structure as at Orangetown, the HoQ has more limited legitimate position power. By the nature of the devolved operation, actors will need to engage with decision-makers and influencers across the organisation; they have the opportunity to explain proposals and work with others to develop recommendations. Their position within the organisational hierarchy means that their voice will be heard, so they can use this position to shape any proposals which emerge from working groups or similar, which they are likely to establish and chair. More senior players retain the power to overrule proposals with which they disagree, but if the HoQ is successful in building referent power they may be able to build alliances which reduce the hierarchical force. Thus, in this type of HEI, the HoQ can develop their social power by creating networks of influence (Fligstein and McAdam, 2011). They are also, primarily, a translator who interprets the regulatory world, but will also act as a bridge within those settings where policy proposals are developed, bringing together others who may have very different perspectives and supporting the process of reaching a shared conclusion. In this type of organisation, an actor can have influence in a wider variety of settings; however, while they will have very significant influence in their specialist area, they have limited power to impose decisions. The relationships they can build may be more important to their success than the organisational structure within which they operate (Veles and Carter, 2016).

In a democratic HEI such as Tealborough, the HoQ's legitimate position power is very limited. There is no scope for 'command and control' unless this is voluntarily granted by academic faculties. The HoQ does however have considerable scope to build and demonstrate expert power, alongside the network-building and associated referent power which is required in a devolved structure. To be successful, the HoQ needs to be able to show a clear understanding of the HEI's values and how their proposals respond effectively to those values for each devolved unit – "creating connections between specialist areas, building common understanding and

driving inter-disciplinary solutions" (Manoharan 2020, p.57). The creation of a team explicitly to work in tandem with academic staff to deliver positive outcomes represents a good example of this in practice, designed to make others' lives easier (Smith et al, 2021). The third-space professional in this environment will need to be effective both as a translator of regulatory requirements, and as a bridge who can bring together and meet the needs of a wide variety of organisational stakeholders. This is a clear example of how the HoQ must operate as the agent of multiple principals (Seyfried and Reith, 2021). Gore (2018) describes HEIs as a "confederation of villages. There is no unified command and control, yet in times of need, villagers can unite to defeat an enemy, build an irrigation system and regulate the price of cattle"; the role of the HoQ is to bring these villages together to coordinate certain activities. This is likely to involve sense-making – telling a story which is "authentic and recognisable" (Watson, 2009, p.99) and using this ability to influence others. This can be enhanced by remembering that "people want a hole, not a drill" (ICSA, 2018) and potentially using bargaining (Reith and Seyfried, 2019) to achieve the desired outcome. Sense-making is often closely aligned to the use of expert power (Lines, 2007), which it itself mostly used in conjunction with referent power; if bargaining is effective it may also be a weak example of the use of reward power.

This extends the argument made by Seyfried and Pohlenz that without the support of the senior leadership, quality management activity is a "toothless tiger" (2018, p.268). This is true not only in the centralised, hierarchical organisation, where there is a strong emphasis on legitimate position power, but also in a more devolved organisation, especially where it is also v democratic; the HoQ can use the softer bases of social power to become participants in a more active network and work effectively across the University).

5.5 Levels of authority, use of social power and deployment of professional autonomy, and the relationship with organisational type

The discussion in section 5.4 suggests that the categorisation of HoQs as third-space professionals is legitimate, but too simple. There is a tendency to categorise experiences according to the role content, rather than organisational type. This study shows that a more

nuanced explanation is required. The findings demonstrate that HoQs have differing levels of authority (the right to take a decision) and use different bases of social power in exercising their professional autonomy, according to organisational type.

Autonomy is important to professionals (Macheridis and Paulsson, 2019). They expect a level of freedom from influence and reasonable discretion in their decision-making: "an internal perceived locus of causality" (Gagne, 2018, p.91). While organisations might be seen as networks of actors (Meyer and Bromley, 2013, p.382), these networks can have distinct features which determine the ways in which this autonomy is deployed. Each organisation has to determine how it resolves the tension between professional autonomy, control and bureaucracy – providing sufficient structure to ensure efficient operations and minimising risk, while providing sufficient freedom of action for the professional to deploy their expertise in response to circumstances (Eisenhardt, Furr and Bingham, 2010; Mills and Ungson, 2003). Similarly, each professional will respond to the organisational structure and negotiate their own path to achieve a level of autonomy.

5.5.1 Authority and social power

HoQs occupy a management position within the HEI; they are responsible for ensuring that key organisational priorities are delivered and they manage the quality team. As such, a degree of authority is to be expected: they will coordinate the work of their teams and have some flexibility over the scheduling of tasks. While this is not absolute, they have substantial independence and discretion over these aspects of the role (Hackman and Oldham, 1976).

The theme of 'ruler in the quality realm' emerged from the interview data (see section 4.2.2, 4.3.2, 4.4.2 and 4.5.2) to discuss the status of the HoQ within the organisation. 'Ruler' is a generic term – it denotes authority but does not imply whether there are constraints to this authority. The findings show that even where the HoQ is accorded the status of ruler, this is not absolute; the HoQ holds an important place within the field but is constrained by a range of factors.

In a centralised, hierarchical university such as Amberville, the HoQ has sufficient legitimate position power to be a rule-maker within the quality management field. All HEIs require ratification of academic policy decisions through their deliberative committee structure - in this sense final decisions are 'collective' - but for organisations which are centralised and hierarchical, this collective decision-making is largely notional. There is little resistance from other actors so - while some modest negotiation may occasionally be required - the HoQ is able to take decisions which will not regularly be contested. However, this authority is constrained in two ways. Firstly, as discussed by Reith and Seyfried (2019), the HoQ engages in balancing external demands against internal interests and is unlikely to introduce policies or procedures which will demand more from academic staff; there are those at a more senior place in the hierarchy, such as Deans, who may hold a power of veto over proposals which require additional resource, for example (Gawley, 2008). This introduces an additional factor into decision-making and may move some decisions outside of the effective 'Overton window' of options (and where the collective decision-making process would give greater authority to those at more senior roles within the hierarchy, who had indeed sometimes imposed solutions against advice). The second constraint is one of scope. While the HoQ has the authority to make decisions within the quality management field, this is constrained to that functional role within the organisation (Savolainen, 2021). They have little opportunity to engage outside of this functional area, as other senior managers have similar legitimate position power within their own areas of responsibility. Even where the HoQ may have a legitimate professional interest, the final decision rests with the senior manager in that area. As such, the HoQ is a rule-maker, but only within agreed parameters; outside these parameters, they are a rule-taker. This fits very closely with that which would be expected in an Amber organisation (see fig. 5), where people "stay in their boxes".

In a hierarchical HEI which has a more devolved structure such as Orangetown, the findings show that the HoQ has significant influence over the rules – and may in some instances be the effective rule-maker – but this is less absolute. The devolved nature of authority for decision-making within the organisation means that proposals must be co-designed with other stakeholders. The Head has a position within the hierarchy which gives them a strong voice; they do not have the authority to overrule or ignore areas proposed by others, but they can make

their case and are likely to be successful. This gives them significant influence in determining the policy areas which require consideration, and also in designing responses to those areas. As described by Reith and Seyfried (2019), they may engage in pacifying – engaging proactively with other organisational actors to explain the importance or merit of proposals. Proposals remain subject to veto by more senior figures within the hierarchy, but as authority is more distributed there is also the opportunity to work across the organisation to build a network of support through referent power: "an accurate cognition of informal networks" (Krackhardt, 1990, p.342; Pfeffer, 1992), which might counteract some of the hierarchical force.

In a devolved and democratic university such as Tealborough, it is hard to identify any individual as the rule-maker, even within the specific field of quality management. Even though the HoQ is recognised and respected as the expert within their field, this does not give them the authority to impose; these organisations operate through consensus, and extensive consultation may be required to achieve this. The final committees which will ratify any proposals are also much more likely to challenge than in the more hierarchical organisations, and therefore consensus-building is essential to success. To be successful in a democratic organisation with a devolved structure, an actor will need to establish strong personal networks (Gibbs, 2019) and to collaborate across internal boundaries (Prysor and Henley, 2018). Importantly, the lack of a dominant hierarchy of authority offers the opportunity to develop and deploy considerable expert power (Savoleinen, 2021; Clauss and Bouncken, 2019); there is recognition that all have expertise within their specialist area. If an actor can demonstrate that they hold expert knowledge and are also able to translate this effectively through a deep understanding of the HEI, they will accrue considerable influence in support of their cause (Enders and Nadioo, 2018). The HoQ in this situation engages in bargaining: showing how they can assist local actors in reaching a compromise (Reith and Seyfried, 2019); this may include using a weak form of reward power. In consequence, while such an actor holds very limited legitimate position power, there is an opportunity for the HoQ to be a strong influence in rule-making: if they are successful in building expert and referent power, they can have a powerful voice in decision-making.

In his conceptual analysis of 40 key articles on expert power, Savolainen (2021) finds that "the opinion leader's base of expert power is context-specific". Most of the articles covered by Savolainen are at least ten years old; the last decade has seen a significant shift towards "new power" (Timms and Heimanns, 2018). Timms and Heimanns argue that new power is participatory – it invites contributions from all and success is likely to be achieved by those who are able to navigate complex community dynamics. Thus if an actor has already gained legitimacy they may be well placed to influence across a far broader area, as suggested in this study; the establishment of expert power may offer a pathway to positive engagement in a wider range of contexts. Grant (2021) has discussed the concept of the "new power University" and how an HEI might best be able to harness the benefits of this move away from traditional power structures to a more open, participatory environment. There is some evidence from the findings to support this view, as those who are successful in building referent and expert power are able to secure influence across a much broader area than their specific expertise.

5.5.2 Deployment of professional autonomy

Each of the HoQs might be described as exercising their professional autonomy, but the context for this judgement differs in each case. Within the centralised and hierarchical HEI, the HoQ is a rule-maker, but within the constraints of both their position in the hierarchy and the scope of their own field. This meets the requirements for an internal locus of causality, but in a comparatively restricted space.

In an HEI with a devolved structure but a strong hierarchy, the HoQ has less authority as a rule-maker but has considerable potential to influence the rules which are agreed, especially if they are successful at building referent power and negotiating with key figures in the devolved units, together with those in senior positions within the hierarchy. The weaker direct authority is offset by the opportunity to engage more widely and to influence some areas which are outside their direct expertise.

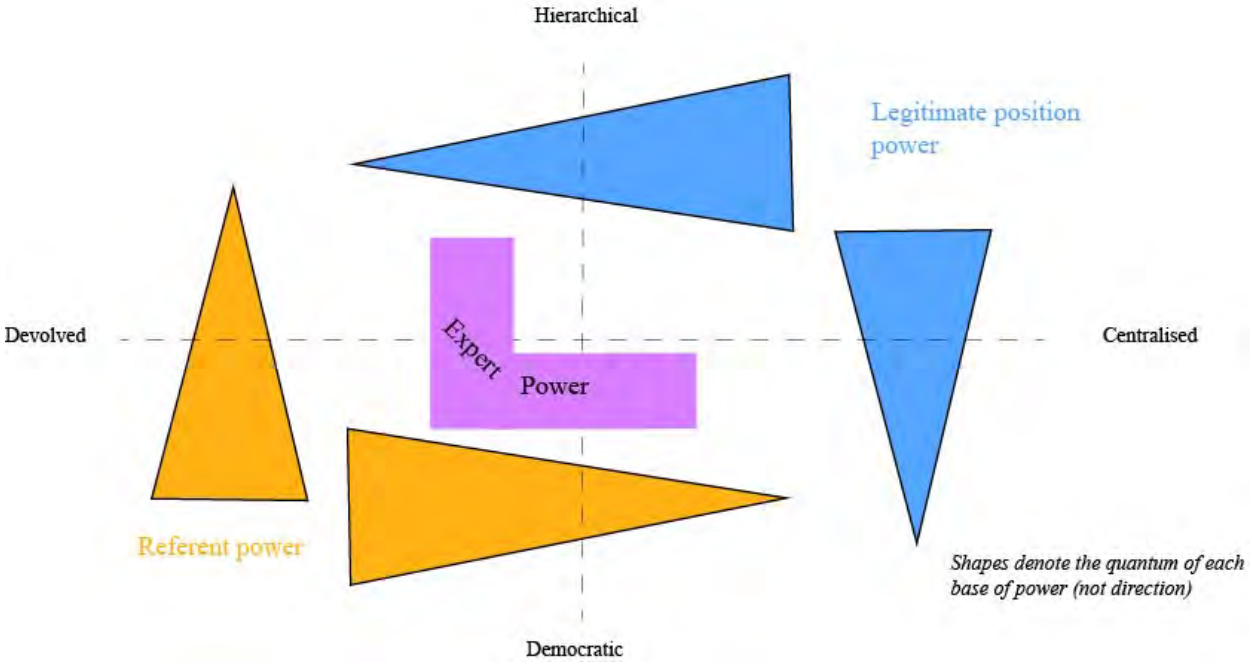
In a formal sense, the HoQ in the devolved and democratic organisation is not a rule-maker at all; they are one player amongst many and they hold very limited authority (generally only as

manager of their team). This might be considered a significant limitation to their professional autonomy, as there is little opportunity to identify causality. However the nature of this organisation also affords the opportunity to build significant expert power and also referent power; if the HoQ is successful at negotiating the formal and informal networks, they can generate a significant base of power (Krackhardt, 1990; Fligstein and McAdam, 2011; Gibbs, 2019; Foss Hansen et al, 2019). They can also engage across a broad range of organisational activity, representing a high level of autonomy and wielding considerable influence. The construction and maintenance of such networks requires effort and engagement but, if this is successfully achieved, it will be easier to build the necessary consensus and to influence actors from across the organisation. This may give the HoQ considerable scope as a rule-maker across a wide area of activity; while the causality is not direct it can nevertheless be powerful. The corollary of this is that, if the HoQ is less successful in establishing those alternative bases of social power (expert and referent), this would be a very challenging role indeed.

5.6 A model of social power and professional autonomy for Heads of Quality in relation to organisational type

Figure 3 (section 2.9) set out a broad model of the available bases of social power for HoQs to deploy their professional autonomy depending on organisational type. The findings from this project, and the associated discussion, suggest a minor refinement to this model, as set out in Figure 6 below:

Fig. 6: Bases of social power used by HoQs

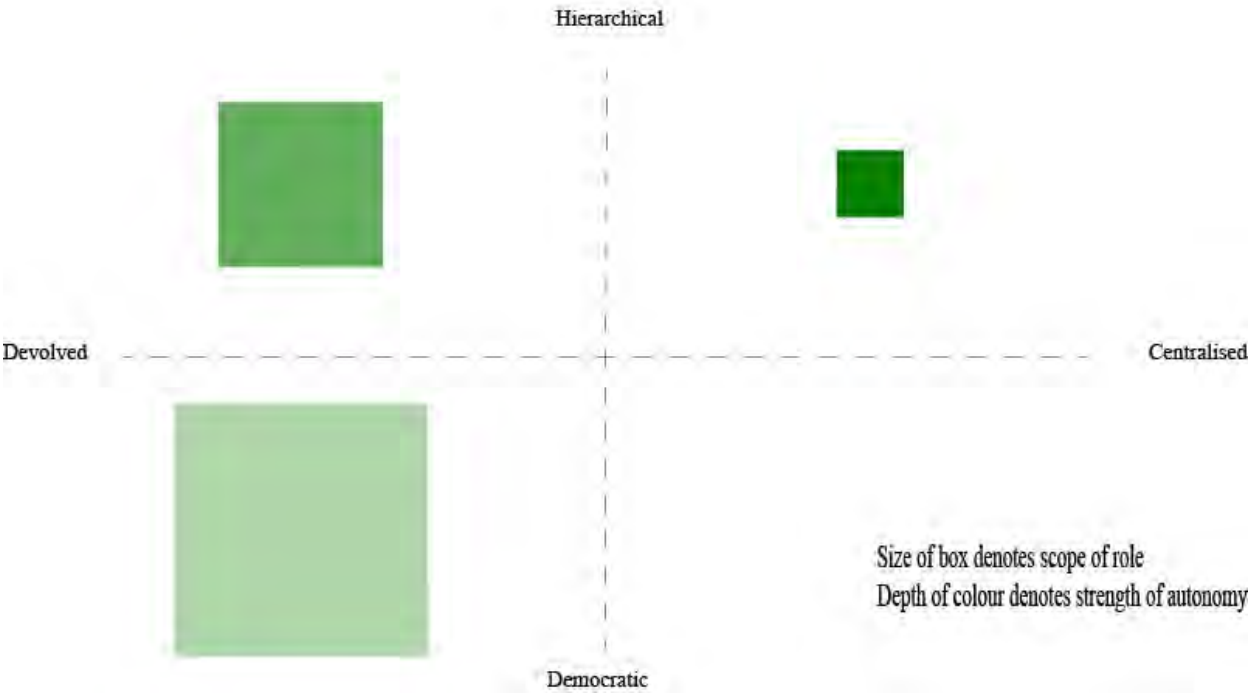


The refined model in Figure 6 indicates the bases of social power available to an actor in each of the quadrants. In the centralised and hierarchical organisation (top-right quadrant), an actor only holds legitimate position power. In the devolved and democratic HEI (bottom-left quadrant), an actor primarily holds referent power, whilst in the devolved but hierarchical HEI (top-left quadrant) an actor may be able to deploy both legitimate position power and referent power, although the strength of each decreases as the level of devolution – and strength of hierarchical control – increases. The original model (Figure 3) postulated that expert power might also be available to a HoQ in each of the quadrants. However, the evidence from this study does not support this suggestion. In the centralised, hierarchical organisation, the HoQ deploys legitimate position power, but if this power is insufficient it cannot easily be supplemented with expert power. There is an element of expert power within the position, but the Head is identified as an enabler and facilitator rather than as an expert; their social power rests on their position within the organisation and this power cannot be increased through additional expertise. It is primarily within the democratic, devolved organisation that expert power can be deployed, which aligns to Savolainen's suggestion that expert power is most effective when deployed together with referent power (Savolainen, 2021). It is also available, although to a lesser extent, to the HoQ working in a hierarchal but devolved organisation. No representative of a centralised but

democratic organisation was included in this project (see section 3.5.4), but it is anticipated that expert power would also be effective in this organisation type. This model sets out in diagrammatic form the answer to the first research question, explaining how organisational type affects the role played by the Head of Quality and the bases of social power they deploy.

It is evident that the three HoQs each has a degree of professional autonomy and operates as a third-space professional. Organisational type plays a key role in determining how this autonomy is deployed by the HoQ, together with the level and extent of this autonomy. This can be represented in the following diagram (Figure 7):

Fig. 7 Strength and scope of professional autonomy



In the hierarchical and centralised organisation, the HoQ has strong decision-making autonomy within the quality management field (indicated by the deeper shading of the box in the top-right quadrant of Fig. 7); but the extent of this autonomy is limited (the box is relatively small). In the hierarchical but devolved organisation, the HoQ's decision-making autonomy is weaker (indicated by the medium shading of the box in the top-left quadrant), but their influence can stretch over a broader area if they are successful in mobilising additional bases of power (the box

is larger than that in the top-right quadrant). In the democratic organisation, this difference is amplified; direct decision-making autonomy is weak (hence the box is lightly-shaded) but their influence can extend very broadly into a wide range of areas of policy and practice if they are successful at mobilising their expert and referent power (indicated by the large size of box in the bottom-left quadrant). This model sets out in diagrammatic form the answer to the second research question, showing how Heads of Quality, as third space professionals, are able to exercise their professional autonomy in different organisational types.

5.7 Heads of Quality and job-crafting

The existing literature suggests that, where an individual has limited access to an appropriate base of power – or where they have not been able to deploy potential power effectively – they may seek to extend or modify their job role. They might do this to make their work more personally meaningful, or because they perceive that the changes will lead to better professional outcomes (Langfred and Rockman, 2015). Alternatively, if an employee considers themselves to be exposed in their current position, they may seek to emphasise shared decision-making and joint accountability or, in some circumstances, to reduce perceived accountability risks (Renkema, 2022). This is known as job-crafting.

The foregoing discussion has demonstrated how HoQs have the opportunity to deploy differing levels of legitimate position, expert and referent power. In considering whether they engage in job-crafting, the focus is on where the HoQ does more than simply personalising their approach within existing parameters; it considers the ways in which those parameters are extended in a way not required – or possibly envisaged – by the organisational hierarchy.

Job-crafting is associated with expert and – in particular – referent power. An individual who builds a strong network across the organisation is likely to be better placed to engage in activity outside their normal sphere of activity; the corollary also applies: that those who choose to engage more broadly are more likely to develop relationships across the HEI. In a democratic organisation, especially with a devolved structure, there is a powerful need to develop referent power to achieve positive outcomes; this provides particular opportunities for wider engagement.

In this type of university all voices are welcome to contribute to discussion; the HoQ at Tealborough had taken active steps to participate in activities outside the normal scope of the role. They had been invited to join some activities, as well as proactively inviting themselves to others; in doing so, they were not seeking to take on additional work for themselves or the team, but to contribute to organisational policy and decision-making. It is noteworthy that this participation was actively encouraged across the HEI; empowering staff to work across a complex environment becomes more important given the growing complexity of the demands facing HEIs (Murray, 2022). This accords with Akerman's (2022, p.129) description of third space professionals as a "positive disruptor" to organisational practices.

Referent power is also necessary in the hierarchical and devolved organisation. The HoQ at Orangetown University would also proactively seek to be engaged in meetings or working groups which fell outside their explicit remit, again with the encouragement of their line manager, although other interviewees appeared to be less aware of activity undertaken outside the formal role.

Actors in a centralised and hierarchical organisation place much less reliance on referent power. They have professional autonomy within their specific field, but little opportunity to develop this further. They might be invited to join working groups where there is an obvious link to their area of work – and they might proactively seek to join a group – but these instances are restricted to where it appears directly relevant. They are aware of the roles and responsibilities of both themselves and their colleagues, and are cautious about – in their view – adding to the workload of colleagues by engaging in interactions which are not directly linked to the respective job roles.

The literature suggests that line managers may not always be aware of the extent to which staff engage in job-crafting, possibly because they already consider this to be a part of the role requirements (Tims and Bakker, 2010). However, in this study, the line managers in both devolved HEIs were aware and supportive of the fact that HoQs undertook broader activities and actively encouraged it, considering this to be a natural part of the role (Langfred and Rockman,

2015). Managers may not always be aware of the detail of activity outside the formal role, but they consider this to be part of the expectations of employees at this level.

There was no evidence that any of the HoQs in this study had sought to modify the parameters of the role to reduce accountability risks. However, the HoQ at Amberville University recognised that, in holding decision-making authority within the quality management field, they were exposed; the 'buck would stop with them' in the event of failure. At both the devolved HEIs, there would be greater scope for job-crafting to reduce accountability, as the greater sharing of authority would dilute individual responsibility, but there was no evidence that this had in fact occurred.

Job-crafting is more likely in situations where someone is less able to deploy legitimate position power as they have less direct control over activity; it is therefore unsurprising that a HoQ within a centralised, hierarchical university such as Amberville is less likely to engage in it. It is in those HEIs where the HoQ relies more strongly on expert – and in particular referent – power that job-crafting is a more natural and expected feature of work. Given the active encouragement to engage more broadly across the HEI, and the positive expectation that the HoQ should do so as expressed by the Line Managers in each case, this can be seen as an accepted aspect of the role, but it evidently personal to the individual concerned; it is their choice how and where to engage beyond the quality realm and there would be no expectation that a successor should make those same choices.

5.8 Summary of Discussion Chapter

This chapter has demonstrated that the findings in Chapter 4 both engage with and extend the existing literature in relation to power and autonomy in relation to organisational type and, in particular, to that addressing third-space professionals in English higher education. Specifically:

1. The thesis proposes a new model of organisation type for HEIs (Figure 5). This brings together several existing models and builds on these to create a new exploratory typology for HEIs. This model has strong explanatory power for the role played by actors within

the organisations in this study, but it is recognised that further research is required to confirm, refine or extend the model.

2. The findings develop existing theory showing how organisational type interacts with the role played by the HoQ (section 5.3). The degree of centralisation or devolution of decision-making authority, and the strength of hierarchical control, both play an important role in determining the parameters of the role of the HoQ as a third-space professional. The success of the HoQ within each type of organisation depends on their ability to identify, develop and deploy the appropriate social power.

3. The discussion of findings against literature on the 'third space' supports the contention that HoQs are third space professionals, however this space is shaped by organisational type (section 5.4). HoQs operate as cross-boundary professionals (Whitchurch, 2009), working at the interface between national regulation and associated expectations on one hand, and organisational policy and practice on the other. However, the space in which they operate is determined by organisational structure; this affects the role they play – acting primarily as a translator of requirements, a bridge between different groups of interests, or potentially both. The types and levels of autonomy which they display – and the flexibility which is accorded to them in their role – is largely determined by the structure of the organisation.

4. HoQs can take advantage of opportunities to extend their role and operate more broadly across the organisation if they are able to build the necessary referent power to hold influence outside their own immediate field of work (section 5.6 and 5.7). This may include an element of job-crafting, extending the role into territories which are not envisaged by the organisation.

The discussion culminates in new models of power for HoQs in relation to organisational type (Figure 6); and of the strength and extent of professional autonomy (Figure 7). These models illustrate the ways in which HoQs, as examples of third space professionals, can use the social

power available to them according to organisational type and the implications this has for professional autonomy.

In the concluding chapter, consideration will be given to possible future directions for further research to deepen understanding in this field, together with the implications for practice of these findings and reflections on the research process.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This research study sought to investigate the role played by Heads of Quality, as third-space professionals, within English higher education. This is a complex and fast-moving environment. The cap on domestic student tuition fees in England since 2012 has driven a strong imperative towards efficiency and effectiveness; the consequent increased competition between providers – in particular for student enrolments – has placed greater emphasis on providers seeking to differentiate themselves and articulate a clear and distinct offer. At the same time, changes to the regulatory environment through the establishment of the Office for Students as a market regulator with strong enforcement powers brings the pressure of ensuring that conditions of registration – including in respect of quality management – are adhered to.

The thesis considers in particular the deployment of professional autonomy by three Heads of Quality, each working in an HEI which is representative of a particular organisational type. It considers the type and level of autonomy available to each HoQ, and how this is realised: whether they have legitimate position power based on their job role or develop expert or referent power, extending their influence or job satisfaction through job crafting. As such, it considers the ways in which the 'power environment' in each HEI affects the role played by three third-space professionals.

6.2 Contribution to knowledge

The study offers four main contributions to the literature about third-space professionals within higher education. First, it offers a new exploratory typology of HEIs, based on organisational structure; secondly, it provides an enhanced understanding of the role of third-space professionals and how this is affected by organisational type; and it then offers new models of social power and autonomy for Heads of Quality in relation to organisational type; and of the corresponding strength and scope of professional autonomy.

6.2.1 Exploratory typology of HEIs according to organisational structure

The literature offers several typologies of organisation, some of which are specific to higher education. By using the axes of centralisation / devolution, and strength of hierarchical control, a typology was developed which takes account of the existing models. It incorporates many of the organisational types which are identified by those previous models, demonstrating how those features interact to generate a new model. This typology was used to frame the research and its conclusions. The findings indicate that the revised typology of HEIs as organisations presented in Figure 5 has relevance and direct application to the roles played by senior managers such as the HoQ, and makes a contribution to the understanding of HEIs as organisations. The typology is exploratory, as it is based on a detailed investigation of a limited number of HEIs, and further research is required to confirm or develop its wider applicability (see section 6.4.1).

6.2.2 Developing understanding of the role of third space professionals

The thesis demonstrates that Heads of Quality are third space professionals. They operate at the interface between national regulation and associated expectations, and organisational policy and practice. An important component of their role is to translate national regulatory requirements and expectations about quality management into both language and practice, which meets the needs of their organisation. They might also act as bridges to bring different groups within the HEI together to reach a consensus. However, the third space in which they operate is not uniform. The space is determined by organisational structure, so their success within each type of organisation depends on their ability to identify, develop and deploy the appropriate social power.

In an HEI with centralised decision-making and strong hierarchical control, the Head of Quality has considerable autonomy to determine policy and practice for the organisation. All actors within this type of HEI generally operate within an allocated position in the structure, and not have the freedom to encroach into other domains. Hence, while the Head of Quality holds legitimate position power, they are constrained to the quality management sphere and also by

their position within the hierarchy, which restricts their opportunity to make proposals which would make additional demands of staff who are outside this domain.

Where hierarchical control is associated with a devolved structure, the HoQ has less direct autonomy to determine policy or practice, as greater decision-making powers are located within academic units. They can identify priority areas for action, but need to convince others of these priorities before they are progressed. It is usual for implementation to be based on agreed principles; the HoQ has the power to audit compliance with these principles, but cannot determine how they should be met. However, while the HoQ has more limited autonomy in decision-making, they can supplement their legitimate position power by building referent power through the establishment of strong internal networks and alliances. This can also increase the range of areas where they have a voice, thereby extending the job role beyond the core tasks, as well as generating additional social power within the quality management sphere.

In a devolved and democratic organisation, the HoQ has very limited opportunity to make autonomous decisions about policy and practice, as these organisations work on the basis of consensus and shared values. The HoQ will rely on their skills as both a translator of the regulatory environment, and a bridge who can bring internal stakeholders together. It is a feature of the democratic organisation that those within professional services positions can be respected for their own knowledge and abilities within their sphere. This enables the HoQ to build and use expert power to shape the decisions within their field, supported by the deployment of referent power built through their use of internal networks. In consequence, they can gain support for proposals and can wield significant influence with those at all levels, including very senior staff. The extension of the job role to other areas of interest is encouraged, and a successful actor who has gained legitimacy may be well placed to have considerable influence in areas which are obviously outside the quality management field.

The Head of Quality in each case exercises professional autonomy, but the way in which this is enacted is dependent on organisational type. While they are likely to share core aspects of a job description (notably including senior responsibility for the internal quality management framework, and compliance with external regulatory requirements), the skillset required to be

successful, and the way in which the job is approached, is determined by organisational structure.

Thus to speak of Heads of Quality as third-space professionals is legitimate, but this categorisation is in some ways too simple. There is a tendency to categorise experiences according to the role content, rather than organisational type, and this study shows that a more nuanced explanation is required.

This study demonstrates a clear link between organisational type, and the types and levels of power and autonomy held by Heads of Quality, as examples of third-space professionals. While there is existing literature on organisational type, including some which is higher education-specific, this focuses on the implications for the organisation itself or the sector as a whole, rather than the effect on those working within the organisation. For the third-space professional, whose role crosses discipline boundaries and cannot remain unaffected by organisational structure, these typological differences are substantial.

6.2.3 A model of power and autonomy for Heads of Quality in relation to organisational type

This thesis shows the different bases of social power available to Heads of Quality according to organisational type. This results in a model (Figure 6) which demonstrates the ways in which the HoQ can exercise their professional autonomy, and the corresponding bases of social power. In a centralised, hierarchical organisation, the HoQ deploys legitimate position power; but if their access to this power is limited, it cannot easily be supplemented by other forms (referent or expert power). The HoQ in a devolved but hierarchical HEI may deploy both legitimate position power and referent power, although the availability of each decreases as the level of devolution and the strength of hierarchical control increases. Conversely in the devolved and democratic organisation, the HoQ holds very limited legitimate position power, but can deploy referent and expert power to establish their professional autonomy.

6.2.4 A model of the strength and scope of professional autonomy in relation to organisational type

The research also shows the ways in which Heads of Quality exercise their professional autonomy (Figure 7). Where autonomy as a decision-maker is most concentrated, it is also most limited in scope. As this autonomy in decision-making is diluted, the scope of activities over which an actor can have influence correspondingly extends, with the opportunity to deploy relations-based and competence-based power to deliver effective outcomes.

Together, these models illustrate the ways in which Heads of Quality, as typical third space professionals, can use the social power available to them according to organisational type and how this interacts with the notion of professional autonomy.

6.3 Implications for practice

The findings of this research demonstrate the effect of organisational type on the role of the Head of Quality. The implications for practice might be articulated under three strands: the recruiting manager within an HEI, the Head of Quality, and the wider professional community.

6.3.1 Managers seeking to recruit Heads of Quality: identifying the most suitable candidate

There is an established view in the existing literature that organisations are often not good at categorising their own structure, with a tendency to overstate levels of flexibility and autonomy granted to staff. It is therefore unrealistic to conclude that HEIs should be more effective at this than other organisations. It is well-attested that there are different reasons why organisations display the structure that they do – there is no superior organisational form, so HEIs adopt a structure which is appropriate for how they perceive their own circumstances and best interests, noting the influence of path-dependency in these decisions. When seeking to recruit a Head of Quality, this research suggests that it would be valuable for the recruiting manager to reflect carefully on the existing operating model, and in particular on the place of the HEI within the typology. Most job descriptions and person specifications for the role of Head of Quality look

broadly similar, but an excellent candidate for a role in one type of organisation may be comparatively ineffective in another type. Even a candidate who has been demonstrably successful at another HEI might not be suitable if their success was predicated on the establishment of particular bases of social power – and the deployment of professional autonomy – in a very different organisational setting. A more careful consideration of the skillset required, including how the bases of social power need to be developed and deployed, would assist managers in making effective recruitment decisions which take account of the compatibility between the expectations of the role, and the preferred approach of each candidate.

6.3.2 The Head of Quality: enhanced understanding of the job role can provide greater job satisfaction

It is likely that most Heads of Quality will orient themselves to the HEI in which they are working and will establish the most effective ways of delivering agreed outcomes, even if this might involve a period of 'trial and error'. An accurate appreciation of the different types of organisation – and the implications of each – would support the Head of Quality in identifying the bases of social power available to them and how best to deploy these. The HoQ could therefore dedicate resources to those activities most likely to be effective. The exercise of professional autonomy is an important element of job satisfaction. An enhanced understanding of how professional autonomy is framed in each type of organisation would assist the HoQ in achieving this.

Perhaps more pertinently, this would be an important consideration if a practitioner were intending to make an application for employment at a different HEI. A clear understanding of organisational type and the consequent shape of the role, would enable an applicant to determine whether they were a suitable candidate – both in terms of their own interests, but also in terms of their skillsets and the environments in which they feel most comfortable. A corollary is that such an understanding of organisational type would reduce the risk of a mismatch between the role and the individual, which is likely not to be of benefit either to the HEI or the Head of Quality themselves.

This conclusion might have wider application to *other third space professionals* working within higher education. While this study was focused on the Head of Quality, similar findings can be extrapolated to others working within each organisational type.

6.3.3 The wider professional community: an opportunity to develop a supportive professional framework

Heads of Quality form their own professional community. There are sector-wide mail groups for senior quality practitioners, and regular seminars and conferences which are dedicated to this group. Given the paucity of research into the role of Heads of Quality, there has been little opportunity for this group to reflect on difference, as well as commonality, or to theorise about the role. Many Heads of Quality will self-define as a third space professional, but may not have considered the implications of this categorisation beyond recognising that the description resonates more strongly with them than the traditional definitions in the annual HESA return. The research provides an opportunity for the wider community of practice to reflect on its shared and different experiences, which could lead to the development of a supportive professional framework or similar to guide those who may be seeking to join, or progress within, this specific area of the higher education profession.

6.4 Boundary conditions and areas for further research

This study has a number of boundary conditions which offer interesting areas for further research in this field which could extend the understanding of higher education management, and the particular roles played by third space professionals.

6.4.1 Potential for a larger scale study

The fact that only three HEIs were selected for detailed investigation may imply limitations in terms of wider generalisability. These three HEIs were selected as representatives of their type / quadrant, but it cannot be guaranteed that other providers within the same quadrant would necessarily share all of the same organisational features. Similar roles in each organisation were

interviewed in detail and asked the same questions; this permits cross-reference internally and also comparability across the three HEIs. All interviewees were able to share a deep understanding of their own organisation, while no interviewee suggested that their HEI was a significant outlier from the rest of the sector. Nevertheless, the sample size is recognised to be small, so this is reflected in the claims made for the research. The wider applicability of the findings would be strengthened through additional research, which could provide additional confirmation or refinement of the exploratory typology proposed. While further qualitative research based around semi-structured interviews would be one approach to this, it may also be possible to devise a survey for completion by relevant staff across a wide range of providers which focused on specific aspects of the findings, in particular the key areas of difference between the provider types, to gain some high-level insights.

6.4.2 In-depth research with individuals who have worked across HEIs with very different structures to understand their experience

Another potentially fruitful direction for future research would be to conduct qualitative research with Heads of Quality who have worked across two or more providers, especially where these providers are of different types. This would provide the opportunity to consider the different ways in which they have sought to navigate the respective HEIs, together with their own reflections on both their experience and their success in doing so. While individuals move between providers on a reasonably regular basis, it is acknowledged that most this is often (although not always) on the basis of promotion to a more senior role, so it would be important to take account of the level of seniority and position within the organisation in each case, to ensure that this did not overly influence the findings.

6.4.3 Investigation of the arrangements at an HEI where the quality management framework had been seen to fail, to identify barriers to success

In each of the three HEIs under discussion, the Head of Quality was well-respected and valued; each was able to take advantage of the (different) forms of autonomy available to them. A challenging, but potentially rewarding, study might be to explore in depth the arrangements at an

HEI where the quality management framework had been seen to fail – or to operate less effectively than intended – and to identify what the barriers to success were. In particular, it would be interesting to understand whether this was because the Head of Quality failed to recognise and respond to organisational type, or whether they had been unable to develop the necessary forms of power and autonomy which are key to success in that type.

6.4.4 Similar research with other categories of third-space professional to consider whether the proposed typology has similar explanatory power

As has been discussed above, a feature of much research into the experience of third-space professionals has tended to focus on specific categories (such as quality practitioners, learning developers, or research administrators). Little account appears to have been taken of the role of organisational structure in shaping their experience, or levels of success. It could be fruitful to conduct similar research with other categories of third-space professional to understand whether the exploratory typology developed for this study has similar explanatory power in other settings.

While these potential limitations are recognised, the careful consideration given to research design and sample selection (sections 3.4 and 3.5), together with the rigorous approach to data analysis (section 3.8) and discussion of findings in Chapters 4 and 5 should provide confidence that the outcomes are reliable and valid and that some claims are generalisable, however the specific context is always important and the claims therefore acknowledge this fact.

One further interesting area for future research was also identified. Research into expert power has shown that it is context-specific. With the rise of new power and the shift away from confidence in traditional authority figures and power structures, it would be interesting to investigate whether this is still the case, especially within a higher education context. Those who have built strong expert power, supported by strong referent power, may be well-placed to hold much wider influence than was the case even a decade ago, and this could be an interesting area of exploration.

6.5 Reflections on the research journey

Despite having twenty-five years of experience within quality management in English higher education, and a keen interest in the notion of third space professionals, I had no particular expectations about the trajectory of this research project. My primary interests were in the exercise of professional autonomy and the roles played by Heads of Quality in the emerging regulatory environment, but I had not previously engaged with the literature on either organisations, or the operation of social power. The development of a typology of HEIs emerged from this literature review; and I learned a great deal about both professional autonomy and social power, some of which helped me to understand my own personal approaches and behaviours more clearly. It also led directly to research questions which were of personal and professional interest, as well as theoretically important. The interviews and analysis of the findings then led to the proposed explanatory typology as presented in Figure 5 (section 5.2).

It has become increasingly apparent that the roles played by Heads of Quality are not identical. However, without this research project, I would not have linked this directly to the type of organisational structure; and I would have had only very limited understanding of social power. Perhaps more importantly, I have benefitted greatly from the discipline of a comprehensive literature review into topics about which I knew comparatively little and, in particular, the discipline of coding and analysis of qualitative data. This was a new process for me and at first appeared daunting; it was painstaking work but very satisfying to complete. I can recognise the greater rigour with which I approach some elements of my professional role as a result of undertaking this thesis, and I look forward to future stages in my professional and research journey.

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APPENDICES

Appendix One: Pilot survey (PS)

Introductory section

1. **Institution**
2. **Job title**
3. **Length of time in post**
   Less than a year 1-3 4-6 7+

4. Who do you report to?
Vice-Chancellor / Principal or equivalent
Deputy Vice Chancellor / Pro Vice Chancellor or equivalent
Registrar / Chief Operating Officer
Academic Registrar
Other [please specify]

5. For which of the following areas of work do you have lead responsibility? (Please select all that apply)
Quality management (Validation and review, Annual monitoring / review, External examining)
Quality enhancement
Student engagement
Student records
Admissions
Timetabling
Research degrees
Student support services

6. What is your relationship with professional / administrative staff in faculties / schools / departments?
Direct line management
No official management responsibility
Other (please explain)

For each question, please assume that the "relevant processes" are those which fall within your area of responsibility, as described at Q5. *(Responses Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly disagree unless otherwise stated)*

7. I have complete freedom to design the relevant operational processes for my areas of work

8. I have complete discretion over how relevant processes are implemented across the University

9. The University sets my high-level objectives, but does not specify how these are achieved

10. The University publicly promotes innovation and modern services, but in practice it retains its central, bureaucratic processes

11. The University aims to would be proud to differentiate itself from its competitors on the basis of streamlined and efficient processes

12. Please rank these sentences in order of accuracy, with the most accurate at the top.

The professional services at my institution are mostly seen as:
The academic civil service, carrying out the will of the academic community
A professional bureaucracy, managing agreed processes with limited flexibility
A body of experts in their own fields whose views should be treated with respect
A body of professionals who manage agreed processes but are flexible when required

13. Please rank these sentences in order of accuracy, with the most accurate at the top

The University is like an army: it is very hierarchical, and it specifies the 'right' way to do things. It is uncomfortable with change, and people tend to stay in their boxes

The University is like corporation: there is a clear hierarchy but also some cross-functioning teams. The University doesn't try to control everything, but the senior executives tend to feel a need to check up regularly.

The University is like a cooperative. It promotes fairness, community and consensus, often working bottom-up. The culture is values-driven, and even lower-grade staff are empowered to make decisions

The University is like a social movement. Staff are free to choose their own projects; anyone can lead, and anyone can pitch in. Leaders set this tone and culture, and appoint the right people, but do not dictate, and intervene only exceptionally rarely

14. If you would like to add any further commentary, please use the box below to do so. I should be particularly interested if things have changed significantly at your institution in the last 12-18 months and moved strongly towards greater or less autonomy for professional services managers; or if there is a particular feature of your work which could not be captured by the questions and answers above.

The second part of this research will comprise detailed case studies. Each institution and each respondent will be anonymised, beyond broad categorisation (approximate size and mission group, and generic job title). I also need to pilot these case study interviews, so if you would be willing for your institution to be included as a possible case study, please confirm this by providing your name and email address below.

Thank you for taking part in this pilot survey. The final questions are about the survey itself.

The survey was easy to complete
I understood what was intended by each of the questions

The answers adequately captured how I wanted to respond

Do you have any further comments about the survey?

Appendix Two: Revised survey (NS)

Introductory section

1. **Institution**
2. **Name**
3. **Job title**
4. **Length of time in post**
   Less than a year 1-3 4-6 7+

5. Who do you report to?
Vice-Chancellor / Principal or equivalent
Deputy Vice Chancellor / Pro Vice Chancellor or equivalent
Registrar / Chief Operating Officer
Academic Registrar
Other [please specify]

6. For which of the following areas of work do you have lead responsibility? (Please select all that apply)
Quality management (Validation and review, Annual monitoring / review, External examining)
Quality enhancement
Student engagement
Student records
Admissions
Timetabling
Research degrees
Student support services

7. What is your relationship with professional / administrative staff in faculties / schools / departments?
Direct line management
No official management responsibility
Other (please explain)

For each question, please assume that the "relevant processes" are those which fall within your area of responsibility, as described at Q5. *(Responses Strongly Agree / Agree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree unless otherwise stated)*

8. I have complete freedom to design the relevant operational processes for my areas of work
(Hackman and Oldham, 1976)

9. I have complete freedom to decide how relevant processes are implemented across the University, and the control to implement this
(Muzio and Kirkpatrick, 2011; Berg, Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2010)

10. I am often involved in activity which falls outside my formal job remit where I can make a useful contribution.
(Langfred and Rockman, 2016)

11. I find ways of creating space in my job to engage in tasks which make the role more personally fulfilling
(Tims and Bakker, 2010; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001; Grant and Ashford, 2008)

12. The University is very hierarchical in nature; power is located within key positions in the formal structure
(Langfred and Moye, 2004)

13. The University has quite a flat structure. Of course there is a management structure, but individuals have considerable freedom to operate.
(Macheridis and Paulsson, 2019; Langfred and Rockman 2016)

14. The University is strongly culture- and values-based; there is a real sense of common purpose which drives decisions
(Buono, 2003; Paradeise and Thoenig, 2013)

15. We are very centralised; most matters are determined and implemented centrally on behalf of the whole University
(Mintzberg, 1980; also Eisenhardt, Furr and Bingham, 2010; Paradeise and Thoenig, 2013)

16. We have a very devolved structure; local units are pretty free to 'do their own thing'
(Mintzberg, 1980; also Eisenhardt, Furr and Bingham, 2010; Paradeise and Thoenig, 2013)

17. The University publicly promotes innovation and modern services, but in practice it retains its central, bureaucratic processes
(Felin and Powell, 2015)

18. Please rank these sentences in order of accuracy, with the most accurate at the top
(Laloux, 2014)

The University is like an army: it is very hierarchical, and it specifies the 'right' way to do things. It is uncomfortable with change, and people tend to stay in their boxes

The University is like corporation: there is a clear hierarchy but also some cross-functioning teams. The University doesn't try to control everything, but the senior executives tend to feel a need to check up regularly

The University is like a cooperative. It promotes fairness, community and consensus, often working bottom-up. The culture is values-driven, and even lower-grade staff are empowered to make decisions

The University is like a social movement. Staff are free to choose their own projects; anyone can lead, and anyone can pitch in. Leaders set this tone and culture, and appoint the right people, but do not dictate, and intervene only exceptionally rarely

17. If you would like to add any further commentary, please use the box below to do so. I should be particularly interested if things have changed significantly at your institution in the last 12-18 months and moved strongly towards greater or less autonomy for professional services managers; or if there is a particular feature of your work which could not be captured by the questions and answers above.

The second part of this research will comprise detailed case studies. Each institution and each respondent will be anonymised, beyond broad categorisation (approximate size and mission group, and generic job title). If you would be willing for your institution to be included as a possible case study, please confirm this by providing your name and email address below.

Appendix Three: Pilot interview schedule (PQ)

Research questions

3. How does organisational structure affect the roles played by Heads of Quality, as third space professionals, and the bases of social power they deploy:
   3.1. in relation to the strength of hierarchical control;
   3.2. in relation to centralisation or devolution (of organisational structure).

4. How are Heads of Quality, as third space practitioners, professionally autonomous?
   4.1. Do Heads of Quality have autonomy over their decisions and actions? (Are they rule-makers or rule-takers? Is their judgement shaped through the wider influence of institutional values or power hierarchy, and how can they approach this most effectively?)
   4.2. How does professional autonomy interact with organisational structure in the role of Heads of Quality?

Mapping research sub-questions against interview schedule:

The early questions about role and responsibilities are scene-setting and background; they may play a role but are not targeted at specific research sub-questions.

	HQ	Others
1a	9, 10, 11, 12	8, 9, 11, 12
1b	9, 10, 11, 12	8, 9, 11, 12
2.1	2, 4, 5a, 5b, 6, 8, 13	3, 5, 6a, 6b, 7, 10
2.2	Passim	Passim

3a Head of Quality

Start with the introduction

1	Could you start by explaining your role – who do you report to, who reports to you, and what are your key responsibilities?
2	How would you describe your role to someone outside the sector who doesn't really understand what it's about? *Keywords here are things like: in charge / responsible / support. I will pick up on any keywords they use and explore a little further what they mean by 'support' or 'responsible' – unpack the level of autonomy they are describing*
3	Has anything changed in your role in the last 18 months? *Key points may be internal mergers, additional responsibilities, changes to team size*
4	I am going to ask you to take a few minutes to sketch me a very rough diagram. We're only talking here about matters of academic governance – validation, external examiners, annual monitoring, that kind of thing. I'm asking you to think of a time when one of those processes was changed. Imagine the decision to make a change to be a continuum from initial idea to confirmed outcome. Where did the proposed change originate, and what was its journey – who contributed to shaping it, and how much weight did each contributor have? You can include both individuals, and Committees. Who, ultimately, approved it? And just as importantly, who in your view has to be supportive of that outcome, without whose support it would not be approved? Can you explain the drawing? *I'm interested in who is included and why, how strong the influence is, and whose support is deemed critical – is that the VC, line manager, Deans…or just you?* *It's possible that this conversation will result in some changes to the diagram but we'll only make them on tape, not on the original plan.*
5a 5b	Do you think this (where we ended up) is a pretty accurate summary of your formal responsibilities in relation to quality management, and how decisions are normally taken? Is this the level of influence you normally expect? Can you give some examples of how this works in practice?
6	And when it comes to delivery / implementation – would you have the same level of influence? Can you explain about this?

7	7a Are there specific areas where you have less authority? Could you explain about these, and why they're different?
	7b And are there specific areas where you have less autonomy? Could you explain about these, and why they're different?
8	Do you get involved in many activities which are outside those formal responsibilities? How does this happen? *(If necessary, I would prompt with: Are you invited, or do you invite yourself?)*
9	You described your organisation as [*where on the grid, for example, quite hierarchical but very decentralised*]. Can you explain why you said this – what examples would you give?
	Thinking about where you've placed your University on that diagram, could we take a few minutes to think about what factors might have influenced that? For example, what effect if any do you think each of the following has? Size Mission group History of the HEI VC Anything else?
10	How does this manifest itself in decision-making? What does this mean for you – how do you deal with this situation?
11	How would you describe your relationship with the Deans? *(I'll use whatever title the institution has for the leader of functional academic units.)*
12	How about your relationship with other academics? What determines the nature of that relationship?
13	Have you established any formal or informal networks to help you perform your role? Could you describe these – how they came about, and how they impact on you?
14	Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about the way in which you contribute to the work of the University?
15	Is there anything else haven't talked about that you consider may be important?

3b Line manager

Start with the introduction

1	Could you start by explaining your role – who do you report to, who reports to you, and what are your key responsibilities?
2	Could you say a bit more about your role in relation to quality management – things like validation, periodic review, external examining, annual monitoring. What responsibilities do you have?
3	How would you describe QM's role to someone outside the sector who doesn't really understand what it's about? *Keywords here are things like: in charge / responsible / support. I will pick up on any keywords they use and explore a little further what they mean by 'support' or 'responsible' – unpack the level of autonomy they are describing*
4	Has anything changed in quality management in the last 18 months? *Key points may be internal mergers, additional responsibilities, changes to team size*
5	I asked the Head of Quality to sketch me a diagram of a recent decision taken on an area of academic governance, and they chose [whatever this was]. I asked them to imagine the decision to be a continuum from initial idea to confirmed outcome, and to indicate where the proposed change originated, and what its journey was – who contributed to shaping it, and how much weight did each contributor have? This is the diagram they drew. Could I ask you to take a few minutes to annotate it and indicate any points that you would see differently? Can you send it back to me – and now explain your annotations. *I'm interested in who is included and why, how strong the influence is, and whose support is deemed critical – is that the VC, line manager, Deans…or just you?* *It's possible that this conversation will result in some changes to the diagram but we'll only make them on tape, not on the original plan.*
6a 6b	Do you think this (where we ended up) is a pretty accurate summary of the formal responsibilities in relation to quality management, and how decisions are normally taken? Can you give some examples of how this works in practice?

7	And when it comes to delivery / implementation – would you say that the same applies? Can you explain about this?
8	Some line managers may actually have responded to the survey, others won't have seen it; so there are two options, 7a for those who did and 7b for those who didn't You described your organisation as [*where on the grid, for example, quite hierarchical but very decentralised*]. Can you explain why you said this – what examples would you give? *OR* One thing I'm interested in is how roles may differ depending on how hierarchical an organisation is, and also how centralised it is. This is a grid using those two axes. Do you recognise your institution as fitting into one of these quadrants or would you suggest modifications to the model to accommodate your University? *If different from expected, challenge this:* Other people have suggested that your University belongs in [this quadrant], why do you think there may be a difference of opinion?
	Thinking about where you've placed your University on that diagram, could we take a few minutes to think about what factors might have influenced that? For example, what effect if any do you think each of the following has? Size Mission group History of the HEI VC Anything else?
9	Does this (wherever the diagram takes us) have implications for how quality is managed at the University?
10	We talked earlier about HQ's role in relation to quality management. Would you say that HQ gets involved in many activities which are outside those formal responsibilities?
11	How would you describe QM's relationship with the Deans? *(I'll use whatever title the institution has for the leader of functional academic units.)*
12	How about QM's relationship with other academics?
13	Is there anything else haven't talked about that you consider may be important?

3c Dean or equivalent

1	Could you start by explaining your role – who do you report to, who reports to you, and what are your key responsibilities?
2	Could you say a bit more about your role in relation to quality management – things like validation, periodic review, external examining, annual monitoring. What responsibilities do you have?
3	How would you describe QM's role to someone outside the sector who doesn't really understand what it's about? *Keywords here are things like: in charge / responsible / support. I will pick up on any keywords they use and explore a little further what they mean by 'support' or 'responsible' – unpack the level of autonomy they are describing*
4	Do you think anything has changed in quality management in the last 18 months? *Key points may be internal mergers, additional responsibilities, changes to team size*
5	I asked the Head of Quality to sketch me a diagram of a recent decision taken on an area of academic governance, and they chose [whatever this was]. I asked them to imagine the decision to be a continuum from initial idea to confirmed outcome, and to indicate where the proposed change originated, and what its journey was – who contributed to shaping it, and how much weight did each contributor have? This is the diagram they drew. Could I ask you to take a few minutes to annotate it and indicate any points that you would see differently? Can you send it back to me – and now explain your annotations. *I'm interested in who is included and why, how strong the influence is, and whose support is deemed critical – is that the VC, line manager, Deans…or just QM?* *It's possible that this conversation will result in some changes to the diagram but we'll only make them on tape, not on the original plan.*
6a 6b	Do you think this (where we ended up) is a pretty accurate summary of the formal responsibilities in relation to quality management, and how decisions are normally taken? Can you give some examples of how this works in practice?
7	And when it comes to delivery / implementation – would you say that the same applies? Can you explain about this? Do you, as Dean, have any extra say over how things are implemented in your faculty?

8	One thing I'm interested in is how roles may differ depending on how hierarchical an organisation is, and also how centralised it is. This is a grid using those two axes. Do you recognise your institution as fitting into one of these quadrants or would you suggest modifications to the model to accommodate your University? *If different from expected, challenge this:* Other people have suggested that your University belongs in [this quadrant], why do you think there may be a difference of opinion?
	Thinking about where you've placed your University on that diagram, could we take a few minutes to think about what factors might have influenced that? For example, what effect if any do you think each of the following has? Size Mission group History of the HEI VC Anything else?
9	Does this (wherever the diagram takes us) have implications for how quality is managed at the University?
10	We talked earlier about HQ's role in relation to quality management. Would you say that HQ gets involved in many activities which are outside those formal responsibilities?
11	How would you describe QM's relationship with you and your fellow Deans? *(I'll use whatever title the institution has for the leader of functional academic units.)*
12	How about QM's relationship with other academics, especially those with responsibility for quality management issues locally?
13	Is there anything else haven't talked about that you consider may be important?

3d Other academic staff member

Start with the introduction

1	Could you start by explaining your role – who do you report to, who reports to you, and what are your key responsibilities?
2	Could you say a bit more about your role in relation to quality management – things like validation, periodic review, external examining, annual monitoring. What responsibilities do you have?
3	How would you describe QM's role to someone outside the sector who doesn't really understand what it's about? *Keywords here are things like: in charge / responsible / support. I will pick up on any keywords they use and explore a little further what they mean by 'support' or 'responsible' – unpack the level of autonomy they are describing*
4	Do you think anything has changed in quality management in the last 18 months? *Key points may be internal mergers, additional responsibilities, changes to team size*
5	I asked the Head of Quality to sketch me a diagram of a recent decision taken on an area of academic governance, and they chose [whatever this was]. I asked them to imagine the decision to be a continuum from initial idea to confirmed outcome, and to indicate where the proposed change originated, and what its journey was – who contributed to shaping it, and how much weight did each contributor have? This is the diagram they drew. Could I ask you to take a few minutes to annotate it and indicate any points that you would see differently? Can you send it back to me – and now explain your annotations. *I'm interested in who is included and why, how strong the influence is, and whose support is deemed critical – is that the VC, line manager, Deans…or just QM?* *It's possible that this conversation will result in some changes to the diagram but we'll only make them on tape, not on the original plan.*
6a 6b	Do you think this (where we ended up) is a pretty accurate summary of the formal responsibilities in relation to quality management, and how decisions are normally taken? Can you give some examples of how this works in practice?

7	And when it comes to delivery / implementation – would you say that the same applies? Can you explain about this? Does your Dean have more say over local implementation, or are you likely to get involved?
8	One thing I'm interested in is how roles may differ depending on how hierarchical an organisation is, and also how centralised it is. This is a grid using those two axes. Do you recognise your institution as fitting into one of these quadrants or would you suggest modifications to the model to accommodate your University? *If different from expected, challenge this:* Other people have suggested that your University belongs in [this quadrant], why do you think there may be a difference of opinion?
	Thinking about where you've placed your University on that diagram, could we take a few minutes to think about what factors might have influenced that? For example, what effect if any do you think each of the following has? Size Mission group History of the HEI VC Anything else?
9	Does this (wherever the diagram takes us) have implications for how quality is managed at the University?
10	We talked earlier about HQ's role in relation to quality management. Would you say that HQ gets involved in many activities which are outside those formal responsibilities?
11	How would you describe QM's relationship with senior staff such as their line manager and the Deans? *(I'll use whatever title the institution has for the leader of functional academic units.)*
12	How about QM's relationship with you and your peers who have responsibility for quality management issues locally?
13	Is there anything else haven't talked about that you consider may be important?

Appendix Four: Revised interview schedule (NQ)

Research questions

5. How does organisational structure affect the roles played by Heads of Quality, as third space professionals, and the bases of social power they deploy:
   5.1. in relation to the strength of hierarchical control;
   5.2. in relation to centralisation or devolution (of organisational structure).

6. How are Heads of Quality, as third space practitioners, professionally autonomous?
   6.1. Do Heads of Quality have autonomy over their decisions and actions? (Are they rule-makers or rule-takers? Is their judgement shaped through the wider influence of institutional values or power hierarchy, and how can they approach this most effectively?)
   6.2. How does professional autonomy interact with organisational structure in the role of Heads of Quality?

Mapping research sub-questions against interview schedule:

The early questions about role and responsibilities are scene-setting and background; they may play a role but are not targeted at specific research sub-questions.

	HQ	Line manager	Academic	Direct report
1.1	12, 13, 14, 15, 16	10, 11, 12, 14, 15	8, 9, 10, 14, 15	8, 9, 10, 15, 16
1.2	12, 13, 14, 15, 16	10, 11, 12, 14, 15	8, 9, 10, 14, 15	8, 9, 10, 15, 16
2.1	2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10	3, 5, 6, 7, 8	3, 5, 6, 7, 11	3, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13
2.2	Passim, esp 10, 11, 17	Passim, esp 9, 13	Passim, esp 12, 13	Passim esp 12, 14

4a Head of Quality

Start with the introduction

1	Could you start by explaining your role – who do you report to, who reports to you, and what are your key responsibilities?
2	How would you describe your role to someone outside the sector who doesn't really understand what it's about? *Keywords here are things like: in charge / responsible / support. I will pick up on any keywords they use and explore a little further what they mean by 'support' or 'responsible' – unpack the level of autonomy they are describing*
3	Has anything changed in your role in the last 18 months? *Key points may be internal mergers, additional responsibilities, changes to team size*
4	I'm going to ask you now to think about a recent occasion when a key academic governance process was changed. So, external examining, validation, annual monitoring, that kind of thing. Could you tell me about it – where did the proposed change originate, and what was its journey? Sub-questions if not covered: 4a Who contributed to shaping it? 4b Who, ultimately approved it? 4c And who has to be supportive of the outcome, without whose support it would not be approved? 4d Could you have stopped it, if you wanted? 4e Could anyone else? (*Note: I am thinking here about, for example, the Chair of the approving committee, the line manager, a majority of Deans*)
5	Would you say that's pretty typical of how changes are approved?
6	And when it comes to delivery / implementation – would you have the same level of influence? Can you explain about this?
7	I'm now going to ask you some questions and ask you to answer true or false "Within the quality management realm, I am definitely the ruler", true or false? (*If they say yes, I will add: "Are you an absolute ruler?"*. 7b Can you give a brief explanation of your answer?

	7c Are there parts of the realm where you have less authority? Could you explain about these, and why they're different?
8	"If I left, my replacement would probably do things very differently", true or false? 8b Can you give a brief explanation of your answer? (*Note: it is probably inevitable that a newcomer would do the job differently. I am interested to discover whether this is because the current postholder has created some areas of the role, or approaches, which are very personal to them.*) 8c Are there specific areas where you have less autonomy? Could you explain about these, and why they're different?
9	"I've found a way of making the role my own", true or false? 9b Can you give a brief explanation of your answer, with a couple of examples?
10	"My boss probably doesn't know half of what I do", true or false? 10b Can you give a brief explanation of your answer?
11	Do you get involved in many activities which are outside those formal responsibilities? How does this happen? *(If necessary, I would prompt with: Are you invited, or do you invite yourself?)*
12	You described your organisation as [*where on the grid, for example, quite hierarchical but very decentralised*] (*Note: I shall take this answer from the survey*). Can you explain why you said this – what examples would you give?
13	Thinking about where you've placed your University on that diagram, could we take a few minutes to think about what factors might have influenced that? For example, what effect if any do you think each of the following has? Size Mission group History of the HEI VC Anything else?
14	How does this manifest itself in decision-making? What does this mean for you – how do you deal with this situation?

15	How would you describe your relationship with the Deans? *(I'll use whatever title the institution has for the leader of functional academic units.)*
16	How about your relationship with other academics? What determines the nature of that relationship?
17	Have you established any formal or informal networks to help you perform your role? Could you describe these – how they came about, and how they impact on you?
18	Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about the way in which you contribute to the work of the University?
19	Is there anything else haven't talked about that you consider may be important?

4b Line manager

Start with the introduction

1	Could you start by explaining your role – who do you report to, who reports to you, and what are your key responsibilities?
2	Could you say a bit more about your role in relation to quality management – things like validation, periodic review, external examining, annual monitoring. What responsibilities do you have?
3	How would you describe QM's role to someone outside the sector who doesn't really understand what it's about? *Keywords here are things like: in charge / responsible / support. I will pick up on any keywords they use and explore a little further what they mean by 'support' or 'responsible' – unpack the level of autonomy they are describing*
4	Has anything changed in quality management in the last 18 months? *Key points may be internal mergers, additional responsibilities, changes to team size*
5	I am going to ask you to think about the recent decision to [the change identified by Head of Quality]. Imagine the decision to make a change to be a continuum from initial idea to confirmed outcome. Where did the proposed change originate, and what was its journey? 5b Who contributed to shaping it, and how much weight did each contributor have? 5c I understand that the decision was ultimately approved by [as given by HQ]. Who in your view has to be supportive of that outcome, without whose support it would not be approved? 5d Could you have stopped it, if you wanted? 5e Could anyone else? (*Note: I am thinking here about, for example, the HQ, a majority of Deans, perhaps even the VC*)
6	Would you say that's pretty typical of how changes are approved? (*Note: if not, of course I shall ask what would be different in more typical cases.*)

7	And when it comes to delivery / implementation – would you say that the same applies? Or is a decision about implementation devolved – and if so, to whom?
8	"In the quality management realm, N (HQ) is the ruler" – would you say that's true or false? Could you explain why you gave that answer? Are they an absolute ruler and, if not, what limits are there on their power?
9	Do you think a replacement would do the job very differently? Could you explain why you gave that answer?
10	*Some line managers may actually have responded to the survey, others won't have seen it; so there are two options, 10a for those who did and 10b for those who didn't* 10a You described your organisation as [*where on the grid, for example, quite hierarchical but very decentralised*]. Can you explain why you said this – what examples would you give? *OR* 10b One thing I'm interested in is how roles may differ depending on how hierarchical an organisation is, and also how centralised it is. This is a grid using those two axes. Do you recognise your institution as fitting into one of these quadrants or would you suggest modifications to the model to accommodate your University? *If different from expected, challenge this:* Other people have suggested that your University belongs in [this quadrant], why do you think there may be a difference of opinion?
11	Thinking about where you've placed your University on that diagram, could we take a few minutes to think about what factors might have influenced that? For example, what effect if any do you think each of the following has? Size Mission group History of the HEI VC Anything else?
12	Does this (wherever the diagram takes us) have implications for how quality is managed at the University?

13	We talked earlier about HQ's role in relation to quality management. Would you say that HQ gets involved in many activities which are outside those formal responsibilities?
14	How would you describe QM's relationship with the Deans? *(I'll use whatever title the institution has for the leader of functional academic units.)*
15	How about QM's relationship with other academics?
16	Is there anything else haven't talked about that you consider may be important?

4c Academic staff member

Start with the introduction

1	Could you start by explaining your role – who do you report to, who reports to you, and what are your key responsibilities?
2	Could you say a bit more about your role in relation to quality management – things like validation, periodic review, external examining, annual monitoring. What responsibilities do you have?
3	How would you describe QM's role to someone outside the sector who doesn't really understand what it's about? *Keywords here are things like: in charge / responsible / support. I will pick up on any keywords they use and explore a little further what they mean by 'support' or 'responsible' – unpack the level of autonomy they are describing*
4	Do you think anything has changed in quality management in the last 18 months? *Key points may be internal mergers, additional responsibilities, changes to team size*
5	I am going to ask you to think about the recent decision to [the change identified by Head of Quality]. Continuous monitoring of enhancement (Chester) – now an action plan Warwick is introducing new staff to support schools responding to all the strategic demands; but also doing more survey anaylsis Imagine the decision to make a change to be a continuum from initial idea to confirmed outcome. Where did the proposed change originate, and what was its journey? 5b Who contributed to shaping it, and how much weight did each contributor have? 5c I understand that the decision was ultimately approved by [as given by HQ]. Who in your view has to be supportive of that outcome, without whose support it would not be approved? 5d Could you have stopped it, if you wanted? 5e Could anyone else? (*Note: I am thinking here about, for example, the HQ, a majority of Deans, perhaps even the VC*)
6	Would you say that's pretty typical of how changes are approved? (*Note: if not, of course I shall ask what would be different in more typical cases.*)

7	And when it comes to delivery / implementation – would you say that the same applies? Or is a decision about implementation devolved – and if so, to whom? Do you have any influence over how policies are implemented at a local level?
8	One thing I'm interested in is how roles may differ depending on how hierarchical an organisation is, and also how centralised it is. This is a grid using those two axes. Do you recognise your institution as fitting into one of these quadrants or would you suggest modifications to the model to accommodate your University? *If different from expected, challenge this:* Other people have suggested that your University belongs in [this quadrant], why do you think there may be a difference of opinion?
9	Thinking about where you've placed your University on that diagram, could we take a few minutes to think about what factors might have influenced that? For example, what effect if any do you think each of the following has? Size Mission group History of the HEI VC Anything else?
10	Does this (wherever the diagram takes us) have implications for how quality is managed at the University?
11	"In the quality management realm, N (HQ) is the ruler" – would you say that's true or false? Could you explain why you gave that answer? Are they an absolute ruler and, if not, what limits are there on their power?
12	Do you think a replacement would do the job very differently? Could you explain why you gave that answer?
13	We've been talking about HQ's role in relation to quality management. Would you say that HQ gets involved in many activities which are outside those formal responsibilities?
14	How would you describe QM's relationship with senior staff such as their line manager and the Deans? *(I'll use whatever title the institution has for the leader of functional academic units.)*

15	How about QM's relationship with you and your peers who have responsibility for quality management issues locally?
16	Is there anything else haven't talked about that you consider may be important?

4d Direct report

Start with the introduction

1	Could you start by explaining your role – what are your key responsibilities, and do you have any direct reports?
2	How would you describe your role to someone outside the sector who doesn't really understand what it's all about?
3	And suppose instead that you were describing QM's role to someone outside the sector? *Keywords here are things like: in charge / responsible / support. I will pick up on any keywords they use and explore a little further what they mean by 'support' or 'responsible' – unpack the level of autonomy they are describing*
4	Would you say that anything significant has changed in the way you do quality management in the last 18 months? *Key points may be internal mergers, additional responsibilities, changes to team size*
5	When I asked for an example of a recent change to an academic governance process, HQ talked about [example]. Were you involved in that at all, or are you familiar with it? If so: Could you give me your perspective on this – where did the proposed change originate, and what was its journey? 5a Who contributed to shaping it? 5b Who, ultimately approved it? 5c And who has to be supportive of the outcome, without whose support it would not be approved? 5d Do you think HQ could have stopped it, if they wanted? 5e Could anyone else? (*Note: I am thinking here about, for example, the Chair of the approving committee, the line manager, a majority of Deans*) If not: 5f In your experience, how do changes to academic governance policy or processes generally get made? Do they originate within the schools / faculties, or in your office? 5g How involved would you say HQ is?

	5h How likely is it that a change would be implemented that HQ disagreed with? Do they have the power to stop it? 5i Who else has that power – who needs to be in favour?
6	*(Note: only relevant if they answer 5a-e.*) Do you think this is pretty typical of how quality management decisions are taken, and the balance of responsibilities?
7	And when it comes to delivery / implementation – how is that determined? Is any power devolved, and if so to whom?
8	One thing I'm interested in is how roles may differ depending on how hierarchical an organisation is, and also how centralised it is. This is a grid using those two axes. Do you recognise your institution as fitting into one of these quadrants or would you suggest modifications to the model to accommodate your University? *If different from expected, challenge this:* Other people have suggested that your University belongs in [this quadrant], why do you think there may be a difference of opinion?
9	Thinking about where you've placed your University on that diagram, could we take a few minutes to think about what factors might have influenced that? For example, what effect if any do you think each of the following has? Size Mission group History of the HEI VC Anything else?
10	Does this (wherever the diagram takes us) have implications for how quality is managed at the University?
11	"In the quality management realm, N (HQ) is the ruler" – would you say that's true or false? Could you explain why you gave that answer? Are they an absolute ruler and, if not, what limits are there on their power? Are there parts of the realm where they have less authority? Why is that?
12	Do you think a replacement would do the job very differently? Could you explain why you gave that answer?

13	Do you think HQ's manager understands their job well, or is HQ largely left to get on with it?
14	We've been talking about HQ's role in relation to quality management. Would you say that HQ gets involved in many activities which are outside those formal responsibilities?
15	How would you describe QM's relationship with senior staff such as their line manager and the Deans? *(I'll use whatever title the institution has for the leader of functional academic units.)*
16	How about QM's relationship with other academic staff who have responsibility for quality management issues locally?
17	Is there anything else haven't talked about that you consider may be important?

Appendix Five: Full codebook

Name	Description
Perceptions of organisational type	
T1 Centralisation/devolution of power and responsibility	
a) central determination	Decisions (about policy or implementation) are made centrally for all parts of the HEI
b) faculty leads on Q	Instances where faculty takes responsibility for decisions or practice
c) flexibility in implementation	Faculty has the ability to implement policy or practice flexibly at a local level
d) framework not rules	The HEI develops universal frameworks, rather than rules, by which a faculty must abide
e) importance of HEI-wide process	Some processes have to be common across the whole HEI
f) need to work across silos	To work effectively, staff need to see beyond their own specific function and work with colleagues in other areas of the HEI
g) policy interpreted locally	Policy is subject to local interpretation (not always legitimate)
h) staffing centralised	The majority of staffing to support Quality is employed in a central service, rather than at faculty level
i) where to draw the line on devolution to faculty	Instances where interviewees note the challenge of determining "how much" devolution for local interpretation can be allowed

Name	Description
<u>T2 Organisational positioning on hierarchy-values continuum</u>	
a) more hierarchy	Features related to a hierarchical organisation
i. academic senior to administrator	Academics are the key decision-makers, administration seen as "second class citizens"
ii. decisions made at the top	Key decisions are made solely by senior figures
iii. face to face contact with senior staff	Instances where relatively junior staff have direct contact with much more senior staff
iv. influence of LM	Line Manager gives clear indication of policy direction
v. know your place	Staff are expected to understand their place within the organisational hierarchy and stay within it
vi. natural organisational hierarchy	References to the line management structure and the authority which comes with seniority within the organisation
vii. Q team defer to HQ	Head of Quality has line manager authority over the rest of the Quality team
viii. senior staff not challenged	A culture where senior staff make decisions and are not challenged by others
b) more values	Features related to a values-based organisation
i. Consensus	Does the Head of Quality seek consensus (or does the HEI require it?)
ii. faculty involvement in	Faculty is involved in setting policy (ultimately determined centrally), their voice is heard

Name	Description
setting central policy	
iii. HEI has shared values	Direct reference to the HEI having shared values
iv. policy not imposed	Policy is not imposed from above
v. professional services valued	The professional services are valued as part of the overall HEI effort
vi. shared development of policy	Policy is developed in genuine collaboration between different players including the Head of Quality
vii. when do you need to check	Some decisions need to be confirmed 'higher up' the hierarchy, but some can be taken locally. How do staff make this decision?
<u>T3 Factors determining type</u>	
a) few external senior appointments	Most senior appointments have been internal promotions, rather than external
b) History of HEI	How the history of the HEI shapes its current culture
c) Size of HEI	How the size of the HEI shapes its current culture
d) SMT	How the SMT of the HEI shapes its current culture
f) structure more accidental than designed	Existing formal structures (line management, committees, groups etc) have developed over time but not 'designed'
g) VC influence	How the VC of the HEI (beliefs, behaviours) shapes its current culture

Name	Description
c) increased focus on QE	There is an increased focus on quality enhancement across the HEI, not just assurance

Perceptions of the Head of Quality as 'Ruler'

R1 Head of Quality as ruler with the quality management realm	
a) Direct reference to 'ruler'	
b) Head of Quality's authority with their team	
i. HQ as leader of the team	Reference to the Head of Quality as the leader of the team
ii. HQ delegate to team	Where the Head of Quality will delegate matters to team members
iii. HQ more authority than team	The Head of Quality has a level of authority which the team lacks
iv. Q team defer to HQ	Head of Quality has line manager authority over the rest of the Quality team
c) Specific areas of authority	Within the broad quality management realm, are there areas where the Head of Quality is more / less able to make decisions?
i. HQ holds greater authority	Areas of work where the Head of Quality is identified as the lead stakeholder
ii. Others also have interests	Other services will also have a say because it impacts on their own work
R2 Locus of decision-making authority	

a) cost v investment	Is a proposal seen as a cost, or an investment? (Authority held by budget-holders!)
b) faculty has authority	Faculty has the authority to make decisions (without reference to the Head of Quality)
c) HQ enabler and facilitator	The Head of Quality's role is as enabler and facilitator
d) HQ has devolved authority	The Head of Quality has devolved authority
e) HQ has recognised authority on Q	The Head of Quality is institutionally recognised as the authority on matters of quality management
f) HQ influence not authority	The Head of Quality has influence, but not authority
g) HQ not have authority to impose	The Head of Quality does not have the authority to impose policy, or solutions
h) HQ not operate clandestinely	The Head of Quality operates transparently and does not seek to achieve things without anyone senior realising
i) HQ steps up when required	The Head of Quality is sometimes required to take on more senior level work, and does so when required
j) LM shows interest	The Line Manager shows an interest in the Head of Quality's work
k) authority held by lead academic	The real authority is held by the academic who is institutionally responsible for quality management
l) Q supported within university	The Quality service is well supported within the University
m) Small group working together	A small group will work together to develop policy or implementation (might be high-level, or a group tasked with proposing one individual change)

R3 Development of quality management policy or process	
a) Desired outcome of proposed Q changes	What was the change (to policy, process, approach) intended to achieve - what difference would one notice?
i. new process focus on student experience	The new process is designed to be more focused on the student experience
ii. new process involves more staff	The new process is designed to involve more staff (less reliant on one individual)
iii. new process more consistent	The new process is designed to be more consistent across the whole HEI
iv. new process more coordinated	The new process is designed to be more coordinated and 'joined up'
v. new process more responsive	The new process is designed to be more responsive, engaging quickly to address issues rather than waiting to an appointed time in the year
vi. new process saves time	The new process is designed to save time
b) Process of development for Q changes	What is the process for developing changes to the quality management framework?
i. Committee involvement	All references to discussion and approval by a Committee, including Senate
ii. consultation on change	Reference to consultation on changes
iii. consultation unusual	Reference to consultation on changes being unusual

iv. emergency process unsustainable	The emergency process for developing changes – used during COVID – is unsustainable as a working model
v. faculty not involved	Faculty is not involved in the process of changes to the quality management framework
vi. HQ designs implementation	The implementation process for changes to the quality management framework is designed by the Head of Quality (or their team)
vii. HQ welcomes input	Head of Quality welcomes input from others when designing changes to the quality management framework
viii. possible compromise on changes	Sometimes there can be compromises on changes which are proposed to the quality management framework
ix. proposals made by faculty	Some proposals for changes to the quality management framework emerge from the faculty
c) Ratification of Q changes	Process for ultimate sign-off of changes to policy or procedure in quality management
i. LM ratifies Q decisions	The Line Manager has authority to ratify decisions about quality management processes
ii. major change approved by Senate	Major changes to the quality management framework must be approved by Senate
d) Reason Q changes are needed	Why did you want to make changes to quality management policy or process
i. existing process burdensome	The existing process is (or is perceived to be) too burdensome
ii. existing process ineffective	The existing process is (or is perceived to be) ineffective

iii. existing process not joined up	The existing process is not (or is not perceived to be) joined up and coordinated
iv. existing process not meet external requirements	The existing process does not meet external requirements (eg regulatory from OfS)
v. process done better elsewhere	Evidence that other HEIs have better / more effective processes
vi. process needs to meet external requirements	New external requirements are being introduced which will require a change to existing process [subtle difference from a process currently not meeting]
vii. process takes account of external benchmarking	The existing process does not take account of external benchmarking, which would be a useful improvement
e) Reasons Q proposals are agreed	What factors will actually persuade others to agree with proposed quality management changes? (What are the decisive factors in convincing colleagues?)
i. new process aligned to values	The new process is demonstrably aligned to the HEI values
ii. new process streamlined	The new process is streamlined and will clearly save (academic) staff time
f) Who decides on proposed Q change	Separate from formal ratification - which individuals actually have the power to force through, or else block, changes to the quality management framework?
i. Chair can block changes	The Chair of the Quality Committee has the power to block quality management proposals
ii. committee doesn't reject proposals	In practice, the Committee does not block quality management proposals when presented

iii. HQ leads on changes	The Head of Quality is expected to take the lead on changes to the quality management framework
iv. HQ one voice among several	The Head of Quality is only one voice amongst several when changes to the quality management framework are discussed
v. HQ overruled within HEI	Instances where the Head of Quality is overruled within the HEI
vi. HQ responsible for S & Q	The Head of Quality is responsible (institutionally) for standards and quality
vii. needs majority objection	Changes will be approved unless there is a majority objection
viii. no individual powerful enough to prevent change	No single individual within the HEI is powerful enough to veto a change
g) Engagement of academic staff in quality management discussions	
i. faculty able to contribute	Faculty has the opportunity to contribute to policy development (through committee, or through consultation)
ii. faculty disinterested in Q	Faculty is often disinterested in quality management matters
iii. faculty requests more responsibility	Instances where faculty wishes to take on greater responsibility for quality management (eg for implementation)
iv. faculty seeks advice	Instances where faculty seeks advice from central Quality team
v. proposals not made by faculty	Faculty does not make proposals for changes to quality management processes
R4 Quality management team as enforcers, or as part of a collaborative effort	

a) easy to be the police	It's "easy" to be the quality police, spotting infringements and saying no
b) faculties seek guidance	Instances where the faculty will seek guidance from the Head of Quality
c) HQ audits faculty	Reference to the Head of Quality auditing, or checking, faculty processes
d) HQ explains why Q matters	Head of Quality seeks to explain to colleagues why aspects of the quality management framework are important
e) HQ negotiate implementation	The Head of Quality will negotiate implementation of decisions with faculty
f) HQ worked with AC to develop proposals	The Head of Quality worked with an academic to develop proposals for changes to the quality management framework
g) keeper of the rules	The Head of Quality has authority as the "keeper of the rules" -
h) perception as police	There is a perception within the HEI of the quality team as the Police
i) policy co-design	Instances where policy is co-designed
j) Q acts as the glue	The Quality team ensures a level of consistency and shared understanding which 'glues' the HEI together
k) Q team as problem solvers	The Quality team are often asked to be problem-solvers on behalf of faculty
l) Q team support faculty to deliver	Faculty has the responsibility to deliver, and the Quality team support them to do so
m) shared responsibility for Q	There is a shared responsibility for quality management between the Head of Quality and others (including faculty)

n) uses role to make things happen	Can see that something is important and uses the authority of the role to make it happen (or not)

Perception of ways in which the Head of Quality has personalised the role

P1 Freedom of the Head of Quality to influence the way in which the role is performed	
a) Formal structure	In what way do formal structures enable or constrain the Head of Quality in influencing the way the role is performed?
i. structure is effective	Existing formal structures (line management, committees, groups etc) are effective and the Head of Quality has to work within them
ii. structure is HE typical	Existing formal structures (line management, committees, groups etc) are typical within HE and the Head of Quality has to work within them
iii. structure more accidental than designed	Existing formal structures (line management, committees, groups etc) have developed over time but not 'designed'
b) personal impact	In what way can or does the Head of Quality personally influence the way the role is performed?
i. Accolade driven	HEI encourages teams to win external awards; Head of Quality takes this on
ii. HQ has determined broad scope of role	Head of Quality has the chance to determine where and how to focus, within parameters
iii. HQ personal qualities	The personal qualities of the Head of Quality are a determining factor in how the role is performed

iv. HQ personalised approach to role	The Head of Quality is undertaking the same functions as predecessor but has personalised *how* they undertake these functions
v. HQ shaped own role	The Head of Quality is the first person in this specific role and therefore has been able to shape the role accordingly
vi. interpret external environment	The Head of Quality is the one who interprets the external environment, which informs some elements of the role within the HEI
<u>P2 Key internal relationships</u>	
a) Building alliances	Does the Head of Quality build alliances to create a stronger base?
b) create network	The Head of Quality has created one or more networks (formal or informal) to support them in delivering
c) not established networks	The Head of Quality has not created an internal network (although some informal relationships may exist)
d) Q managed through relationships	Quality is managed through the power of internal relationships
e) working with Deans	When and how the Head of Quality works with senior academics such as Deans
f) working with other academics	When and how the Head of Quality works with academics who are less senior than Deans
i. how do you make contacts	How does the Head of Quality get to meet these other academics - through processes, otherwise planned, happenstance?
hard to make new contacts in this role	*It can be difficult for the Head of Quality to make new contacts as their role generally means that they are in touch with the same people*

made contact through previous post	*The Head of Quality has some internal contacts based on a previous role within the HEI*
P3 Head of Quality's independence of their Line Manager	
a) LM advice useful	The Line Manager's advice is often useful
b) LM not want to know detail	The Line Manager wouldn't want to know the detail of the work
c) would expect boss to know	It would be unusual for the Head of Quality to undertake any significant work which the Line Manager as unaware of
P4 Perception Head of Quality's activity which falls outside their specific brief	
a) HQ invites self to engage outside Q	Instances where the Head of Quality has engaged beyond their normal role at their own instigation (eg volunteered to join working groups or get involved in developments)
b) HQ was invited to engage outside Q	Instances where the Head of Quality has engaged beyond their normal role because they have been invited to do so (eg has been asked to join working groups)

Appendix Six: Mapping of research sub-questions to sub-themes

Research questions	Theme
1. How does organisational structure affect the roles played by Heads of Quality, as third space professionals, and the bases of social power they deploy:	
6.3. in relation to the strength of hierarchical control;	P1, R1, R2, R3, T1, T3
1.2 in relation to centralisation or devolution (of organisational structure).	P4, R2, R3, R4, T2, T3
7. How are Heads of Quality, as third space practitioners, professionally autonomous?	
7.1. Do Heads of Quality have autonomy over their decisions and actions? (Are they rule-makers or rule-takers? Is their judgement shaped through the wider influence of institutional values or power hierarchy, and how can they approach this most effectively?)	P1, P3, P4, R1, R2, R3, R4, T2
2.2 How does professional autonomy interact with organisational structure in the role of Heads of Quality?	P2, P3, P4, R1, R3, R4

Appendix Seven: Extracts from coded interview transcript

1A

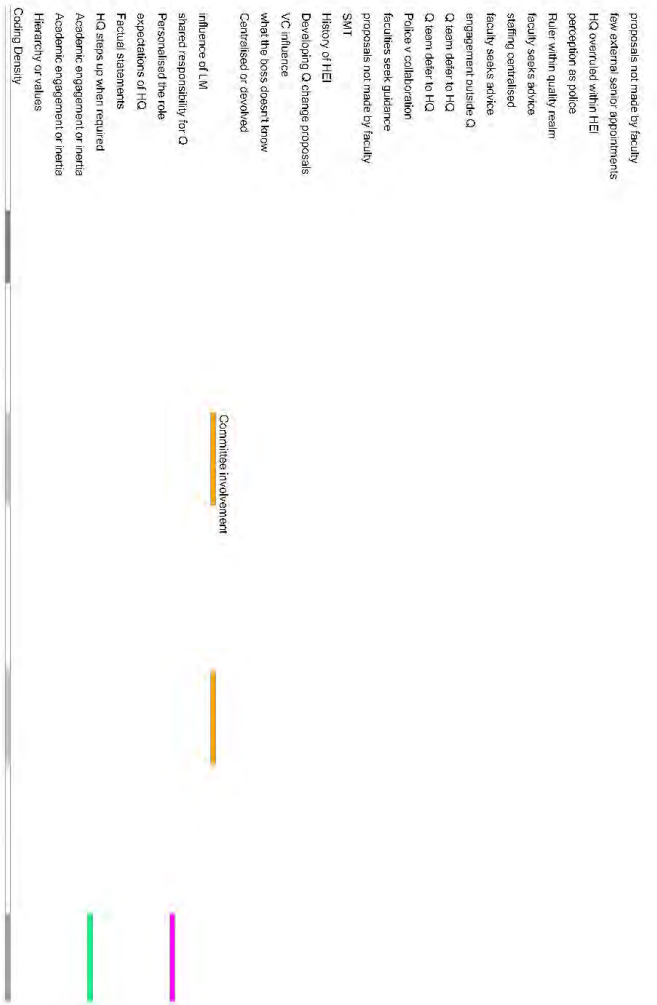
proposals not made by faculty
few external senior appointments
HQ overruled within HEI
perception as police
Ruler within quality realm
faculty seeks advice
staffing centralised
faculty seeks advice
engagement outside Q
Q team defer to HQ
Q team defer to HQ
Police v collaboration
faculties seek guidance
proposals not made by faculty
SMT
History of HEI
Developing Q change proposals
VC influence
what the boss doesn't know
Centralised or devolved
Committee involvement
influence of LM
shared responsibility for Q
Personalised the role
expectations of HQ
Factual statements
HQ steps up when required
Academic engagement or inertia
Academic engagement or inertia
Hierarchy or values
Coding Density

Direct Report, Ambervile University (DR/A)

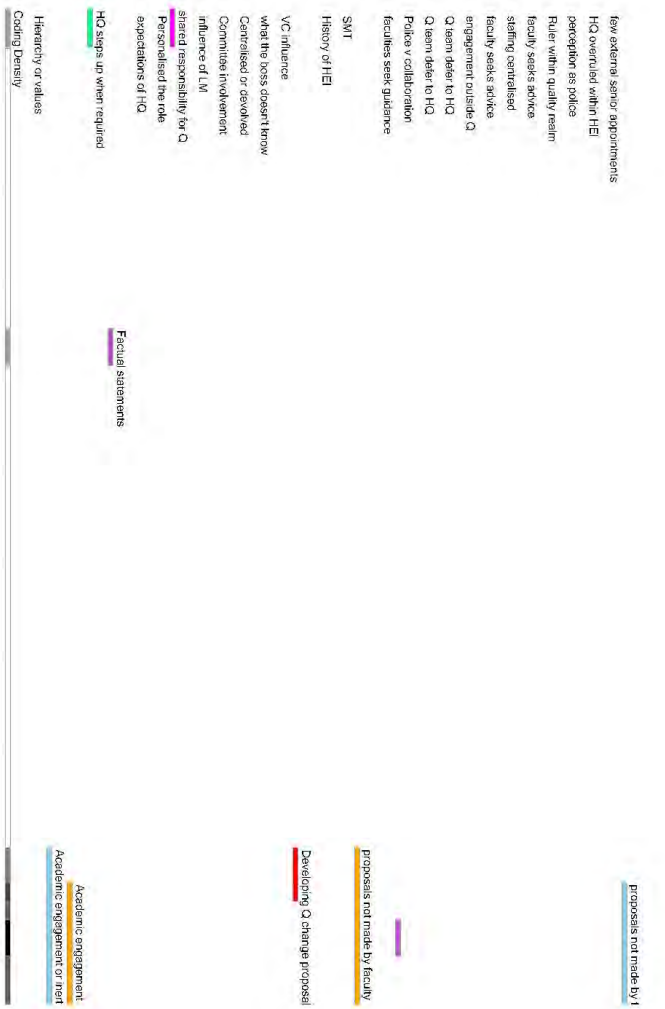
JR	And I'm also recording on my mobile so that I have a backup
DR/A	Yeah
JR	Just because, um, because, the day you don't do the backup is the day the first one doesn't work properly.
DR/A	Yeah
JR	Um. And, thank you for sending back the consent form. Obviously you saw the briefing sheet, um, so you know kind of what I'm researching about um, quality management professionals as, as third space professionals and the levels of autonomy that they enjoy within higher education. Um, and sort of importantly, I should emphasise at the start that, um, nobody is going to be identifiable through the course of this research so, um, I'm have a number of case study HEIs, at this moment in time I've got as far as calling them university A, B, C and D. I may find something a little bit more imaginative, but it won't be any more revealing. And, and all the - all the staff who I interview will be given very generic job titles just so that, er, it won't be – higher education has a way of producing very specific job titles.
DR/A	Yeah
JR	Er, and, and obviously the intention is not that anyone can be identified through the, through a precise title. So, so everyone, we have a very generic title to make that work. So, um, so you can withdraw consent at any point until, um, er, until the thesis is submitted, after which it gets a bit harder. [Laughs]
DR/A	Yeah. Okay. Yeah, that's fine.
JR	Um, and also as you know, I'm, I'm making an audio recording which I will transcribe the audio get kept um until the thesis is complete and the transcripts stay for three further years, but they will also all be anonymized, there won't be, there won't be any way of telling who they are.
DR/A	Okay.
JR	Um. And the final thing I want to say at the start is thank you, for giving up your time.
DR/A	No problem.
JR	So could I start just by asking you to explain briefly what your role is and what your key responsibilities are, whether you have any direct reports, that kind of, er, thing?
DR/A	Yeah. Er, my job title is Quality Manager Academic Standards. Er, I line manage a small team, currently three people in that team. Um, the areas - there've been some shifting around of the areas that I'm responsible for over the last few years, but at the moment, the key areas are oversight of external examiners,
JR	Mmhm
DR/A	Er, I work jointly with registry on award assessment boards, er, publication and updating of the university's regulations and the accompanying quality handbooks. My team would prepare the university for external review or audit, but of course we're not quite sure what's going to happen with that at the moment. And in the past, we've been the team that would do things like Quality Code mapping, that sort of thing, er, internal audit and what we call "concerns reviews". If such a review became necessary, my team would surface those. I am secretary to the Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee. Er, we've recently introduced a new, er, process of faculty annual and triennial review, which looks at how faculties are discharging their quality management responsibilities. And the final thing that we do, although we haven't actually had

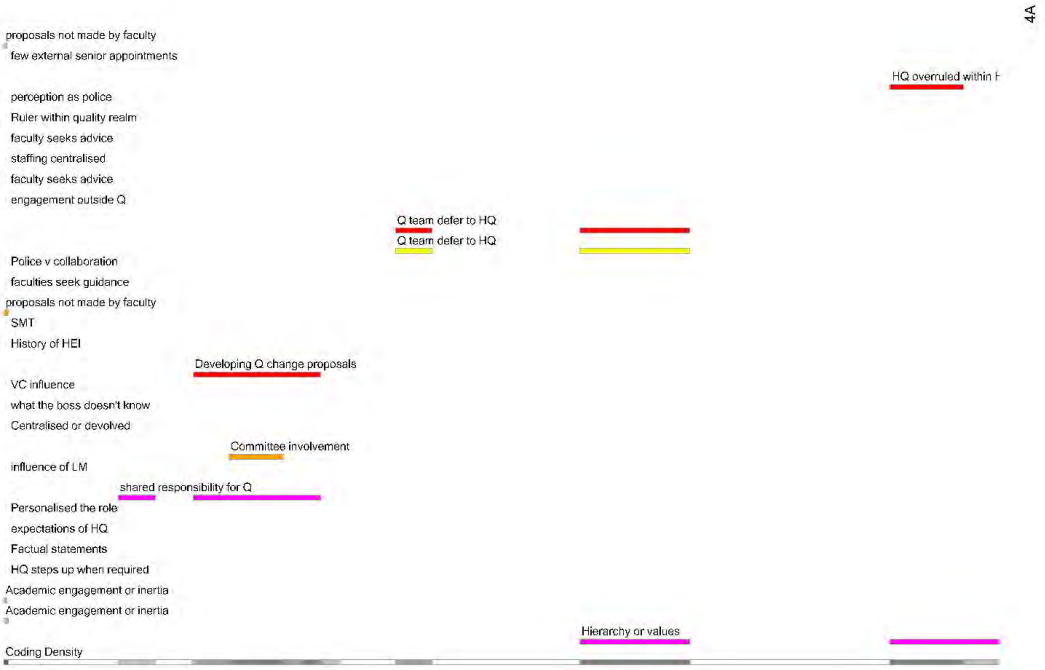
1 / 11

	one yet, somewhat unbelievably, my, my team has recently taken on responsibility for dealing with any student complaints that are related to matters of academic quality. Previously, all student complaints would be dealt with by the Proctor's office. Whether that is to do with accommodation or quality. But the academic quality related ones will come to my team in future. It's useful for us to have that data to feed into processes like periodic review and programme monitoring.
JR	Sure. And so how would you describe your role to someone outside the sector who, who doesn't really understand what it's about? Doesn't know what external examining is, or validation is, or …?
DR/A	I would describe my role, I think, as helping develop process and then making sure that we follow processes to do with things that, er, ensure academic standards, that ensure that the work our students are producing and the way in which we review and monitor that work is on a, you know, a par with what's happening in the rest of the sector, and, er, that we constantly seek as well to enhance what we're doing and that we look for ways in which, in which we do that.
JR	And then suppose that instead of describing your, your role, you were describing Ian's role to someone outside the sector. How, how would that differ?
DR/A	Well, Ian's role is to oversee the work of the entire department. There's obviously areas which I, I may have dealt with in the past, but no longer do – things like academic appeals, validations, collaborative provision, which all sit within our unit. He also, Ian, I guess – is the – he's the sort of public face, if you like, of the Academic Quality and Standards Department. Er, he's responsible for a lot of strategic, er, stuff, you know, writing papers that go to University Council or to Senate. I mean, the rest of us at, at team-lead level may input into those, but Ian has, has quite a lot of responsibility in that area.
JR	And, and when, when you say that he's responsible for those, um – do you mean that actually, you know, when, when he writes a paper that's sort of literally on his head? Um, you know, is it ..?
DR/A	It kind of is at the moment. We're actually, [laughs] we're actually in a position at the moment where, er, the senior manager who did have the, if you like, line-management responsibility for quality, er, left the institution in September. And a replacement has been appointed who we understand will be line managing our department.
JR	Right.
DR/A	And is not due to start with us until next April. So, yeah, things like, er, the annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement Report, which, which has always been written by the head of AQS but might have had a bit more input in the past by the AQS' line manager, is now essentially going straight to Senate and to University Council, er, because there's nobody in that post.
JR	And understandably, the Vice-Chancellor might have quite a lot else going on.
DR/A	I'm sure she does. I'm sure she does. And I understand from Ian that she contacts him quite regularly with new tasks to do. Er, but, but, yeah, I mean, I think we've always had quite a lot of devolved autonomy, even when the SMT member was in post, to be honest. But it's just even more so at the moment because there's nobody there in that post.
JR	Would you say that that's actually increased that level of autonomy? Or has it just sort of made it more visible?
DR/A	Erm. [Pause] It's increased, I think, because it's had to, because there isn't, you know, this, this postholder there. And I think our SMT is almost a little bit understaffed at the moment because that particular SMT member was not the only one to have left recently. Er, we're in a period – we had a new



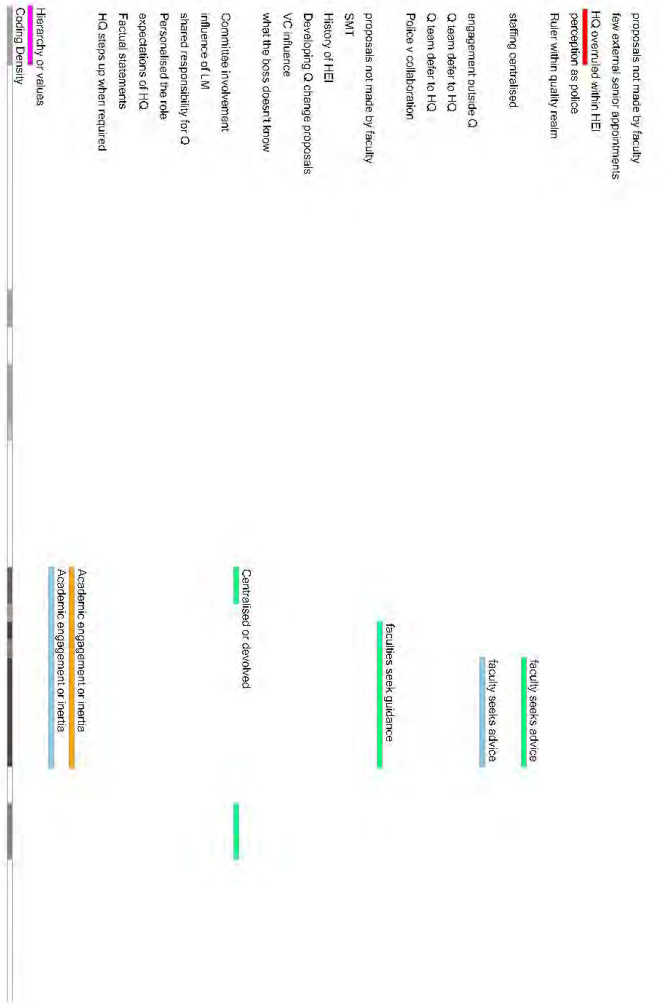
	Vice-Chancellor who started, er, in January of this year. It's one of those, those periods of transition. Er, sorry, can you just remind me what the question was again?
JR	No, I think, I think you've, you've answered that. I was just asking about whether, whether, um, whether the level of autonomy had actually increased in the meantime or whether it just kind of, whether it was more obvious what it was, because there was nobody there, but I think you've –
DR/A	Yeah
JR	So, if you, if you just think about, um, the, the quality management process that you have. Now clearly over the last nine months, we've started to do things quite differently in a number of ways because there hasn't been much choice about that.
DR/A	Yeah
JR	Um, but have there been any changes to the things which the, the, the quality team are responsible for? I mean, you might be *doing* them differently, um, but have you taken on additional responsibilities? Or have there been all sorts of moves around or is it fairly stable?
DR/A	It's fairly stable. I think the, the academic quality-related student complaints coming into my team is something that is new.
JR	Yeah
DR/A	Um. No, I can't, I can't think of any new areas of responsibility that have come to us since the pandemic started.
JR	Fine. Um, so one of things I was talking about with Ian was, um, I asked about a recent change to, um, academic governance processes. And he talked about the way in which you are changing the continuous monitoring enhancement process.
DR/A	Yeah
JR	Um, and, and I don't know how involved you were in that, and how familiar you are with it. Were you - did you have anything to do with that change or is that just…
DR/A	I haven't been involved with the very recent changes, although I have some awareness of them. I was involved – when we first moved, er, about three or four years ago now from an old sort of paper-based, almost paper-based system – although obviously you typed it in – of an annual monitoring report, at a set point in the year, and we changed to more of a continuous monitoring, I was involved at that point. But the more recent changes where we've gone to it being very much focused on the action plan and what goes into the action plan. That's no longer in my team, but is looked at by a different team.
JR 10:02	Um, so if you think generally about sort of changes to academic governance processes of which that may be one that, you know, there'll be other examples. How, how does – what's the journey they normally go through? I mean, are they normally – um, do they normally emerge from, er, one of the central teams, like, like yours, or do they normally emerge from academics or do they emerge through a particular process? Is there a general way? Or is – or do they just come from where they come from?
DR/A	Thinking of most of the recent developments, I would say that they have arisen either from our team – Academic Quality and Standards – or perhaps the senior manager who was in, er, in conversation with our team. Er. Yeah, I, I don't want to be unfair to academics by saying we haven't had things arise directly from academic staff. It may be when we first get the germ of an idea and float it out there, then we'll start to get input from academics, which is useful. But I'm, I'm not sure I can think of something that I would say directly arose from a suggestion from academic staff.





JR	So, so, you said that you might sort of put a general idea out there and then start to get input from academics. So, so what journey might that go on? So if you, you have an idea or a suggestion as to how a process might be improved, and let's say it comes from you and your, your team originally. What's the journey that would go on, up until sort of final approval by probably Senate, depending what the issue is?
DR/A 11:51	Yeah, I think initially some form of consultation, um, possibly with a rep from each faculty, something like that.
JR	Mmhm
DR/A	That could be – well, it would now have to be done online, obviously, but may have been done meetings or via email in the past. You may have then small get togethers, a position paper might be drafted, which would-, might go in the first instance, depending what it is, to one of the subcommittees of our Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee. It then would go to the Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee at some point. Er, certain things we may ask, if it's relevant, we may ask input from externals such as our chief external examiners on certain things. And then yes, Senate would be the final point in that journey.
JR 12:36	And, and how involved would Ian be in that process, so if your team had an idea that came through you, um, would Ian know about it automatically before you consulted? Or might you just consult sort of anyway and he find out later?
DR/A 12:52	I wouldn't consult on something without running it past Ian. And I think that's just to do with the mode of communication we have in the department. We have regular team leaders' meetings once a week, and I think we would just naturally mention these things to him and make him aware. And even if he didn't want to be involved in any way in the consultation, just leave it to us, we, we would just let him know, I think, naturally.
JR 13:19	And how about if you said, 'now, here's a process and we think this isn't working great and we'd like to change it like this'. And he said, 'that's a really bad idea. I don't think we should be doing that. I don't support that at all'. Would that stop it in its tracks? Or would you, would you still go ahead?
DR/A 13:37	Er, if there was a situation completely as you've just said, so 'I don't think that's a good idea, don't go ahead', I wouldn't then go ahead behind Ian's back, if you like, to try and do it. But it was something I felt strongly about, I would ask to have a one to one meeting with him and try and put my point across, but I, I wouldn't just carry on regardless if he felt it was a bad idea. But I would try and change his mind if, if I felt strongly.
JR 14:11	And. Um, so do you think, I mean, let's say that er maybe, er, the, the current vacancy SMT member, let's say if that person were in post, and if they had an idea that they said – and especially when there's a new one coming in who might come from a different institution and therefore might have some ideas of how they've done a certain process and, and said, 'I think we should be doing it like this'. Ah, obviously you don't know the new person, so I'm asking you to speculate a bit. But um, and if Ian had felt very strongly that was a bad idea and said so, would you expect, based on how, how the institution operates, would you expect him to be able to stop that in its tracks, or do you think that change might go ahead and still be approved sort of, even though Ian, Ian didn't, didn't think it should be.
DR/A 15:08	Well, looking back historically, at the uni-, which may not be quite what you're asking, but there have been cases in, in the past years where in AQS sort of a central department, we've not thought something was a good idea, but it has gone ahead regardless. And sometimes we end up saying, "we told you so" when it all goes pear-shaped two years later. I, I think Ian would have the confidence to, in a very tactful and careful way, put his argument across if he felt

	strongly that something was not a good idea. But with the best will in the world, sometimes when you're being told by somebody very senior to you to just make something happen, sometimes I guess you, you feel you have to go with it.
JR	I guess too!
DR/A	(Laughs)
JR 15:58	And if you think about the committee, so you said you're secretary to the Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee
DR/A	Yeah
JR	So, so you're, you're obviously very familiar with how the Committee operates. Um is, is there anybody particular, or any group in particular on the Committee, that you think would have the power to stop a change that they didn't like? So wherever it's come from, whether it's come from the chair or whether it's come from Ian and your team or indeed from an academic, is there, is there anyone who *must* be in favour or else it's really not going to happen? And if they say no, they've kind of got the power to stop it.
DR/A	No. Not on, not on the AQE Committee that I service, no, there's no one individual or even two, you know, who, who would have a say-so like that.
JR 16:49	So, if all of the academic members got together and said 'over our dead bodies'. Do you think that would be enough to stop it?
DR/A 16:56	Possibly, or certainly enough to refer it back to, er, to have further thoughts. Yeah, if you've got really quite a big majority, or say, all the faculty reps plus say the student union reps saying that, then I think – well I, I would hope actually in those cases that there would be further discussion.
JR 17:20	Um, thank you. If you move a s- so there's a policy or process being approved, um, on its way through either by the Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee or else by Senate, you know, depending on what it is, um, and then it comes down to operationalisation, implementation – whatever. So you, you pass it out, to the – through the faculties and say, this what we're going to do now. How, how much responsibility for implementation is devolved to them, and how much is determined by, by you, as it were?
DR/A 17:58	Um. It's a strange one this. We, we I-, faculties have to take responsibility for quality assurance and we encourage them to do so. Er, but in the past, we sort of find ourselves sometimes caught in, I think, a bit of a tight spot where faculties may moan that we're being too prescriptive, or too bureaucratic. So then you step, you try and step back a bit and say, okay, we'll leave it a bit more to you about how you enact this. And then you get people ringing you up going, oh, we want a template about how to do this. Or, you know, if you step back too far, they almost seem a bit scared and want to tell you how, how to do it. Er, I mean, we – I would, I would, I would say we send out detailed guidance to people on what we expect them to do and we try, we try and do this in a helpful way with worked examples and what have you. Er, but some of our faculties, I think, are better than others, or some require a bit more oversight from their faculty link person, cos each of us in AQS at team leader level is linked to a faculty. Er, they vary slightly. But, yeah, we, I think we would give quite strong advice and guidance, as I say, give lots of examples to people about what needs to be done.
JR 19:19	Yeah. Okay. So I'm going to share my screen with you a moment. Um, let's hope the technology works and this comes up. So hopefully what you get to see is a little grid.
DR/A	Yeah
JR 19:33	Um, so one of the things I'm interested in is whether levels of autonomy might, er, vary depending on how centralised an organisation is and how hierarchical or, or values-based an organisation is. So it's a fairly simple diagram. Um, the X



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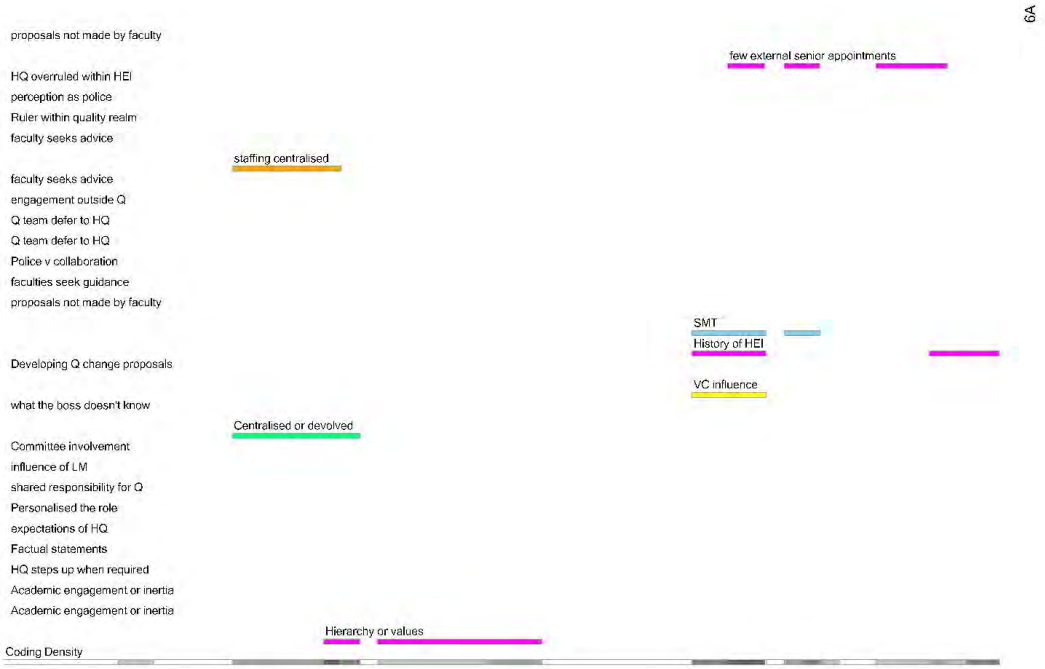
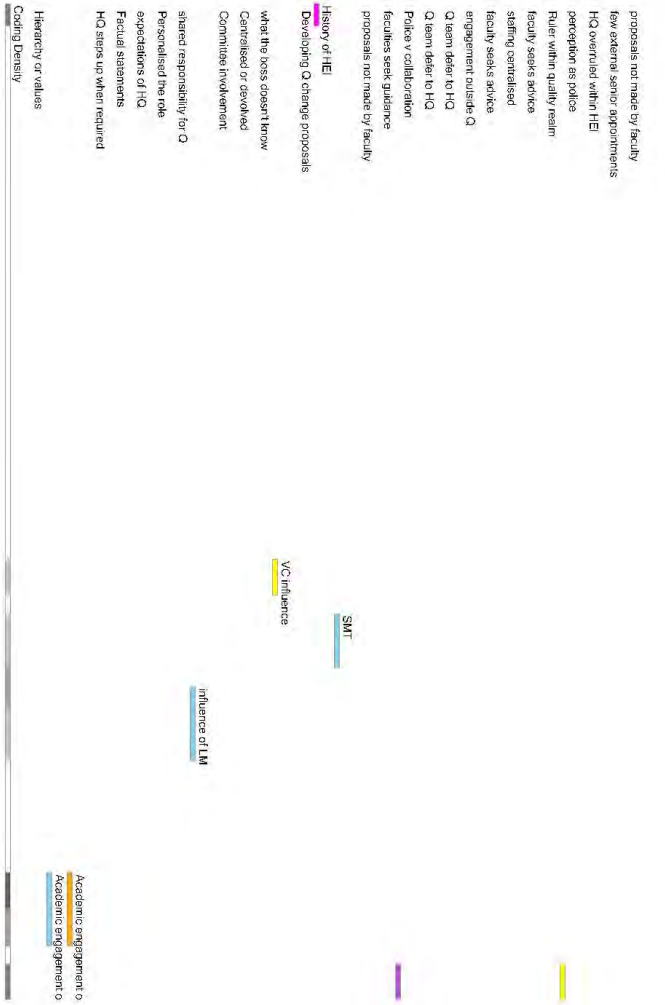


		axis is centralised to devolved, and the Y axis is hierarchical or values based, as you can see, and this is, of course, sort of taken for granted that no institution will completely fit perfectly within one box. There's always something a little bit different going on in one part of an organisation. But if you had to broadly say where you think that University A fell, which of the quadrants do you think sounds most like you?
DR/A	20:20	[Long pause] I would say we're possibly sort of upper, upper-middle of the bottom right quadrant.
JR		Upper middle of the bottom right?
DR/A		So, the bottom right.
JR.		Yeah. Okay
DR/A	20:43	Yeah, we, we are cent – we are quite centralised, certainly in terms of, say, what we do in quality, that we have quite a large central quality unit, there's over 20 of us, and out in the faculties they don't really have a dedicated quality manager. There's the dean and the faculty administrator. Er, but the extent to which they are involved in quality stuff is, is variable even between those faculty administrators. I also don't – I don't think that there's a particularly strong hierarchy or there, there hasn't been to date at University A. Whether that will change under the new vice chancellor. Er, I know this isn't a scientific thing to say at all, and it's almost like hearsay. But I was, I was very interested when one of my friends and colleagues moved from University A to work at a larger Russell Group institution in the north west on a sort of similarly graded job to what she was doing at University A, and said she was astonished that how hierarchical it was and how almost on her grade – where you had quite a lot of autonomy at University A – you had no opportunity for face-to-face contact with senior managers. It was almost like you were seen and not heard. Er, whereas we, we have, we have had till now quite a lot of opportunity, even at relatively junior roles, to have direct contact with senior managers.
JR		Right. So, so bottom right sounds about right.
DR/A		Yeah
JR		From that description, I'll, I'll stop sharing, which is much nicer for face to face conversation rather than tiny postage stamps in the corner. Um, if you think about, um, that description of the university and where you kind of placed yourself, um, can you think of any particular factors that might have influenced that? And why, why you think that University A is quite centralised, but not very hierarchical?
DR/A	22:43	I think some of the things that may have led to that may almost be things that are negatives in a way. I think until recently when we had the change of vice chancellor, we had, well we had a very long serving vice chancellor. And we have very few people coming in from outside onto SMT.
JR		Right
DR/A		We have people who have been there a long time but had often been promoted, from other leadership positions into SMT. And so I think often - and just the small physical size of the institution. You knew these people because they'd worked there for years, you saw them around. And so there just wasn't that kind of hierarchy, because you'd known them and they continued to be available to you. And – but on, on a, on a minus side, I think arguably, um, it's been a bit detrimental to University A not having more turnover of staff and having sort of fresh blood and new ideas coming in more regularly than has been the case until recently. Er, and I think, yeah, I think some of, some of the business about faculties having these quite small offices with just the dean and the faculty administrator, again, I suspect was accidental rather than anything, I don't know, if it was ever a strategy, when anybody sat down and said, this, this is the model

	we're going to have. I mean, we've had eight faculties, then it was down to six, then it was seven again. It – yeah, I'm not sure how clear institutional strategy was in the past, or what to what extent these things just sort of happened by accident. And in my view, it is a bit more of the latter.
JR 24:37	So it's probably a bit, a bit about history, but also informed by size. I think, because it's quite small then you tend to know people better. Um, so would you say that, that that, um, position in the diagram.
DR/A	Er. So sorry, you just
JR	Hello?
DR/A	Sorry, Jon. You keep freezing a bit, and I keep losing your voice.
JR	Now, let's see. Is that any better?
DR/A	Yeah. I can hear – you're frozen. Your picture's frozen, but I can hear you now.
JR	Well, I'll tr-, I'll try and speak and maybe it's a blessing that you can't hear me – er can't see me.
DR/A	Yeah you're, you're back now. I can see you, yeah, I can see you.
JR	Um. So. Sorry. This is one of the perils of Zoom. Um.
DR/A	Yeah
JR	So, if, um. So – yeah, sorry so just to reiterate. Probably the reason why you are where you are is, is sort of history, but also informed by the size of the institution, because it means that those people are just better known to you because in a small institution they tend to be.
DR/A	Yeah
JR	Um
DR/A	Yeah
JR	But you did say, I mean, obviously the vice chancellor started this, this calendar year and you said there's a couple of members of SMT who have moved on.
DR/A	Yeah
JR	Do you expect things to change dramatically as a consequence of that? Or is it just too early to, to tell?
DR/A 26.08	It's too early to tell. But I, I'm expecting there will be changes. I think there, there need to be some changes. I mean, I'm talking about the institution as a whole. You know, I think we've become a bit static and, you know, things need to change. I think it's more than just a couple of members of SMT who've gone. It's four or five, to be honest. And so I think inevitably, you know, there are going to be changes. Er, I mean, some of those we, we need to address things like University A's slipping down the league tables, the fact that, um, recruitment isn't as good as it once was. There are, there are the biggies like that. How much things change for *us* in AQS and the way we operate, I think is going to depend on who the new line manager is. And, and historically, what their thoughts are about the way in which they want to operate.
JR 27:05	Sure. I, I – maybe I need to come and do a follow-up in five years time and find out what's happened.
DR/A	[both laugh]
JR	Um, So, so you, um, placed yourself as kind of centralised and not very hierarchical. What particular implications do you think that has for the way in which quality is managed at the university, if any?
DR/A 27:25	I sometimes worry that in some of the faculties, they still don't really 'get' quality and the, if you like, the importance of it. Certain individual members of staff do, certain faculties are better than others. But this, this whole idea of sort of ownership, and quality being everybody's responsibility. I worry that in a system that's quite centralised, like ours, that perhaps doesn't happen as well as it might. And that people still perceive us a bit as like this central service who are like, making them do things. Er, even though I think it's much, it's much – we've



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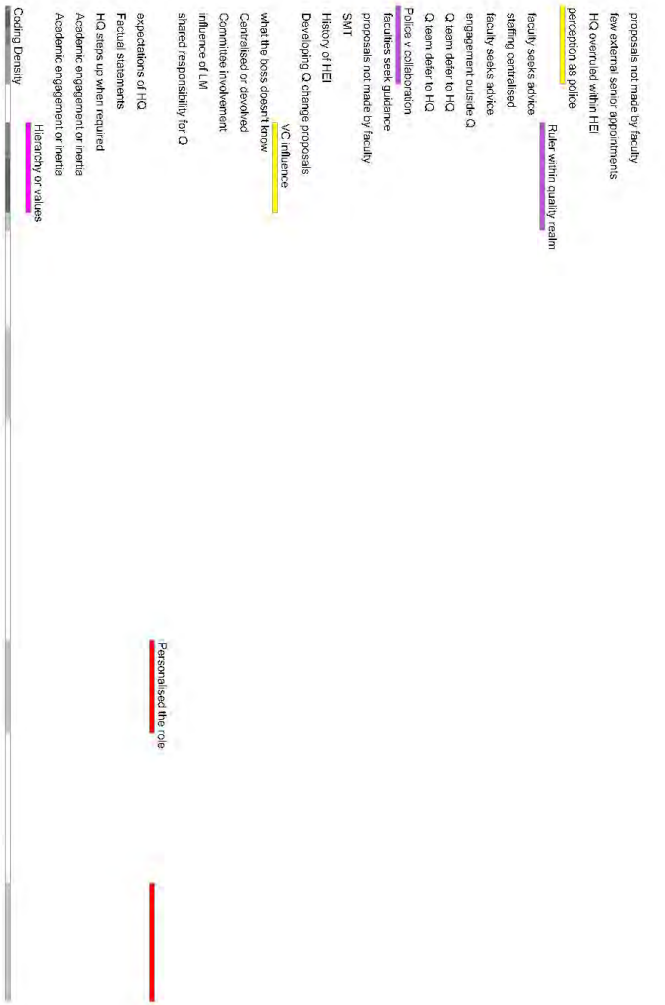
	moved so far over the last few years. And I think you know we have a pretty good working relationship with most academic staff. But I still think there's this perception sometimes that it's oh, it's Quality. You know, they're off – you know, in the centre, and they don't really understand our day to day jobs. A little bit.
JR 28:30	Might come back to that one in a moment. So I have a true/false question for you. Which is – in the quality management realm, Ian is definitely the ruler.
DR/A 28:52	[Pause]) I'll have to say false, because although he's doing a lot at the moment, and has a lot of autonomy, I'm quite sure that if the vice chancellor suddenly decided that she didn't like something he was doing, or wanted to change it, then she, she would have the power to, you know, take that, take that action or change things. She seems content to let him get on with stuff at the moment. But ultimately, she has that power.
JR	Vice-Chancellors do, yes.
DR/A	Yes
JR	Would, would you say that there are there are parts of the quality realm where perhaps Ian has more authority or where or maybe less authority?
DR/A 29:34	[Pause] I – no. I would say he's got quite, quite a lot of authority over all the areas that we have, and is actually more involved in a hands-on, day-to-day basis than his predecessor across areas such as – I'm thinking about, say, collaborative provision that perhaps his predecessor had less to do with. And I think it may be because there was a restructure after the, after his predecessor left who – also his predecessor had the title of Dean and also oversaw our Institute of Learning and Teaching. And I think sheer workload pressure on her – her role was massive – meant that she, she just couldn't get involved in, in some of the areas to the extent that Ia-, Ian does.
JR	And so do you think that a replacement would do the job very differently to Ian? I mean, clearly the predecessor isn't necessarily a good comparator because the job role wasn't quite the same.
DR/A	No
JR	But um, if Ian were to leave and someone else were, were to come in, do you think they would do the job very differently, or would they broadly be doing the same thing?
DR/A 30:56	I think it would be broadly the same, but that they might decide that there are certain areas within the department that either they didn't have the time or the desire to specialise in, or that they felt were the lower risk ones, that's where they might be more hands off than Ian. But I don't, I don't think there'd be anything dramatically different.
JR 31:18	And, and do you think that's just because of the sort that the structures and the way of operating are fairly sort of baked in to how University A is? Or, or, um, is that just because the way he does it is sort of really obvious and the way in which you'd expect someone to.
DR/A 31:47	Mmm. [Pause] Yeah, I mean, the way we've, the way the department's organised at the moment and the way it was organised previously is, we have, we have the head of department, then we have team leaders.
JR	Mm-hm
DR/A	And then the people reporting to the team leaders. And that's, that's a structure that I think works quite well. Er, and so I, I, I wouldn't see what gains there would be for anybody coming in new to try and structure that differently, to be honest. Er, yeah, I mean, I don't think it's so much that stuff's "baked in" at AQS, you know Ian has made some changes compared to his predecessor, and his predecessor made some changes compared to her predecessor. Er. But it's



	- yeah, no it's interesting. Ian's – I, I just don't know, to be honest. Like I say, I don't – Ithink it works quite well and I don't think there's a lot that anybody would necessarily want to change, but you just can't tell depending on who the individual is, who came in.
JR 32:52	No, that's fair, that's fair, fair enough. Fair comment.
DR/A 32:57	Well, if they wanted to take a completely different tack, or, and they'd have to do this in liaison with the wider institution. And make us a much smaller central unit and have, if you like, more of a quality office in each of the faculties and just do things very differently.
JR 33:14	So this is a slightly odd question in the particular circumstances at University A, because I wanted to ask about Ian's line manager, and I understand it's now temporarily the vice chancellor.
DR/A	Yeah
JR	So, so I was going to ask whether you think that Ian's line manager understands his job well, or whether he's largely left to get on with it. Now, understanding that the vice chancellor has an awful lot of responsibilities and probably isn't day to day, you know, um, looking over every last thing that he does. But in general, and possibly also thinking about um, the member of SMT who left the institution, do you think that, um, that he understood Ian's job well, or, or was he quite hands off in that way?
DR/A 33:58	I think, er, I think he had a reasonable understanding of, of Ian's job, and was always approachable and as available as he could be with his own massive workload for meetings and what have you. I think sometimes, er, things were left for Ian and – or Ian and his predecessors were, were expected to do things that were really at a very high level that sometimes you thought, shouldn't the member of SMT themselves be taking a bit more responsibility for this. And I think that may in part have been connected to the ginormous workload and the breadth of things that that member of SMT was looking at, er, not because in any way Ian and his predecessors were not capable of doing that work, but sometimes you kind of thought – and looked at the pay grades here and thought – wow. You know, at the kind of things, you know, people were being asked to do. And I think they were, they were happy and content that Ian and his predecessors were capable of doing that work and happy to kind of let them run with it in order to make his own workload more manageable.
JR 35:16	Is there an obvious example of that? Of something where you think, 'I think that's beyond the pay grade for that individual'.
DR/A 35:28	[Pause] I think possibly some of the stuff around partnerships that, er, that happened or also even for, er, for somebody who is on an equivalent paygrade to me, not even Ian, who was asked to sort of sort out stuff to do with the way the outline planning proposals go through committee, where the member of SMT involved, chaired the committee through which these outline planning proposals went and yet sort of handed over the whole thing to, er, to our department.
JR	Thank you. So, um -
DR/A	I don't mean that to sound complaining, at all, it was just – it was an observation that we'd frequently kind of think like, wow, really? We're doing *this* as well? [laughs]
JR 36:23	Um. So we talked about Ian's role in relation to quality management, um, quite a lot. Would you say that he gets involved in many activities outside of his formal responsibilities, or does he fairly much stick to, stick to those quality duties?
DR/A 36:43	Er, I'm not massively aware of him being involved in a lot of stuff outside his immediate responsibilities. I mean, he seems, he seems to be on myriad

	committees and working groups, but I think they would all naturally occur as a result of the role that he's in now – are you almost talking about volunteering to do things that are outside, or …?
JR	Yeah, yeah.
DR/A	Wider university stuff?
JR	Yeah
DR/A 37:15	Er. Not that I'm aware of. I think pretty much everything I'm aware of he does is sort of tied in to very closely to his role and the expectations of that particular role
JR	And, and how would you describe his, his relationship with senior staff, such as I mean, his line manager, faculty deans, those kind of very senior members of staff?
DR/A 37:44	It, it, it seems very good to me. I know that our, our previous head of department, er, when Ian, when Ian – 'cause Ian was in the department before he became head of department, er, said to me once how much he enjoyed working with him because he will challenge you on stuff. In a very polite way, he'd say, you know – he'd say to people, he'd say, "ah but, I, I think this, or I've got this suggestion". So I think people enjoy working with him. I think they rate him highly. And he, he just has a very affable and approachable manner, which I think people, people like.
JR 38:18	And, and would you say the same is true with, with other academic staff across the university who are involved in, in quality processes? Not – not – so not the dean, or the senior staff, but just, just other academic staff – do they also have a good relationship or does he not have so much to do with them, would you say?
DR/A 38:38	No, whenever I've heard anybody speak about Ian, it is invariably in positive terms. I mean, stuff he's done in the past, was, he was quite heavily involved with er, academic appeals and academic integrity procedures and rewrote those procedures when he first came, and worked closely with academic staff as panel members, and on those procedures, and I've never heard anything negative said about him, to be honest, by, by anyone.
JR 39:05	Um, [Karen], thank you. They're all the questions except for just to ask you, is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you either consider may be important or that you expected me to raise?
DR/A 39:20	No. I don't, I don't think so, no. Er, no, just to ask you – were you chair of QSN at one point?
JR	I was, yeah
DR/A	Yeah, I thought so. Around 2011.
JR	Yeah, for six years, so yeah about 2006 to 12, or something, yeah
DR/A	Yeah. Cos I, when I first, I did go through a period of going to their conference about three times in four years. And I knew your name from there. Yeah
JR	Yeah, that's me. Sorry. My, my name is sufficiently unusual certainly within our education sector to mean that – yeah. Apparently I'm not completely forgotten.
DR/A	Er, no, I don't think there's anything, anything else. But, er, I mean, I came with quite an open mind to be honest and wasn't sure what you - well, I've read your, I've read your brief, obviously. But no, I didn't have any particular preconceived ideas about what you might be asking.
JR	Well, thank you very, very much for your time and for, for answering all of the questions despite not knowing what they were going to be. Um, and, um, I just, you know, reiterate, um – the, the audio will be transcribed, um, and, and then I get on with the analysis.
DR/A	What timeframe are you working to, to complete?
JR	Um, I've been a little bit cast sideways because, um, I was all ready to, to go live with stuff, and then this covid thing happened and everything's increasingly –

proposals not made by faculty
few external senior appointments
HQ overruled within HEI
perception as police
Ruler within quality realm
faculty seeks advice
staffing centralised
faculty seeks advice
engagement outside Q
Q team defer to HQ
Q team defer to HQ
Police v collaboration
faculties seek guidance
proposals not made by faculty
SMT
History of HEI
Developing Q change proposals
VC influence
what the boss doesn't know
Centralised or devolved
Committee involvement

influence of LM

shared responsibility for Q
Personalised the role
expectations of HQ
Factual statements
HQ steps up when required
Academic engagement or inertia
Academic engagement or inertia
Hierarchy or values
Coding Density

	and of course, originally the idea was that case study interviews that would be done in person. With the [inaudible]. That's just not practical, unless I want to wait for another six, nine months before we move on with anything, and so, um, I'm, I'm certainly hoping I can submit during next year, next calendar year. It would be fantastic to think that I might be able to submit not right at the end of next calendar year, but, you know.
DR/A	Yeah
JR	Depends on me having no Christmas and just try to get on with some analysis, I got a couple of days to sleep first, after we close. And then, yeah, see what I can do about it.
DR/A	Yeah
JR	I really, I feel a real strong obligation to do it. Partly because I'm genuinely interested, and partly because I'm being supported by my institution and I feel I owe it to them to try and get it up and over the line.
DR/A	Yeah
JR	But, you know, er, um as I always say to everybody, right is more important than quick.
DR/A	Yeah
JR	I do want to do it properly. So, thank you. Have a lovely evening.
DR/A	Yeah. Thank you. Good luck with it. And happy Christmas, when we get to that point.
JR	Let's get there too
DR/A	Yeah
JR	Cheers
DR/A	OK bye
JR	Cheers, bye

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Academic engagement or inertia
Hierarchy or values

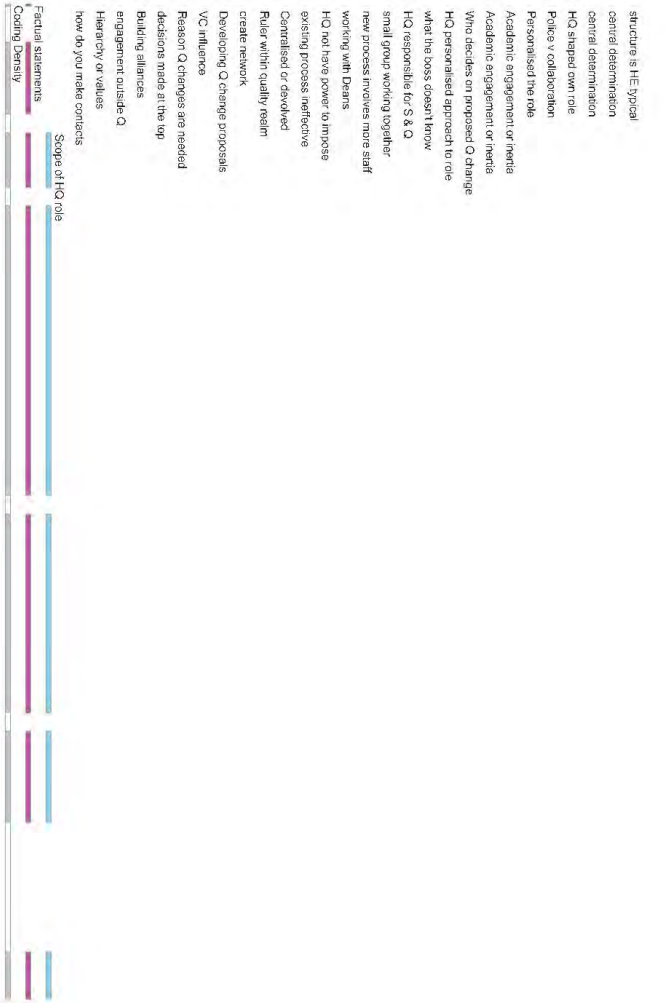
Coding Density

Head of Quality, Orangetown University (HQ/O)

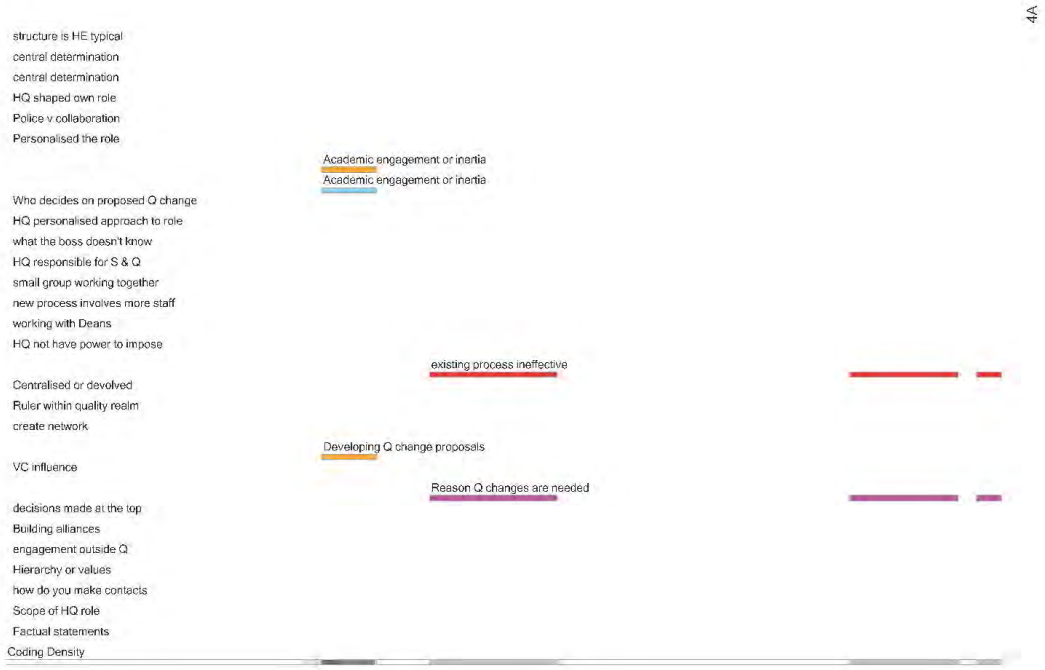
JR	Umm technological failure. [laughs]
HQ/O	OK, no worries, thanks for the warning.
JR	Umm but so as soon as I know that the audio file is safe and fine, I'll delete the other one. And obviously the purpose of the audio file is it gets transcribed to form the evidence base. Umm and the audio file will be deleted at the end of the project the transcript remains for three years. But umm as I put it, in the briefing sheet, umm every institution will be anonymised. The current, the current working model is University A B C and D and –
HQ/O	That's original! [laughs]
JR	Well, I'm going to try and come up with something better. I have to admit that that's where we are at the minute. And all of the job titles will be standardised. So everybody will be called like academic registrar or head of quality or something just to make sure that we, there's no chance of identifying somebody because they have an unusual name umm… [laughs] and unusual job title, not unusual name.
HQ/O	[laughs] Fine yeah
JR	And, thank you for sending back the consent form, as it says on there, obviously, you can withdraw consent at any point until ummm the thesis is submitted, after which it gets slightly more tricky. And thank *you* for helping to organise your colleagues, or identify your colleagues, that's really appreciated.
HQ/O	Not at all.
JR	So umm I'm going to start with- and you've seen the briefing sheet haven't you, so you know –
HQ/O	I have yeah
JR	so I'm investigating levels of autonomy umm that are held by umm third space professionals acting in that kind of role of being a head of registry or head of quality or similar. So could I start just by asking you to explain your role, so who you report to, who reports to you, and then what your kind of key responsibilities are?
HQ/O	Yeah, absolutely. So umm I am... my job title is Director of Registry, and Registry is quite a small umm service within Orangetown University, it's a lot smaller than where I've worked before. Umm I report to the PVC for Learning and Teaching, umm or Teaching and Learning even [laughs] so the last one I

structure is HE typical
central determination
central determination
HQ shaped own role
Police v collaboration
Personalised the role
Academic engagement or inertia
Academic engagement or inertia
Who decides on proposed Q change
HQ personalised approach to role
what the boss doesn't know
HQ responsible for S & Q
small group working together
new process involves more staff
working with Deans
HQ not have power to impose
existing process ineffective
Centralised or devolved
Ruler within quality realm
create network
Developing Q change proposals
VC influence
Reason Q changes are needed
decisions made at the top
Building alliances
engagement outside Q
Hierarchy or values
how do you make contacts
Scope of HQ role
Factual statements
Coding Density

	reported to was Learning and Teaching, I do wish people wouldn't do this! [laughs] It's too, too confusing. Errm she is obviously, has the teaching and learning remit across the entire institution. Also reporting to her are the Director of Computing and Library Services and the Director of Student Services at Orangetown, so she has three direct reports of which I am one. So, I think – my overall remit is err quality assurance in very broad terms, PGR, and taught student frameworks, regulations, casework, that kind of thing. We also look after graduation. So that is it at a very, very high level. So, within my team there are sort of three strands, three sub teams within the registry team. So there is the – I've got three assistant registrars. The one that you will be talking to, umm DR, is what you would call the head of the Quality Assurance strand, so he's the Assistant Registrar for Quality Assurance. So he'll and he'll obviously tell you more about his role, but basically he heads up all the umm work that we do around course… umm course validation, on-course curriculum management, umm that side of, of the registry function. Umm he's got within his remit degree apprenticeships and collaborative provision. It's a great one! Err then I've got two other assistant registrars. I've got the assistant registrar for a taught provision which is around, well it does what it says on the tin. It's around looking after all of our err student casework and regulatory frameworks for taught provision, so that's exam boards and the awards regulations, it's student disciplinary and, and all that goes around that, complaints, appeals, the usual umm kit and caboodle. The equivalent on the postgraduate side, the assistant registrar for PGR and events. She's also got overall oversight of graduation, which was just where we parked it, it could've gone in any of them because it doesn't really fit in any of them. Err but the bulk of her work is, is looking after, obviously, the PGR awards and student regulations. Also, Registry at Orangetown's got a bit more of a sort of on-programme support role for PGR than it for taught. So the taught course administration is very much handled within the schools, with Registry just providing the normal sort of oversight, umm, whereas we get quite involved in PGR on-course administration, around the student record, around sorting out Vivas, dealing with – and then obviously into all the appeals and complaints and the usual stuff that you get umm around that. So as part of that, we're, we've also got a virtual graduate school at Orangetown, which involves ourselves, or that strand of my team anyway, and the research and enterprise team, or at least one strand of theirs, which is the bit that supports the researcher environment. We come together under a, a virtual dean of the graduate school – he's an actual person, but it's a, it's a kind of virtual entity. Err and he drives a sort of – the vision and strategy for the graduate school. It's then also underpinned by work that's done in schools, so it's umm… That's the model we've taken. So I hope that just gives you a flavour of what we get involved in.
JR	There's quite a lot there, isn't there, thank you.
	Yeah [both laugh]. Weirdly though, we don't have student records, which is very unusual, I think, for a Registry, that we don't have student records.



	But. I'm not complaining. [laughs]
JR	No, I don't think I'm allowed to extemporise. But I, I think... that you've not done badly. [both laugh]
HQ/O	Quite.
JR	And if you had to describe your role to somebody, a friend of a friend, someone from outside the sector who doesn't really know much about HE, doesn't really know what it's about, how would you describe your role to them?
HQ/O	I never give them my job title, umm if I want them to understand what I do, because that doesn't help at all. So what I tend to do is say, well, you know how in a university we have to have rules and regulations, err our students have to follow rules – We write those rules and we err you know, we support students when things go wrong for them, when, you know, umm either we don't provide what we should do, or they do something wrong and they're in trouble with us. So I might describe it like that. And then I might also say, and on the other side, we also have to have rules and regulations for the way that we structure courses and the way that we deliver them. So I'm also responsible for all the quality assurance that goes with that. Most people know what quality assurance is in, in their own walk of life, so that tends to be an easier one to explain. [laughs]
JR	And you, you would use the word that you're responsible for that, that you sort of – that you're *in charge* of making sure that that works.
HQ/O	Yes, yeah I would.
JR	And if you, if you just think back – oh sorry, I should really have said this at the start, but I'll throw it in now – umm the idea of the research is obviously that was it was conceived pre-COVID, and so we're kind of talking about steady state rather than, rather than this interim period.
HQ/O	Yeah
JR	Although umm who knows what steady state will be by the time we get back into it, it may not look like it did before, but whatever it is – with the exception of the fact that we're now all working remotely, has anything changed in the role and responsibilities in the last sort of 12-18 months?
HQ/O	I've only actually been in post for about, oh, less – just over two years now, two – yeah, about 28 months or so. Umm so I don't have, I can't look back over a very long period of time to just caveat what I'm going to say. But no, I think if anything, as I've settled into the role, I've probably become more autonomous and I've driven more things through, umm. But I don't think that's anything to do with COVID, umm I think [laughs] or anything like that. I think that is just the natural settling into a new role, finding your feet, working out what, what's... what you like about the place and what doesn't seem to work. And then starting to put in place a series of actions to take things forward.
JR	So, we might come back to a number of those comments in a moment. [laughs]



HQ/O	Yeah	
JR	Can we start with this one? Umm, I mean, you've said there are a number of things where you've thought actually that isn't really working and we ought to do something about it. So, could you think about a recent occasion where there was a key academic process which you thought needed to be changed? So it might be to do with external examining or validation, annual monitoring, all the kind of standard stuff. Umm, and just talk me through the journey of how that change happened, so who identified the problem? How do you go about – how did, how did the university go about dealing with it? You know, what, what journey was there between origination and then final approval?	
	Right. So I'll umm… There's an example umm that I'll choose from around the sort of validation area. Umm so, we have regular thematic reviews on an annual basis, which is supported by registry, whereby the University's Teaching and Learning Committee will choose a theme that it wants to explore. Usually that's me and my team suggesting a lot of that, because we don't tend to get many people putting things forward, err cause they know it cr-, it involves work, I think. So they intend to keep their heads up down [laugh's] but the – in theory, UTLC agrees this. And there was one in October 2019, which was postponed from the summer, not, you know, just, just one of those things due to staff availability, which was looking at umm differential attainment. Now, it's a big thing at Orangetown, cos of the nature of our student body, and we have a lot of commuter students, a lot of ethnic minorities. Umm, you know, [location] is a socially deprived area, so we – you know, that's our, that's our clientele if you like [laugh]. So umm, so we do, we do a lot of work around it. And we'd got a larger institutional sort of interest, if you like, and monitoring of a lot of statistics around that. And on the back of that came the idea of doing a thematic review. So I attended this – it was the umm first one, because for some reason the one the year before hadn't gone ahead. Umm so it was the first one I'd seen at Orangetown so I wanted to observe it. So I went along and they were back – and that was back in the day when everybody still sat round a table, err, you talked to the various course teams and you talked to err various bunches of students.	
JR	Mmhm	
HQ/O	And there's – as part of that, umm I got chatting, it's just one of those coincidental things, so we were having lunch with a, with a group of students while talking to them about their various experiences. And I got chatting to a Students' Union umm activist who was very into the whole err – she had a disability herself and she was very much into what we can do about levelling umm up, levelling up for disabled students. Umm so we started having a, a conversation about this and she expressed a few – she gave me a few examples of things that she struggled with and that other students had reported to her particularly struggling with. And then she made what was just an off the cuff sort of remark about – I don't think anyone takes these things into account when they're planning these courses. It's all very well, but.. Umm and I thought hmmm, and it just set a few alarm bells ringing with me that	

actually, as part of our validation processes, we probably don't unpick, you know, exactly what we're doing to make sure that whatever we're designing is, is accessible to all.

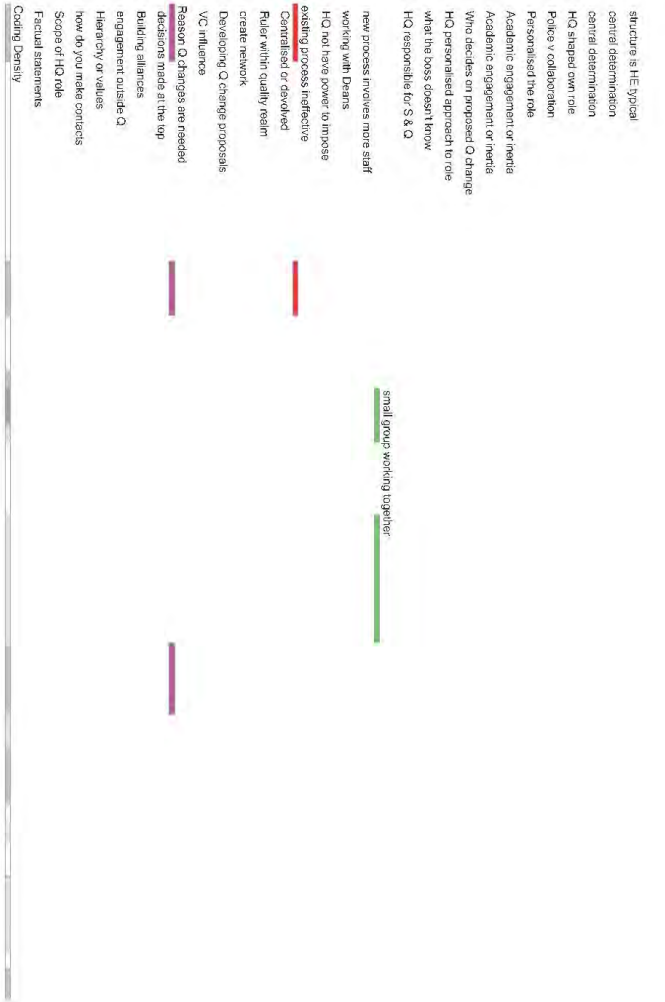
Umm so it just set a –umm so that's where the germ of the idea came from, it just set that off in my mind, so afterwards I went and explored that with a few members of the team.

And, one of my team, she used to work in at [named HEI] and she said, d'you know what, I've thought that since I came here, she started about the same time as I did. She said, I've been thinking exactly the same thing. We did a lot more work at my old place right at the beginning when the, when the academic has the lightbulb moment around, let's develop a new offer, umm this course could really add to the portfolio. I said, no, we don't do we, at that point. We ask them if they've, you know, we ask them if they've talked to disability services and they, and they tick a box and that's it, you know, it really is [laughs] it's not really very impressive this, is it? So no, we need to do something about it. So she and I both got the bit between our teeth.

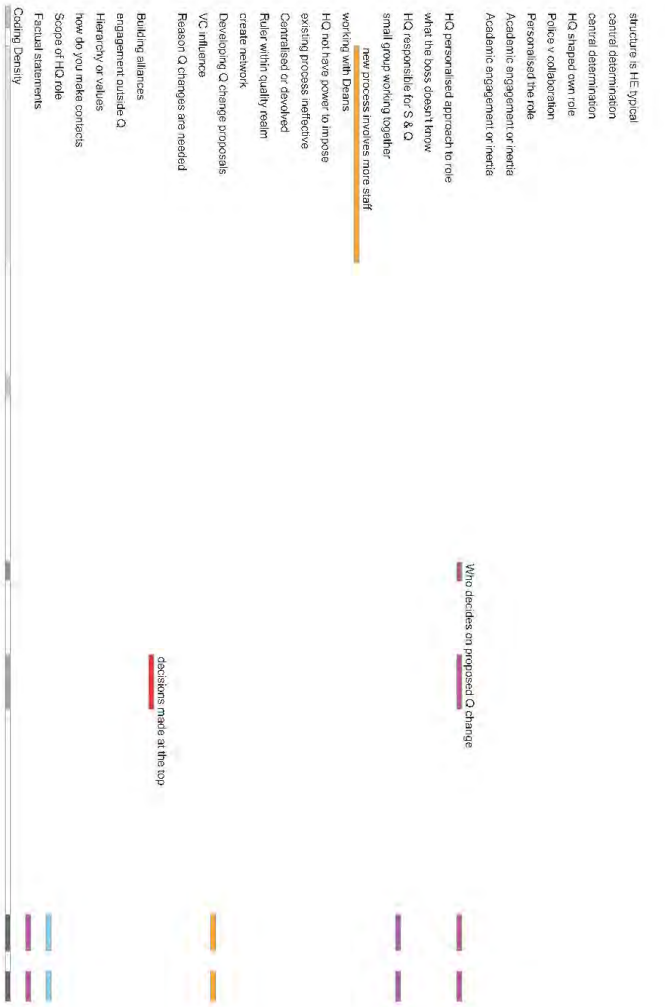
Umm, she reports directly to DR, who you're going to talk to. Umm and so I said, we'll get a paper together, we'll go to UTLC, we'll suggest that we need to look at this, umm as a – we need to convene a, a task and finish group from ULTC, to take this forward, look at it in more detail, work-partner up with the Students' Union, umm as well, as that's where the idea came from. We always would anyway, but particularly I wanted this individual on the working group umm because she was the one who had given me the idea and was quite passionate about it.

So that's what we did. And then it was agreed that I would chair the working group from UTLC. Err, and we took best part of an academic year. We had a umm task and finish group that was made up of academics from across different schools, we had the Students' Union – we had the President of the Students' Union, we had the equalities office- officer, and we had the particular disabilities officer that I've told you about already, the one who gave me the idea. So we had all of them on it. And we had some registry bods as well. And we came up with –we did some benchmarking, we stole some id- sorry, we shared good practice [laughs] from around the, from around the sector, we all pulled together umm examples of what we thought we liked, and from what other institutions were doing, and we also came up with some ideas of our own, and eventually this, this project went on and eventually we reported back to UTLC. We made our recommendations. And we've now got a framework, like a disability – more than disability, a diversity framework actually, around umm supporting umm academics when they are at the very early stages when they're wanting to go through the validation process for a new course.

Umm, so we came up with checklists, and we've got a framework, and what the, umm and what we also suggested which has been umm – it's not been without umm, it's not been without some pushback in certain places, although most people just said, 'absolutely fine, we should have been doing this for years, go ahead. Umm yeah, we do need to do this'. We did get a bit of [muffled] big brother Registry we got, and we got a little bit about 'this is, this infringes on my academic freedom. I should have the right' – I don't know to be what, sexist, racist, whatever, ageist, whatever, 'I should have the right, that's my academic freedom'. So we got a *little* bit of that, but very little actually. We



	were pushing at an open door with most of the community. Umm they, what's proving logistically more difficult is the other part of the project, which was to set up umm reading groups, if you like, small buddy groups, at the initial st- stage to look through a proposal and act as a critical friend to say, you know, I think this, this umm, you know, this umm reading list looks a bit male or it looks a bit a stale or pale or whatever [laughs] whatever else, you know. Or you know, have you thought that this umm, this field trip is going to be really difficult for anyone in a wheelchair? Or have you thought about how a s- you know, a hearing impaired person might engage with this material or whatever it might be, you know, and that's where we've, we've found that people are more than happy to tick a few boxes and do the checklist, and, and they do want to do the right thing. It's actually quite a lot more challenging to get somebody to take time out of *their* busy day to help someone else to improve, you know, their offer. So that's, that's been the biggest challenge for us.
JR	Thank you, we might come back to that bit as well –
HQ/O	Yeah
JR	It's quite interesting. So it was ultimately approved by UTLC.
HQ/O	It was.
JR	So they're, they're the people who finally have to, to say yes. Umm, would – is there anyone around that table without whose support you think this proposal or *a* proposal wouldn't go through – it doesn't have to be this one – is there a particular individual or group of individuals who would absolutely have to support to change for it to be successful?
HQ/O	Yeah, my line manager, who is the chair of UTLC, the PVC, yeah. If she really didn't want to do it, then there'd be no point.
JR	Umm and how, how about the Deans in that situation? Do they have - ?
HQ/O	Nah. Not, not at Orangetown. At Orangetown, the Deans are responsible for an awful lot, umm within their schools, err but they – if, if they didn't want to do this, and the PVC wanted them to do this, they would be doing this.
	[both laugh]
JR	Fair enough. And imagine it was a proposal that had come from somewhere else. So, so maybe, I dunno, a proposal came from student records, I'm not sure why they'd be doing a proposal about validation but there you go - would *you* be able to stop it, if you didn't –
HQ/O	[inaudible]
JR	So clearly this was your project, so you wanted, you weren't going to try and stop *this*. But if it was somebody else's idea, do you think you'd have the authority to say, no, this is really stupid?
HQ/O	Yes, absolutely. Although obviously, I wouldn't couch it in quite those terms.



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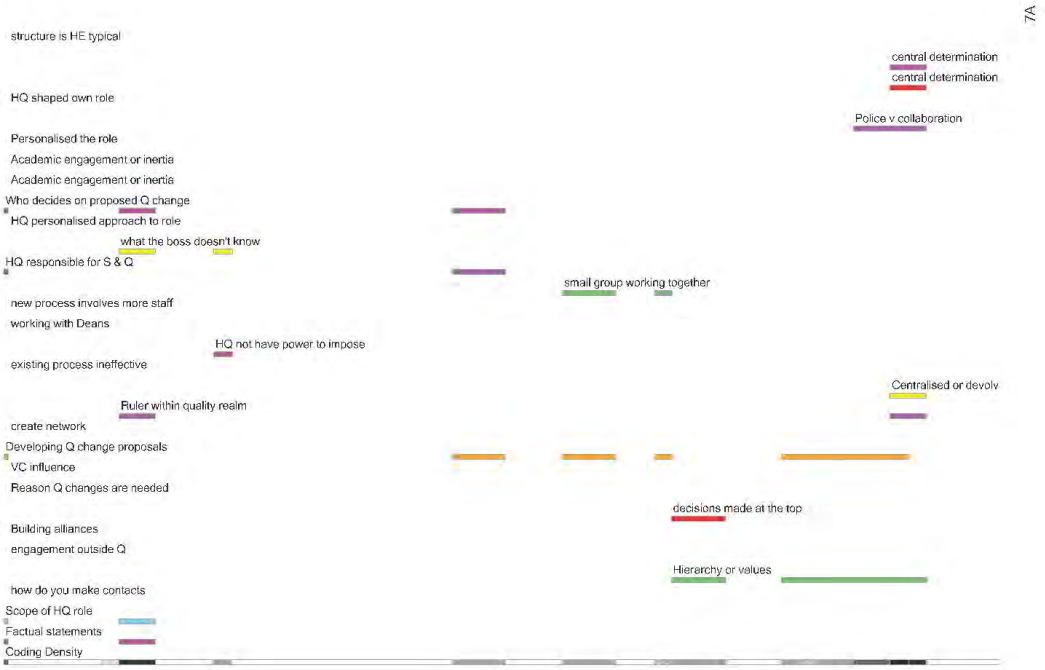
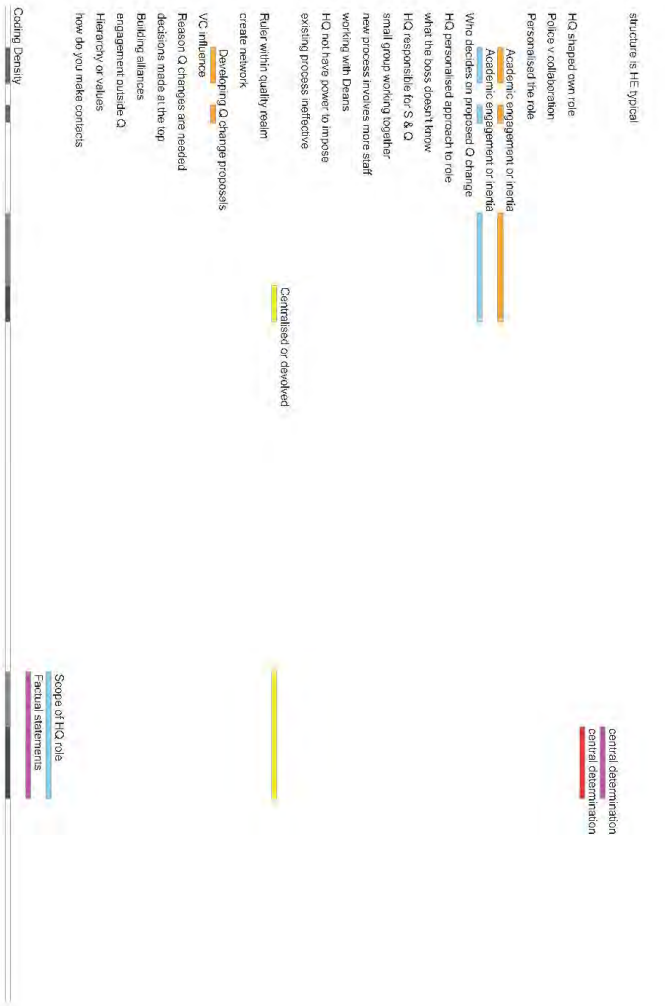


	[both laugh]
HQ/O	But no, I would def – I would definitely feel confident and empowered to say I don't think this is where we ought to be putting our resources at the moment, or we've got other priorities, or… Yeah, some, some way. I mean, I might be overruled. Again, if my manager overruled it, and said 'Well, I don't agree with you, I think this is a great idea' then we'd still be doing it.
JR	Do you think that would happen often?
HQ/O	No. No, I think she, I think she, she trusts my judgement. We, umm we think a lot the same way, I'm not saying we're very similar people. We're not, we're quite different. But I think, you know, in, in terms of what we want to achieve for the institution, I think we're on the same page.
JR	And if, if you knew a proposal was coming and, you thought, I really think this is a bad idea, would you try and take steps before the committee to have a word with her and explain your position, or would you just –
HQ/O	Oh absolutely. No, I wouldn't, I wouldn't do it at the committee, I'd try – well it's not fair on the other, on the proposer either if, you know, nobody wants to be slapped down in public. It's not appropriate. Umm so I would prob – well firstly, I would say to the proposer, I'm not sure this is going to fly at the moment, for all the following reasons. But then I'd also give my err manager the heads up as well.
JR	And so from the way you've described that example, that sounds like it's relatively typical? That that's what would normally happen, so, you know, a problem's identified, and umm then you, if you, if it is agreed that this is a problem, then set up a working group and try and involve people from across the institution to solve it. Would you say that's normal? Or would you more normally just get on and do it yourselves in the team?
HQ/O	It's normal for me. It's an approach that I t- when I came into post, I got a lot of feedback as I went round as part of my induction, that there had been a culture of 'Registry doesn't listen, Registry just makes up rules and doesn't understand how they have to be implemented in the real world'. Which is rich, cos I spent most of my life at the other [laughs] you know, poacher turned gamekeeper I am, or the other way round. But umm, but anyway, so I was very mindful of that when I first started to try and influence what was happening at the university that we did – I wanted to consult. I mean, it's always been my way anyway, I mean, I have a consultative mode of working I think, anyway. But I was particularly acutely aware of the need to be seen to be doing this at Orangetown to try and umm move us on from that rather, rather old fashioned view, you know, of registry as just some sort of grumpy police force, while I wanted – we are sometimes a bit grumpy, and we do have to police things. But, you know, we're actually there to provide a service and we're there to facilitate things that need to get done. Just the same as any other service. So I wanted, you know, I wanted to particularly take that approach. And I'm not sure it was always the way before I joined the institution, actually.

JR	And would you say that, usually, if there's going to be a change, it's you or your team that identifies it, or do a lot of things come up through from the faculties where they've noticed something and they, they want to flag it?
HQ/O	I think that's happening a bit more now. Umm things had come through from other services readily enough, wouldn't always be Registry, you know, if – and something might come through from student services or from, from computing, or, or indeed from careers and employability or, you know, somebody – they were always quite proactive, I think, in the past as well. And the international office would as well not feel shy about bringing something forward. Umm I think, I'm not sure really whether faculty, or schools as we call them at Orangetown, whether they would have, would have necessarily brought anything very much. They still don't, to be perfectly honest. They bring problems rather than solutions. And I don't mean that in a, you know, [laughs] I don't mean that in a facetious kind of a way. I mean, they, they do tend to look to the central services to solve it for them. They're likely to present to a, an issue, 'We, we –', the royal we, 'we've got to tackle this. Now, what do we do about it, Registry?'.
JR	Umm so there, there might be a distinction here. And I think, the way that we've been talking about it, we sort of haven't made the distinction, so maybe you're going to say there isn't really one. Umm it might be a distinction between sort of policy, and then implementation. So, policy, umm, we need to make sure we always consider, umm well, diversity [unclear] you're talking particularly about disability when you're talking about validation. So you have a policy that says you need to do it, but also you designed the 'how'.
HQ/O	Yeah
JR	Umm do you, do you generally have that kind of umm broad responsibility for the 'how' as well as the 'what'?
HQ/O	Yes, generally, umm generally I do, or we do within the team. I mean, I'm not taking credit for everything that happens. There's a lot of 'how' goes on from, from within my team as well. But yeah, I mean, we would not only say what needed, you know, what we felt… what we felt needed to happen, but also how we needed it to happen, because if we don't, well, we've got seven schools and we'll get at least seven versions of how it ought to happen.
JR	If you only get seven, I think you're doing quite well.
HQ/O	Well absolutely, we do have more than seven on occasions.
JR	Umm sorry, this is Jon extemporising again, which he's not supposed to do. Umm so I've now got a run of two or three questions where I'm going to just ask you to answer true or false.
HQ/O	Yeah, sure.



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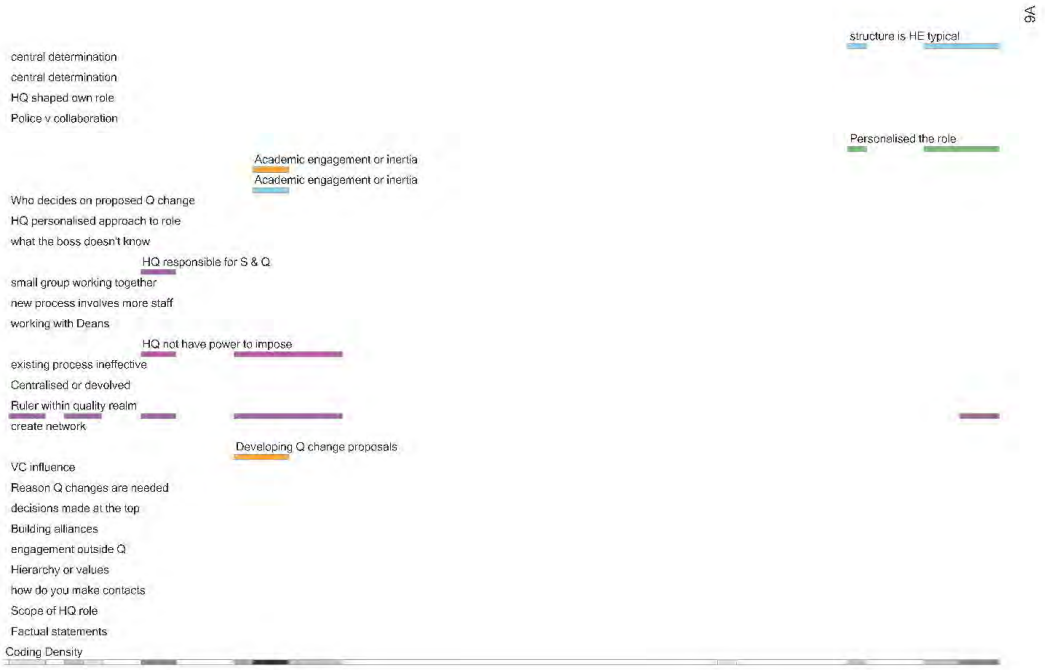
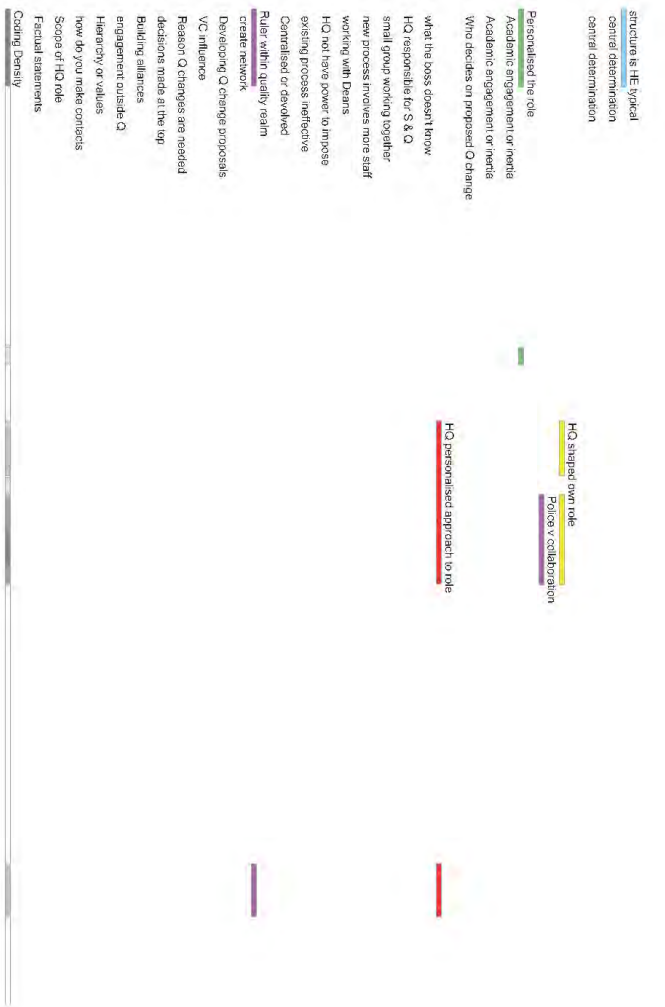
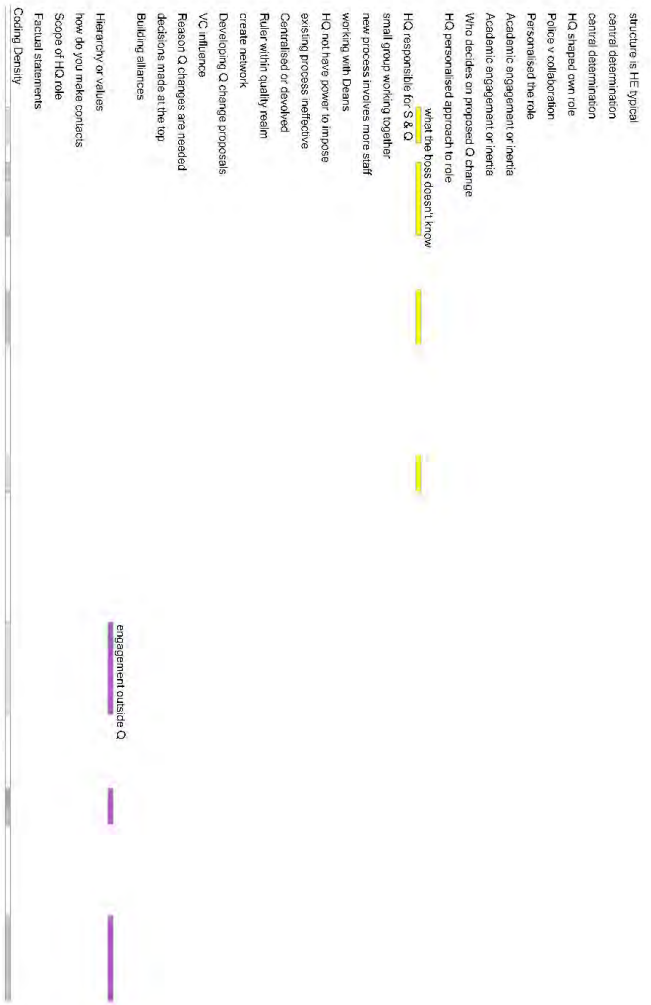


JR	So the first one is, within the quality management realm, I am definitely the ruler.
HQ/O	[short pause] False.
JR	Would you like to say a little bit more about why that's false?
HQ/O	I think it's more umm… I don't think *ruler* is the right word. I'm a very influential stakeholder, -
JR	Right –
HQ/O	I think would be fairer to say. It's not my way or the highway, though, we're much, we work much more collaboratively and ideas come, can come from anywhere. And other people can, as I say – at the end of the day, it's my line manager as PVC who would carry the can, as it were, and then the ultimate responsibility. So if anyone's a – *can* be described as a ruler, it's probably her rather than me.
JR	I'm not going to ask her whether she's an absolute ruler, don't worry.
	[both laugh]
HQ/O	That's good cos she's a despot.
	[both laugh]
JR	Rachel said –
HQ/O	Rachel says, you're queen of the universe [unclear]
v	Umm if you think about that as a realm, the quality management area as a realm umm where you are a very significant stakeholder, are there areas in there where you perhaps have less authority? Areas where you have more? Or is, actually across that, across that broad spectrum of stuff that you talked about at the beginning, do you think your, your influence is about the same across all of it?
HQ/O	Probably about the same across all.
JR	OK. So, next true or false question. Umm if I left, my replacement and probably do things very differently.
	[pause]
HQ/O	False.
JR	Because?
HQ/O	Because… If they had exactly the same remit as me, umm there are only so many ways of skinning the cat [laugh] and I think most of them have been tried. No, in all seriousness, umm I think there are some very well established – I'm not saying they wouldn't make improvements and changes over time. But I

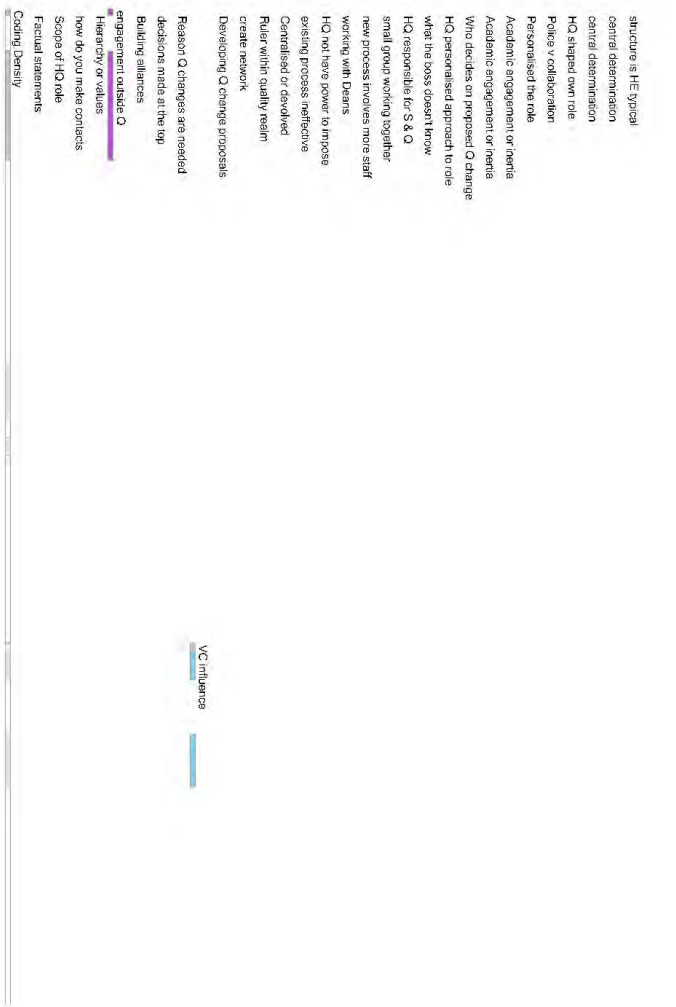
	don't think anyone would come in and want to radically shake it up immediately. Because there are lots of well-established working practices, processes and systems that would actually, even if you *did* want to put a bomb under it, would, would stop you from doing anything very quickly. The whole – other institutions operate in pretty much the same way don't they. It, it takes ages, umm to effect a major change, you're not – you know. Would they do things very differently? No, I don't think they would.
JR	And of course, it's a given that any new postholder would do certain things differently –
HQ/O	Yeah
JR	because individuals do the things they do, I'm sort of taking that sort of for granted. So, third one, umm, I've found a way of making the role my own.
HQ/O	Yes, definitely. Yeah, that's true.
JR	Would you like to say a bit about that?
HQ/O	Yeah. Umm. I'd be – the way that my predecessor did the job was clearly very different. Umm she had very different views on the role of a registry, and the role of a senior manager to me. So, I've definitely done things my way, since I've come in, and effected quite a lot of changes as a result of that. And that's fine, you know, she had her views, I've got mine. Umm so I've definitely changed, I think, the way that registry is perceived across the institution, which has obviously therefore had an impact on, on *me*, individually, in the way that I, Ido my job as well. So I do feel that people would say, you know, if you ask a third party has she made it her own, I would – yeah, I would be confident they would say that I had.
JR	If you com- if you think about that, and compare that to your previous answer, is – does that mean that somebody – you know, suppose that you move on to bigger and better things, and I get appointed, umm… So you, you were able to find a way of doing it that was very different to your predecessor, or enough to make it sort of your job. Would that be *very* difficult for me to do? To sort of follow, follow in your footsteps, or have you created such a perfect –
HQ/O	Oh God no!
	[both laugh]
HQ/O	Gosh, no. No, sorry. I think I was talking about two different things. I think in terms – what I'm talking about having made my own is much more around the interpersonal side. What you wouldn't necessarily want or need to change is the systems and processes.
JR	Sure
HQ/O	So sorry if I wasn't – if I wasn't clear on that. [some inaudible]



JR	No, you were, I was just double-checking that was where you were.
HQ/O	Yeah.
JR	Umm so, the final one of the true / false ones. My boss probably doesn't know half of what I do.
HQ/O	Oh, I'm sure that's true. I don't think she'd want so. [laughs] She knows an awful lot about what I do though. Because she, err, we do have a close working relationship. We usually catch up every week, which is quite a lot of time to get out of a PVC, she's quite hands-on in her approach and not just with me, umm with, with members of my team. She knows them all by name. They don't feel, you know, scared to email her and ask her a question. She's, as I say, she – back in the day when we were allowed in the same room as each other she used to pop up and talk to people. Umm she's very approachable. So, yes. So she probably knows, she knows an awful lot about what I do. But you know, it wouldn't be, wouldn't be appropriate for me burden her with everything.
JR	You don't think she'd be startled to find out some of the things that you do? Or let's say, surprised.
HQ/O	Perhaps pleasantly, cos as I was saying, she probably doesn't know the half of it.
	[both laugh]
JR	So umm at the beginning, you outlined quite a broad set of responsibilities that you have within your, within your role, within the formal role. Do you find you get involved in many activities that are outside of those formal responsibilities?
HQ/O	Yeah, absolutely. It's that last bit on the job description about anything else we decide is appropriate, isn't it? It's great, that's the bit I, I probably like best, because that's where you get into all the, you know, interesting challenges. I'm always talking my way into meetings and, you know, onto working groups and things just because I, I like to know what's going on out there.
JR	And so that tends to happen because you hear about a thing and think, oh, that's interesting, I want to play *that* game.
HQ/O	Can be that way around. Or sometimes people will come and, you know, say I've got a problem and I'll sort of, you know, get involved in the solution. I try not to, you know, do it too much because I do have a day job. But umm oh there was one – oh it's only a small example, but it was, it was funny though. So when the previous director of computing and the previous university secretary both decided to leave at around the same time, they approached me and said, you know, we're both leaving in a couple of months. We're gonna need a new umm Chair for our IGG, would you do it? Information Governance Group – would you do it? So I said, I'm not even a member of this mysterious committee. But – I didn't even know it existed. But of course, I'm more than happy to chair it for you. Perhaps you ought to make me a member first, and



	we'll look at the terms of reference. But, you know, and it's just, it's just things like that. And then, of course, when the new University Secretary started, out of courtesy, I said, you probably want to take this back as it really is in your job description. However, I'm more than happy to stay on the group, you know, I found it really interesting. And so that's, that's the sort – that's just a simple example of the way I tend to get involved in things.
JR	Ah it's quite a useful example. Umm, I'm going to share my screen with you a moment, if I may. Let's hope that this works. Tell, tell me if you can see this, when it turns up, do you see a little grid?
HQ/O	Yup, I can, yes.
JR	Umm, I don't know if you remember but when we – when I did the little survey that you responded to, there was a question about how hierarchical and how centralised the institution was. And, and your answer was that it was yes to hierarchy, but very much yes to devolution. So it would, you'd have placed yourself a bit above halfway but firmly on the left hand side of the diagram. Does that sound right still?
HQ/O	Yes, it does. Yeah.
JR	Right, so I can now stop sharing again, which is much nicer and you can actually [unclear].
HQ/O	Yes.
JR	Umm, could you say a little bit about that, and why you, why you give that answer?
HQ/O	Yeah. Our vice chancellor is very keen on devolving responsibility to, to, to the deans basically. Umm he takes the view umm that, well – I don't know how to put this politely… I don't even need to be polite, do I, but sort of – I think he quite enjoys holding their feet to the fire. He thinks that they should be absolutely responsible for what goes on in their area. They should make executive decisions, but then they should stand by them and be held accountable if they go wrong. Umm so he's quite firm on that with the Deans. When he was a dean, I think back in the day he struggled with the fact that he wasn't always given as much autonomy as he would have liked. So he's always said, I want to give them, you know, all the freedom to make the choices that they need to make. However, you know, it also gives them enough rope to hang themselves with, is the flip side to that. Umm and so, therefore, we do have some senior leadership team meetings that can be quite umm, yeah, challenging. I wouldn't want to be a dean at Orangetown, actually, to be perfectly honest. [laughs] So I think that's where we get the sort of devolution from.



	Umm that said, umm, there are elements that are very sort of centralised, or it's a bit like a politburo, the senior – the very, very senior Vice Chancellor's Executive Group, umm which is not unusual in universities either. So you've got Deans – this is why I wouldn't want to be a dean at Orangetown – you've got deans who are absolutely responsible, you know, umm for student numbers and all the rest of it, if they don't, you know, if they don't make the savings and they don't bring in the income, then questions are very… very much asked. If the NSS isn't good enough, then they are very much held to account. And, and it can be quite publicly as well. Umm certainly within the senior leadership team. But, on the other hand, if they, if they want to, you know, do something that involves more than their own area, then they're very quickly, it's the VC, the DVC, possibly the PVCs, who will decide whether or not that's going ahead, thank you. So, it's… [laughs]
JR	Umm and you said earlier – I said I might come back to this and it would fit sort of very neatly here. You said that umm the deans have a lot of responsibility in, in sort of their area, but actually, when you're talking about umm things like how you're going to do validation and ensure that umm you pick up let's say disability as, as an example, then in that instance, actually they don't really get involved in that at all – they're, that, that's *obviously* something that will be done at university level and by or through, umm through the committee, but ultimately through you and your, your team.
HQ/O	Yeah, absolutely.
JR	So. umm. You've sort of, you've given one of the answers to this question already and I'm interested to know if there might be others. I mean, so if you think of little grid diagram and where you place Orangetown as being kind of, you know, very devolved, but with a degree of hierarchy. Umm I was going to ask whether you could think about what factors might have influenced this. You've already said VC is –
HQ/O	Yeah
JR	One of them. Umm do you think there's anything about size or Mission Group or history of the institution that has also influenced that, or do you think that the VC is kind of the, the determining factor here? I think he's quite long-serving, isn't he.
HQ/O	He is long serving, absolutely. And I think, you know, he's fashioned the institution in his image over that time. Umm, clearly, I mean, because I haven't been there for more than a couple of years it's a little bit difficult. But to look into people who have been around 20 or 30 years, I think he has been quite instrumental in, you know, in shaping the institution as it currently is. That said, there are also a number of other umm senior bods. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, for example, has spent his entire career just about at Orangetown as well. So, you know, again, there's a lot of continuity there.

	Not the PVCs, they're all, they've all, you know, been around the sector a little bit more. Umm but, I'm just trying to think if there is anything else specifically. You're probably not asking the right person, because I'm not very long serving, some of the others that you're going to talk to might, might be able to give you a better view of that one.
JR 38.25	So, I'm going to be very unprofessional and ask you to speculate [laughs] just out of interest, is umm to what extent – so obviously you've had a, quite a long-standing VC and a longstanding DVC who, who have a umm, a very good sort of understanding of the institution and have probably between them kind of formed it in its current arrangement. If – to what extent is that now, kind of how Orangetown is? If they both decided to retire next month, how much do you think that this is now the DNA, and how much would it actually quite quickly spring to a different model, if that's what the V – the new VC thought?
HQ/O	I think it should move with umm, with the sort of what the head honcho wanted umm, at least over time. Umm, apart from anything else, a new VC would probably come in and do that age-old thing – right, we're gonna have to restructure chaps. So [laughs], so you know, that's, that's one way of getting it to change. I think there are some weird things at Orangetown in terms of structure and hierarchy that I, if I was still around at the time, would want to challenge with other incoming senior colleagues. Umm you know when you're on a hiding to nothing and you know where you can challenge. Umm so I know– and there are things that I will, I've got a mind to challenge within, you know, within the people that we've got now in the, in the senior team. Umm I think if we suddenly had a, a different VC and a different DVC suddenly almost overnight, there'd be a lot of other people who are be sitting around thinking 'oh I'd like to change that or that', or 'that doesn't really work'. So I think there probably could be quite a lot of churn.
JR	Thank you. So, so the current situation, umm again, I think that last answer kind of picked up some of this. But if you have a situation, which is, you know, the Deans – so the schools have quite a lot of power or the deans in the schools have quite a lot of power, umm and how *that* impacts on, on decision making and in particular on, on *your* role and your, you know, the decisions you're able to make. Umm and you were saying, you know, that there are things that you might at the moment, you might think well I'm on a hiding to nothing with that, there's no good arguing that one, I know it's going nowhere. Are, are there ways of getting around that? Are there are other people you talk to to try and get things sort of quietly sorted almost below the radar? Or does that not really work?
HQ/O	It can work. It depends what it is, and it depends exactly who was digging their heels in. If you've err [laughs], if you've got, if you've got a situation where, you know, some of the Deans are likely to be okay with something and others are likely not to be, you always got that divide and, and rule sort of strategy that you can employ. Umm it depen- it really depends on what the issue is, sometimes you can get round it. And I get on very well and I've been careful to ensure a good relationship with the new director of computer and library services, cos that way and with the director of student services, sometimes, you know, we

can get stuff done by joining together as well, and, and that can be quite powerful. So that might be a way round it. Some – if it – depends what it is, sometimes you can actually do it anyway umm, you know, on the basis it's better to ask for forgiveness than permission. That can sometimes work, it depends what it is. Umm with the smaller things that I think, you know, that are just going to be a minor irritation that I might be tempted to just do it anyway and put up with the whingeing afterwards. Umm really big stuff, or certainly, if I thought that the, the VC didn't want something to happen, I'd be very cautious about, you know, sticking my neck out too far, to be honest. What I would do in that situation is work with others. If I felt that there was, you know – it's not that he won't be challenged, it's just about the way that you have to do it. And it's, he's certainly not a 'let's have a conversation in a committee about this and get everybody involved'. It's much more, umm you're much more likely to get something through or change his mind if you can sort of sit down and have a conversation about it or probably several.	
JR	Umm so, you've mentioned the Deans a couple of times. Do – what kind of relationship you have with the Deans?
HQ/O	Quite a good one normally. Umm it tends to – again, it just does tend to depend. Umm if, as always, if you, if you've done something that they like, you're flavour of the month. If you've had to tell them off because they're not compliant with something, or oh, you've not upheld a student complaint, and you're actually saying they need to offer them a fee waiver or something that's going to cost them, then of course you're all, all things bad. But, you know, if you even out those, I think generally umm I have a good working relationship with the Deans.
JR	And how about with other academic staff that you may come into contact with? And do you come into contact with them?
HQ/O	Definitely with the sort of AD level, directors of this and that in, in the various schools, I do. I don't tend to have *that* much contact with the more junior members of academic staff in schools?
JR	And, and how, what, what determines the nature of the relationship you have with the ones that you *do* know? So if you think about the Associate Deans or you know, the local directors, that's not quite the word is it but directors at school level. How, umm… what, what kind of engagement do you have with them?
HQ/O	A lot of it, the big things are either student casework driven, or sort of policy and project driven. Umm for example, they're often my go-to people on the Task and Finish groups that we need to pull together.
JR	And do, do they form a sort of a formal network? Do they already have a network of ADs, or do you just have to call them together as a group or as individuals or –
HQ/O	They have networks. So if you're an AD for research and enterprise in a school, then they meet as a group.

JR	Right
HQ/O	They also obviously go to university Research Committee and Graduate Board and that sort of thing. So, you know, there are, there are people, there are different networks that they've got that you can tap into. The Deans meet as a group, you know, umm I have instigated – school managers meet as a group, and I umm, I have instigated six weekly catch-ups between registry and school managers because I felt that that was an area where comms weren't all that they might have been. And again, there was very much an 'us and them' sort of approach when I first came into, into post. So I suggested that we do that, and now we meet every six weeks and we just bring up, bring out our dead basically, they bring out all their problems, we bring out all ours. And then we put the worlds to rights, share, you know, we tell them what we need from them and they tell us what they need from us. And yeah, and it's very informal, but it seems to be working. So there are lots, that goes on a lot around Orangetown.
JR	So HQ, you have a marvellous facility for keep asking the – you should be on the Two Ronnies – you keep answering the question, the next question –
	[laughs]
JR	before I get to it, which is fantastic. It shows the questions are kind of in a logical order cos –
HQ/O	it does, yeah.
JR	Because I was going to ask about sort of formal or informal networks that you've established particularly to help you perform your role. So there's a really good and clear example of, of meetings with school managers. Are there any others that you've set up which may be sort of even more informal, just sort of individuals or, or networks of people who you think of as being you know, helpful to you, shall we say?
HQ/O	Yeah. Umm… It would be – I have a one-to-one which I instigated with the director of student services, umm which – when we meet, and that's extremely informal. In the old days, we just used to go and have a coffee in one or other of Umm in our offices and, err, talk through what, you know, what we've got on our respective agendas. When the new director of Computing and Library Services came in not long after I started, I also reached out to him and said, look, you know, Matt and I have been meeting like this, I find it really useful. Would you like to do the same? And he said, yes. And that's, that's been – that for me is actually more useful than the director of student services, because umm I've got quite a few sort of systems projects going on at the moment. And being able to have a very informal chat with the director of Computing is, is useful in that context. So that's a really informal one. We diarise them, otherwise we'd never get our acts together. But beyond that, there's never any agenda or anything like that. We just talk about whatever we need to. Umm…

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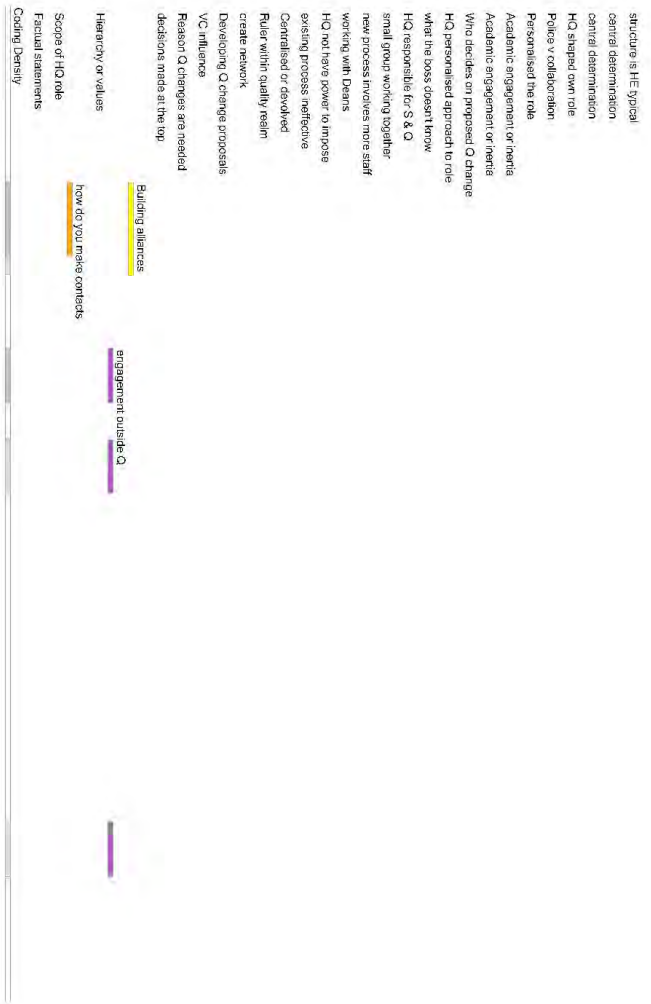
JR	And you – sorry, go on.
HQ/O	Go ahead.
JR	Okay. You say you can use those meetings to umm progress the things that you're, you're working on effectively. Like you said, if you've got a, a systems-based project, then the director of computing's quite a handy, quite a handy contact.
HQ/O	But we can also use it to build coalitions and sound each other out with, you know, ideas that we might have bubbling, that we might just – sometimes just – you just want a, another pair of eyes on it don't you, just sensible, critical friends.
JR	So umm I'm just about the end of the questions. I just wanted to finish by asking you if there's anything else that you'd like to tell me about the way in which you contribute to the work of the university, that I haven't covered.
HQ/O	That's a very good question. We're quite a... we're quite err accolade-driven and that's the big C as well at Orangetown. So there's been, there's always, there's an element in the culture of collecting gongs... umm to go on the wall you know, and I've picked up on that and become sort of acculturated there, and umm you know, got the customer service excellence and things that we didn't have before. And err so there are things that I get involved in as well that, you know, are sort of more wide ranging, cos like I said, the VC likes to have lots of things on the wall.
JR	That's, that's really interesting. I mean, I do remember Orangetown being university of the year, which no doubt was a particularly big gong on the wall. So, if you'd be – if you decided, OK, this is something that matches the VC actually, so I'm going to, you know, do my best to add one or two gongs to the list, was that entirely self-interested or was that university interested or... what, what was the motivation for that?
HQ/O	Umm well, that particular one, customer service err excellence, I absolutely buy into the idea of customer service. It, just, so, self-interest, not in terms of getting a gong for the VC, perhaps more self-interest in it providing me with a ready-to-go framework to do what I wanted to do anyway, rather than having to reinvent the wheel. So they – yeah, definitely an element of self-interest but perhaps not about... ah, I'm not so bothered about having certificates on the wall. But what I have been really interested in is the underlying principles. So it was the same when I was involved in Investors in People, and Athena Swan and other things. It's not, you know, about having, being able to put it on your letterhead necessarily. For me, that's, its's about this is the right thing to do. And if there's something out there that just makes life easier to do the right thing, then I'll jump on that bandwagon.
JR	Sure. Final question is just, is there anything that we haven't talked about that you expected to, or thought might be interesting or important for me to know?
HQ/O	No, I don't think so. I mean, obviously you're looking at third space professionals. So it's, it's sort of interesting that you obviously think people in



	this kind of role are, are typical. You're going to, but you're also – I'm just curious now [laughs], this is – you're talking to umm academic members of staff as well. So obviously, you're talking to Sarah, who is an academic member of staff, and chairs the school quality committee. You're talking to the PVC. So I'm just interested because I've done some work around third spaces as well. Umm whether you're seeing those kind of academic roles very much in the third space. There's been a lot of emphasis I think in, you know, in the literature on professional services in the third space.
JR	Yeah. No, I'm… I'm, for *this* project, I'm thinking of them as being kind of a 360 around, around your role. So getting your perspective. But then also understanding other people's perspective on, on the role of, that you play and other equivalent people.
HQ/O	Yeah.
JR	There, there may be another project down the line [both laugh], it might be quite a long way down the line, which tries to extend it, but I might leave that to Celia Whitchurch.
HQ/O	Yeah.
JR	She's got quite excited, well, she's – what I think is interesting about now, is Celia Whitchurch has started talking a lot more over the last sort of five plus years, about – partly about academics, but also about motivations and why people go towards a third space and how that's part of their career trajectory and so forth. And I'm more interested in the sort of functiony 'what does it mean for that individual and for that institution and how does that work?' rather than 'why would you choose to do it and what do you do next?', kind of thing. Umm, that's different, it's interesting from, just from a personal professional perspective, but that's not where I'm, not where I'm focusing my energies. And I'm really interested to see what comes out.
HQ/O	Yeah.
JR	And I've absolutely have no idea.
HQ/O	Well hopefully you've got some rich data there anyway.
	[both laugh]
JR	Yes. Thank you very much. I have. I'm going to stop the, the recording so…

structure is HE typical
central determination
central determination
HQ shaped own role
Police v collaboration
Personalised the role
Academic engagement or inertia
Academic engagement or inertia
Who decides on proposed Q change
HQ personalised approach to role
what the boss doesn't know
HQ responsible for S & Q
small group working together
new process involves more staff
working with Deans
HQ not have power to impose
existing process ineffective
Centralised or devolved
Ruler within quality realm
create network
Developing Q change proposals
VC influence
Reason Q changes are needed
decisions made at the top
Building alliances
engagement outside Q
Hierarchy or values
how do you make contacts
Scope of HQ role
Factual statements
Coding Density

Academic, Tealborough University (AC, T)

The connection was not perfect for this interview. There are occasions where text was lost, although these are small in number.

JR	So I'm going to start recording. Could I start, AC, just by asking you to say a little bit about your current role? Umm, so who you report to, whether you have people reporting to you and most specifically your key responsibilities.
AC/T	Okay, so I'm Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor for education policy, and also academic director in charge of all undergraduate programmes. Umm and a professor of chemistry, if that helps. [laughs] So umm, I still have 10 percent of my time in chemistry with the research group. And as of this October, I stopped teaching in chemistry, but I was teaching up until October. Umm so the dual role really, umm, the undergraduate role is in charge of all aspects to do with undergraduate matters, so that would be NSS, so that would be student experience-
JR	Mmhm
AC/T	that would be umm teaching quality. So we have our TEG meetings, which is Teaching Excellence Group, annually. Umm we interview a few- if you've already spoken to HQ you probably know all about this. We err basically interview departments on, on teaching strategy, on what's gone well and what hasn't gone well. Course approvals, so all, any new undergraduate course approvals will come through me. And I'm also co-chair of AQSC, Academic Quality and Standards Committee, which is our highest quality assurance committee in the university. Umm I'm also in charge of systems developments to a certain extent. So, umm recently, in the last 12 months, we've developed a mitigating circumstances portal, dealing with umm GDPR-compliant ways for students to, to apply for mitigation. I have developed a self-certification policy and we're developing a system for that. Over the umm, over the last twelve months, I was involved in developing, with others, a online examination portal. So there's – and I'm also Chair of what we call the Student Systems Group, which is academic heads of I.T. and student records and various places to talk about student systems in general. So it's quite broad. Umm but at the moment, my main focus is on policy, and policy change. So, we've gone through quite a hefty policy change over the last few years and we're still probably in the middle of that with regards umm to a range of issues. So, remedying failure in student examinations and assessments, umm to diversification of assessment strategies for departments. A whole range of things, but I think on a day-to-day basis, I interact most with HQ's team, so the EPQ team, Education Polity and Quali - Policy and Quality, and I chair a meeting that's twice weekly of umm the senior people of her team, as well as the other deputy pro vice chancellor who's Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor Quality. Umm, and we basically go through things that have come up during the week, discuss them, kick them around, come up with outcomes. So occasionally members of EPQ and HQ's team will, will email me, asking me what they think we should – [unclear] query to do with a department, what should we do? Sometimes the query comes to me and I email them and say,

possible compromise on changes
policy interpreted locally
proposals made by faculty
Committee involvement
decisions made at the top
power held by lead academic

emergency process unsustainable
engagement outside Q
where to draw the line on devolution to faculty
HQ has recognised authority on Q
Scope of HQ role
small group working together
HQ not have power to impose
faculty leads on Q
Personalised the role
existing process ineffective
Ruler within quality realm
Centralised or devolved
HQ responsible for S & Q

Reason Q changes are needed
Factual statements
Who decides on proposed Q change
consultation on change
faculty able to contribute
faculty able to contribute
Academic engagement or inertia
Academic engagement or inertia
Developing Q change proposals
Coding Density

working with Deans

HQ one voice among several

1A

	what should we do? But. Either of those cases, we get together twice a week and discuss them. So, there's a two way dialogue. So, that's quite a bit. It's useful to have to, to actually answer that, so I actually know what I do do.
JR	I would agree with you, it's quite a bit. Umm, so if you, if you think about HQ's role-
AC/T	Yeah
JR	Umm if you had to explain to somebody who was from outside the sector, and so wasn't really very familiar with validation, and external examining, and all the things – NSS – all the things we do, if you had to explain to them what HQ's role was, how would you describe it?
AC/T	Ah OK, so she, she manages a team which is responsible for all aspects of the student experience. So that would be, I guess, the quality of the courses, umm, the examination and the rigour of the examinations. Umm complaints. Umm endergraduate degrees, postgraduate degrees, degree apprenticeships, umm, all aspects of education within the university, umm quality of it. And… [lost text]… changes.
JR	When you say that her team is *responsible* for it.
AC/T	Okay, err maybe that's the wrong word. Yes, umm, ultimately, the PVC education is responsible for everything in the education space. Umm she's responsible for managing her team, which supports the education executive in all of these roles.
JR	I did think that was what you meant because what you said before about your role. So I guess [lost text] anything that happens, right?
AC/T	Yeah.
JR	And if you, if you think about the last sort of 18 months or so, umm we, we'll come on and talk about sort of changes to policy and procedure and so forth, but just in terms of the quality team, so umm the responsibilities they have, umm numbers of staff, and that kind of thing – has it been quite stable or have there been a number of changes, would you say, in the last 18 months?
AC/T	Well, I guess there's been people moving around internally, which has led to changes. So umm, one member of our staff went to Chemistry. Unfortunately for EPQ, but OK for chemistry! And then there's the normal turnover. And of course, we've lost some people relatively recently, who will be replaced. I know they're a couple of members down, and I guess they, they umm they had the ability to recruit, but that got put on hold in the last six months, the last 12 months, it's almost 12 months now isn't it, 9 months. So they, they have been working at lower – under capacity. But generally, people like working there and they, they leave to get a higher position elsewhere, in the university or outside the university. And so, umm I'd say it was generally stable. But then I've work with different [lost text] different people in a team shunt around, so I think the number of personnel have been pretty stable, but I suspect that people's roles have moved around significantly.

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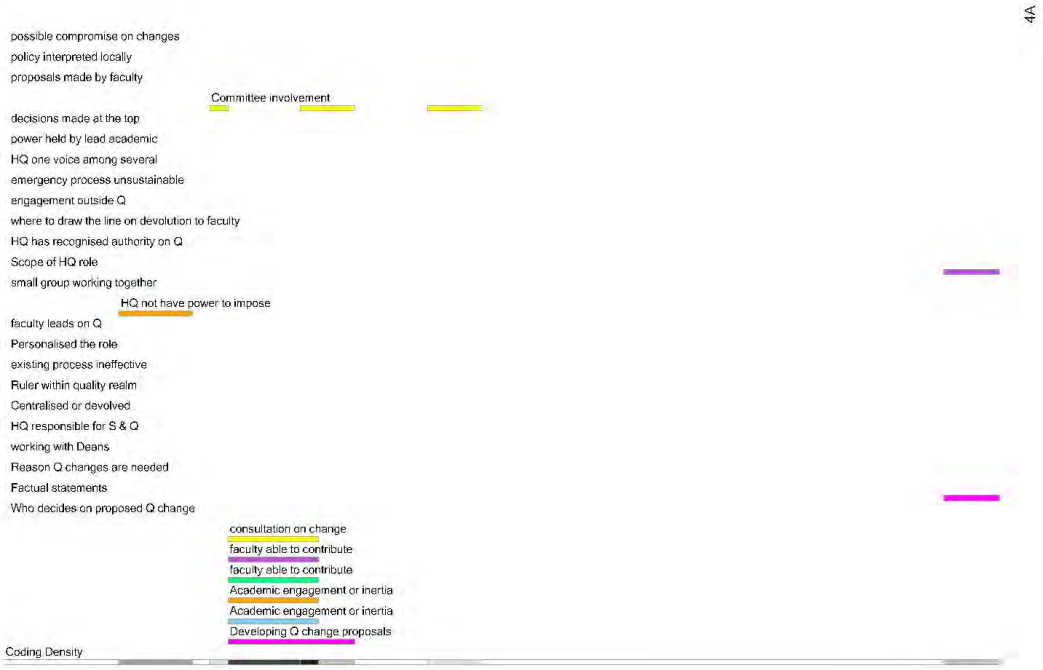
HQ not have power to impose
Factual statements

JR	But as a overall team, they probably are responsible for the same kind of things, although they may have done them a little bit differently in the last nine months because there's been a pandemic and we haven't really been in offices.
AC/T	Yeah. Yeah, I don't think they've been, they've had any, any added responsibility over the last 18 months. I think that their responsibilities were pretty stable, yeah.
JR	So, I'd like to ask you about how changes to umm quality policies or processes may happen at Tealborough University.
AC/T	Yeah.
JR	And umm I spoke with HQ, and the example she gave is that, that she had just worked now on introducing a new process whereby there'll be some additional members of staff who will be effectively, explicitly mandated to work with umm academic schools, to take them through the various requirements, to make sure that they're working alongside, and she used the word 'in tandem', against all the different strategic requirements, gonna help and support them along the way. And I don't know the extent to which you're involved in developing or thinking about that.
AC/T	Not much, because to be fair [pause] I don't think she – [lost text]
JR	If you think about umm changes generally, so if there's going to be a change to say education policy at undergraduate level –
AC/T	Yeah
JR	How, how would you normally expect that to come about? Would it normally be something that comes from a school or from HQ's team, or indeed from you as... umm Director?
AC/T	Umm OK, so, I mean [audio lost] to put my – and I was a director of postgraduate studies, and I was a deputy chair of a faculty education committee, so a lot – so, so generally I'd say ideas for change come from, in three ways. One, from my experience of going through the system and thinking we, we don't do that very well. [laughs] Two from the grassroots who have ideas for change or find that existing rules are leading to problems or misinterpretation or there's less, there's a lack of consistency because the way they've been written in the past or, or whether, of course, education umm space changes over the last five, 10 years or so, as it does, and you need to think about things. From the EPQ team itself, which tends to be more clued into changes in OfS and other quality changes from PSRBs and other things that will come in directly to them. Umm and so I guess there's those three prongs where the information would come from.
JR	And then when you have an idea or a – where something comes in, what kind of a process would it normally –



AC/T	Yeah
JR	Go through to end up with sort of final approval?
AC/T 12.03	Right, so unfortunately, as in most places, at most universities, pre-COVID it was exceptionally long winded, umm in as far as there is a governance structure, which any serious change in policy, when I say change, serious change, I mean say something like, introducing the ability to resit a module as a right, rather than – for all years, rather than the first year only, which is what we used to have ages ago. So that would require a Senate change. And so you've got all of the committees to go through before you get there. But before you even get to that, what we would normally do is we would normally have a number of focus groups with directors of studies in the different faculties. The faculty education committees would discuss the policy. We'd probably have a first draft that would then get kicked around over about a term during that c- during that framework. Then when we've got something that's pretty close to being developed, it would go to Academic Quality and Standards Committee and the Education Executive. And we also have some other governance structures which are maybe four or five years old now – SLEEC, which is the Students Learning – oh God, no. What does it stand for? I don't remember. But it's, it's basically the student experience aspects, so, so the number of committees it would go through, and then AQSC and then Education Committee [laugh] and then, then Senate and then it would get signed off. And because that would take 12 months, you're doing these things 12 months in advance. And if you're lucky, you manage to get it for the next academic year and of course, you have to start these things at the beginning of an academic year, you can't really do it halfway through. So... it's slow. And that's a, it's, it causes frustration for all people concerned when they can see a change could be beneficial to everybody, but it takes that length of time to actually get to happen.
JR	So I'm going to go slightly off script here. I mean, as I put in the briefing sheet, this is, this is meant to be kind of looking at normal times rather than COVID times. But you mentioned that-
AC/T	Yeah
JR	perhaps things have been a bit different in the last nine months because you can't all sit round committee tables.
AC/T	Yeah.
JR	Has, has that speeded things up and, if so, do you think that that speeding up might in some way be, kind of become normal process or do you think you'll just revert to the, the umm the cycle you had before.
AC/T	This is a, quite a complicated answer. So, so I think, oh it's speeded things up rapidly. So I, I developed the graduation benchmark of the safety net for our students, which was ways of making sure that their degrees didn't suffer. We did that in about two weeks and that involved actually changing how the

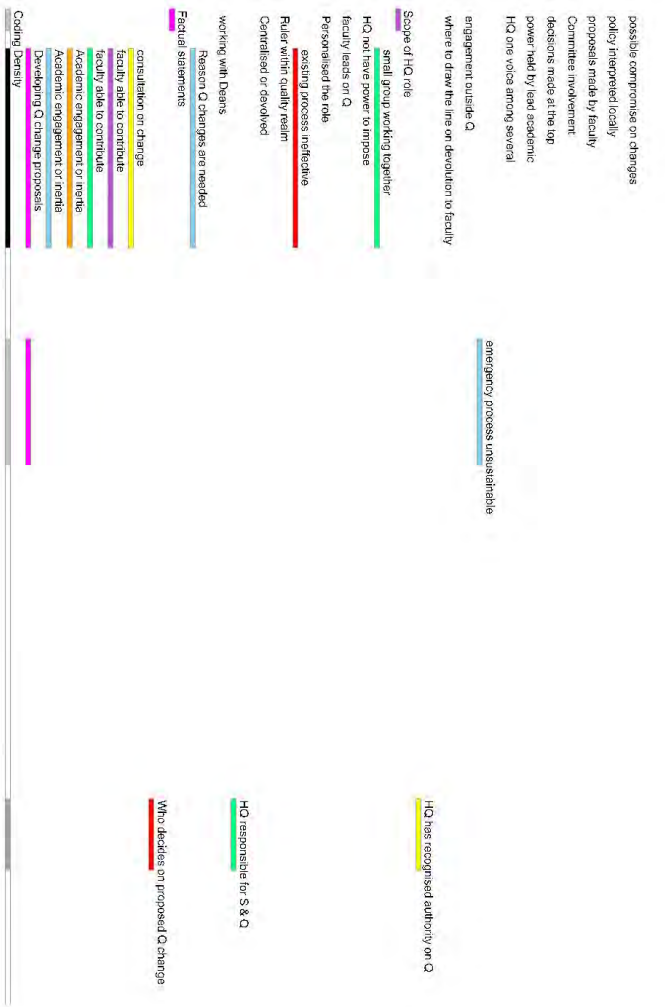
degree outcome was, was, was, was quantified.

And, and that's something really substantial. And we, with that, I just picked three big departments in the three faculties, and worked with them very closely, umm introduced the faculty education chairs, who, whereas they might not have had time to consult with all the departments, knew so much about their departments that they could, they could see where the issues might arise. And then instead, instead of, normally say for example, with that, we would, we would go through EPQ, and then there'd be an examinations issue. We'd talk to the examinations team separately. We'd talk about I.T. [unclear] to develop a system. And we would develop those sort of individually. We basically set up committees where we had all of those present at the same time.

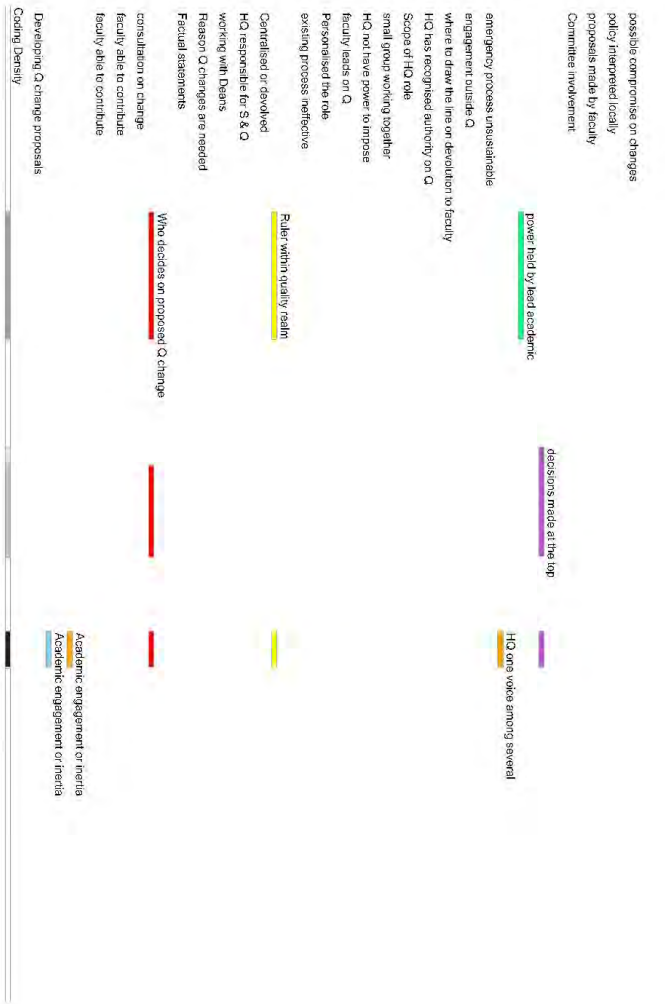
They'd never worked together before, but it meant that something could be – a problem could be, be brought up in the meeting, and it could be solved in the meeting without someone having to go away, work out who to speak to, and then bouncing it to somebody else and then come back next week. So umm, that worked. Now, the issue is it's very, very labour intensive. Umm and while we've learnt that actually it's – trying to remove the silo working, which is what you normally get in to these, these, these teams – umm trying to remove that helps facilitate rapid movement – in our current systems, it's not sustainable because we've got business as usual to deal with umm on top of that. And, that really takes up the majority of teams' times in a normal, in a normal year.

Umm so I think we're gonna have to think about how we move things forward. But what was interesting is whereas normally departments moan. There's always one department that will moan about a policy change umm and say that they weren't consulted enough. And umm this time we've had severe changes in policy, and hardly any department has moaned. And, you know, I don't know whether that's goodwill because they appreciate how difficult the situation has been and so they, they, they accept that some things won't necessarily work out well, or whether truly it's actually worked out quite well. I don't know.

JR	That's useful, thank you. So when a, when a change is going forward –
AC/T	Yes
JR	Wherever it's come from, who umm who has the power to stop it effectively dead in its tracks and say, 'no, we're not doing that'.
AC/T	Depends what it is, of course. But if it was at a minor policy change, me. So if someone from EPQ, HQ's team, said 'we can't do this because of', then I would normally defer to them, unless I really thought it was important and we needed to find a way of doing it. And that might mean getting some more resource. But umm, so, me – I've just, I've done that actually. So I could give you an example of that. We have – Engineering – and I'm glad it's anonymised because – are quite a difficult department. [both laugh] They, they use their PSRB as an excuse to do lots of things which are not really what we want them to do. And it really is



	an excuse, because they could do them differently in ways that we would want them to do and still be PSRB compliant.
JR	Mmhm
AC/T	And one – they'd come up with an example, last week, of something about them wanting to change the pass mark from 40 percent to 30 percent because, in some things – and we do know that their PSRB allows the 30 percent mark as a condoned pass. Now, we don't have condoned passes at Tealborough. Anyway, they came up with a solution, which I don't want to do. I've got an alternative way to help them, which actually is using our existing policies. So, umm so in in our workstream meeting with HQ's group, I just said, look, this is the problem, this is what I think they should be doing, does anyone have any other ideas or am I wrong? Everyone said no, that seems what they should be doing. And I went back to them and said, no, we're not doing that. I'll remind you that these are our existing policies, and you can get round your problem by doing this and this under our existing policies. So, it will be me in that case. But there was a – I'm also in charge of what's called the MyTealborough app, which is effectively an app which pulls data umm for each stud-, each student's personal data such as their timetable, their, their – how much they've got on their eating card for Tealborough, how many printing credits, what spaces in the library are available and what terminals, and I chair umm that group. And there was one particular case where the Registrar wanted something to be put on that app. And I said, no, it violates all of our policy and strategy. And I told him no for two months. But obviously, in the end, I had to relent and I got overruled. But, so it depends what it is, but.
JR	And let's say a change was proposed from the academic community? Could HQ stop it dead in its tracks, or would that be very hard?
AC/T	I think not. I think, if it was, if it had a lot of academic backing behind it, it would have to be stopped in its tracks by Education Executive, which has the PVC, Deputy PVCs, *and* HQ and her senior registrars.
JR	And is there anybody else around the university or any other groups where you think, actually if there were an idea and *that* group were, were seriously opposed, or if that individual was seriously opposed, we'll take the vice-chancellor for granted
AC/T	Yeah
JR	If the vice-chancellor says no. But are there any other groups who, who have the power that if they all sort of banded together and said, 'we really, really don't want this', that probably that would be enough to, to kill a proposal?
AC/T	I'm going to – the answer to that is yes and no. [laugh] Err and what I'm going to do is I'm going to remove the Tealborough Business School from this equation, because they are – I don't know how much you know about Tealborough Business School, but they are effectively a university within a university in terms of their, in terms of their systems, not their policies, of



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course, but their systems, which sometimes means that they can't enact policy and then therefore they try and say no, it's not happening. And they go, they go higher up to try and stop things.

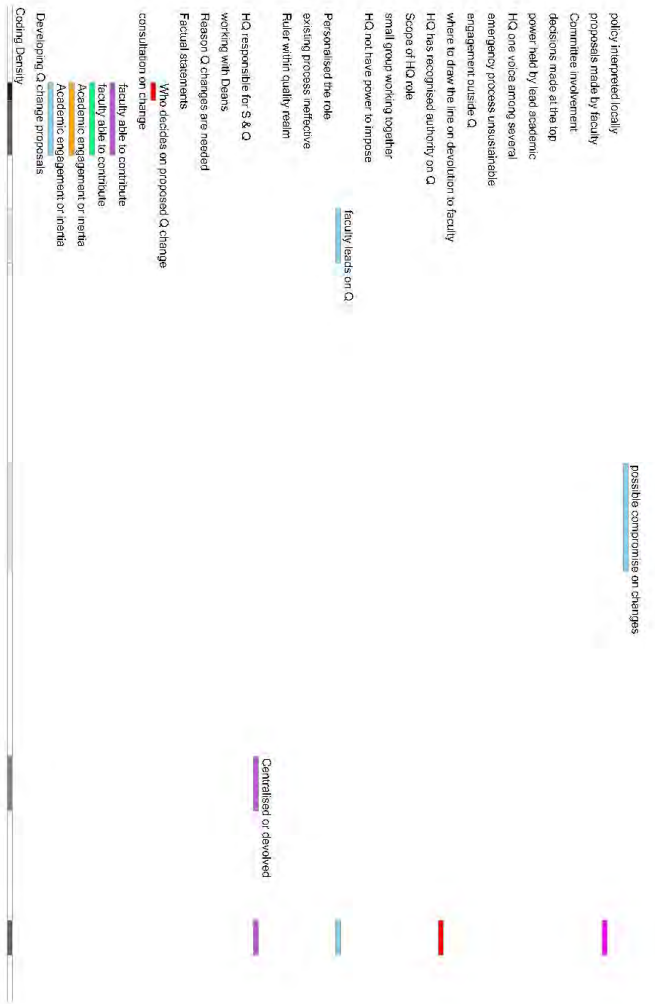
But generally, that doesn't work. And so I'd say no, generally. Umm if a couple of faculties, faculty chairs, got together, then we would have to seriously think that perhaps we weren't doing something which was something we could take forward.

There was a sort of example, well not quite an example. So, we have first year Boards of examiners at a faculty level, and we've had it since the beginning of the university. And in the last decade, everyone's been trying to get rid of it and, and just hand the autonomy to departments because the decisions that are made are 'progress or not', effectively. And obviously most first year marks don't count towards degrees. There's no external examiner involvement. Umm and it was a waste of everyone's time. You know, we had to have somebody from every department to make it quorate. It meant that all of the exam grids had to be done a week before they needed to be done, really. Umm and so we've been trying to abolish it for actually quite a few years.

And it's always had, it's always been vetoed by the arts faculty. And just this year, we tried again and the arts faculty again said, no, we think it's useful because of this this this and this, and what they said is correct, but we just effectively overruled them this time. But, we listened to them and changed our plans a little bit. So, for example, we have a June First Year Board of Examiners – and a September Board of examiners. And the September Board of Examiners is very small because it's only involved in the resit cases. And so we'll keep that one. We'll get rid of the June one, we'll see how it goes, and if everything works out well, we'll probably get rid of the September next year.

So we listen. But we probably wouldn't stop it if we really thought we needed to do it.

JR	Right, thank you. So I mean, that's quite interesting because you've mentioned two parts of the university where perhaps – so obviously the Business School and then Arts here who were not entirely aligned or might not be entirely aligned with what you ideally want to happen. To what extent is implementation of policy devolved to faculties or departments or…
AC/T	Umm that's a very good question. So it is effect- because we have such a strong departmental structure, when we – when the university makes a policy, we assume departments stick to it. Now, one of the reasons why the Arts department were a little bit more hesitant at releasing – at not having FYBOE, was because umm their Chair of the faculty said, 'I don't trust all of my departments to operate the policy properly. And we discover this sometimes in these meetings.' Right? And it does seem certain policies get interpreted very, very differently in Arts to SEM and Social Sciences. And I think that's, that was her legitimate reason why she didn't – she wanted to keep to keep track of them. Now, actually, what that means is, there's an issue with generally making sure departments



	are following policy rather than there being a problem with FYBOEs specifically. So we have to think about how we monitor application of, of, of policy. Umm so so, yes, you've picked up on something which is a weakness, I think, umm and often we find, we get a question coming up from a department and I say, well, why are you even asking that question? Because, that's violating our policy and we go back and find out what they've been doing for the last year and they haven't been doing it right. And so occasionally you find these things by accident. But, I think with a philosophy that – we've been having these teaching excellence group meetings, which is sort of like the teaching version of the REF meetings that departments have every, every year, we, we're starting to pick these out. We're finding these out by probing. So I, I think we're in a much, much better place now. We've been doing that for three years. But, yes, we devolve to departments to implement.
JR	So one thing I'm quite interested in, following on from that, is the extent to which umm the role of somebody in HQ's kind of position may differ depending on how hierarchical an organisation is and also how centralised it is. So I'd like to share my screen with you for a second, and hope that, hope that this works, technology being my friend. Hopefully you can see a little grid
AC/T	Yes I can see that
JR	The x axis there is, is how centralised an organisation would be and then the y axis being hierarchy.
AC/T	Yep.
JR	Acknowledging that this is essentially quite crude and no institution falls completely and utterly in every respect into one quadrant,
AC/T	Yeah
JR	There would be bits and pieces that don't quite follow the rules. Where, where would you broadly say that Tealborough fell within that diagram?
AC/T	That's easy. It's on the devolved side. And the values based side. So it's in that bottom left box based around shared mission and values. Umm COVID has moved us more over to a centralised way. But, so it's moving ov – it moved – so it's moved over a little bit. But it's, it's not really a hierarchical decision.
JR	Right
AC/T	At the University.
JR	Thank you, I'll stop sharing. That was straightforward! [both laugh] When you – if you think about that – very good, very definitely bottom left, could you take a minute to think about what factors may have influenced that

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	and sort of why, why Tealborough is where it is? So why it is not so hierarchal and why it is so devolved, is there anything particular?
AC/T	I think it must have started 40, 50 years ago [both laugh] when, when I wasn't there. Umm but ever since I've been there and I've been there 25 years now, we've always had very strong departmental autonomy.
JR	Right.
AC/T	The Faculty Chairs have never had significant power.
JR	Right.
AC/T	In recent years, they've, they've had more stuff thrown at them. So I'm not talking about the faculty education chairs, I'm talking about the faculty chair.
JR	Yeah
AC/T	They've had more responsibilities over the last decade or so. So they're starting to get more power. But. It's... the faculties have never really been important in terms of power structures, it's really been departments, and that has helped in as far as departments have been able to find opportunities and run with them quickly.
JR	Mmhm
AC/T	But what it does cause, is when they all decide to find an opportunity for a, an I.T. system to do something which is all different and don't talk to each other. And that's where we suffer. And that's why Tealborough Business School is a vision to itself and it won't use any of the central university systems. So we can't even get our mitigating circumstances systems talking, because they won't use the university's one that every other department has signed up to. And in fact, when I was pushing it through, they signed up to it. And then right at the last minute, they decided, no, we're gonna stick with what we've got. Umm and that's the problem, that that sort of thing arises. But the main opportunities – it allows departments to think of things and run with things and move in directions without having to effectively umm go through a hier- a more hierarchal part of the university. I think the issues are, though, at what point do they need to run with things and test them out higher up? To make sure they're not va-, that they're not, you know, invalidating something, or at what level are they OK to make changes? So, I mean, for example, at the aspect of the module. There's certain things which departments are allowed to change without anyone knowing about. I mean, they record it in the system and the system can be interrogated, and whatever. And EPQ would be umm effectively emailed when, if a change had been made. So there'd be the possibility to interrogate it. But they're allowed to do certain things and are not allowed to do other things. And it's quite, the demarcation is now quite clear.
JR	So from the way you're describing it, this is about, it's about history and ethos,

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	rather than particularly say size, or – because clearly 50 years ago, Tealborough was nothing like the size it is now.
AC/T	Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Size. I mean, even in 25 years, it's increased significantly. It's, it's nothing to do with size, I'm pretty sure. It's to do with ethos.
JR 29.59	Yeah. And so, I might be able to guess the answer to this from the conversation we've already had. But, but what, what implications does that fact have for err how quality is managed at the university and the job that HQ has to do?
AC/T	It makes it very, very difficult. Umm I mean, another example would be joint degrees. I remember six years ago I was – I was quite close to the then Students' Union President and he was a joint degree student. And the things he told me, you know, I put in mitigation to both departments and they gave me two different outcomes. [both laugh] And umm, you know, their deadline policy and penalties are different to this department's.
JR	Yeah.
AC/T	So, of course, it causes actually problems at developing joint degrees and governance of joint degrees. And there's also an issue and that is actually finance and how departmental finances is determined, which also makes departments more introspective. Umm the money departments get is so tied up to, with how many FTEs they have, it sometimes doesn't make joint degrees attractive to them. Umm and who gets the m-, who gets the money for the administrative part? Well, actually, you know, you don't want one department doing all the admin, because – anyway, so it, it causes her great problems in that respect. And I do think umm that's one of our biggest problems. And I was basically challenged to try and solve that three years ago, and to be frank I've not got anywhere near it, because I think you need a complete root and branch change of the way that the university operates, in terms of finance at least. And that's nowhere near coming, so...
JR	And that's probably quite a significant change to try and bring about, I suspect.
AC/T	Yeah.
JR	So I have a true or false question. Umm but obviously I'll ask you to explain your answer as well as, as well as give it. In the quality management realm, HQ is the ruler.
AC/T	Can you define what quality management is?
JR	Validation, periodic review, external examining, umm all those – umm NSS –all those processes about how you umm assure the standards of awards and maintain quality.
AC/T	Yep. No. I would say that the Pro Vice Chancellor Education is. And he then

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	delegates that to me and the other Pro Vice Chancellor. But, nothing would be decided without HQ's input. And often, she is more knowledgeable, so we defer.
JR	No that's great, thank you. If HQ was to leave, do you think a replacement would do the job very differently to her?
AC/T	Oh, well, I'm trying to remember – she's only been in post for a while, and I'm trying to remember who we had beforehand. Oh, yes, I can remember. Umm. It's made harder because I used to be in her office, her open plan office, probably once a day, and I haven't been for nine months. And when I used to go in, she'd never be there, she'd always be in a meeting somewhere else, you know. Umm I think she's very different, but I think that's her personality and her way of management, managing her team. And she's also probably more knowledgeable externally from, from what we've had in the past. Just to ask the question about what would happen if she left, I'd have to strangle you because it just – there's no way, there's no way that we'd let her leave.
JR	Well, that's, that's fair enough. Umm but, to that extent – I mean, do you think – so there's one thing obviously about somebody's personality. No-one would come in and do an identical job to their predecessor because people will [unclear]
AC/T	Yeah
JR	Do you think a err a replacement or an alternative person might try and umm change some of the processes or just sort of operate very differently, or do you think actually this is fairly well set at Tealborough and fairly –
AC/T	Yeah.
JR	One knows how it works and you haven't got an awful lot of scope to do much with that.
AC/T	Yeah. There is an aspect of her role which is hidden from me, which is the management, managing of her team.
JR	Sure.
AC/T	And I couldn't comment on that. Managing interactions with academic departments, myself and others in that area, I think nothing changed really when she came, and probably nothing would change if she went. Apart from, umm I think she's more, because she's more approachable and friendly, umm we, we tend to have more meetings. And I know that's not something that – that's not good, that's not good business, that you do things on the basis of how well you get on with someone, but I mean, I think we have had more meetings now with her, with her team and with the wider academic team than we had previously. I don't know whether that's her influence or not, actually. I just know it's happened.
JR	So we've talked quite a bit about the quality management and sort of what HQ does in relation how that interfaces with you, how it interfaces with the

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	academic departments and so forth. Would you say that she gets involved in many activities which fall outside of those formal responsibilities?
AC/T 36.13	She seems to do everything. She's one of those people that I think never says no. So, I mean, I got an e-mail from her at two o'clock in the morning, last night. Umm obviously, I wasn't awake to read it, but... I'm just trying to think. [pause] I think [lost text], to get involved outside of the levels of responsibilities that she's been given, actually. I mean, we, we have Education Executive meetings three times a week. Umm used to be once a week, but now it's three times, used to be five times a week in March. And what we talk about there is really quite broad, and she's always got an input or something to say or some experience but she – I don't think she would do anything off her own bat if it was outside her remit, unless she was asked in one of those meetings, because I think she's got so much to do.
JR	Fair enough. And you've, you've you touched on this already, but umm how would you describe her relationship way with you and other senior academics within the institution who have some sort of quality responsibility?
AC/T	Yeah. I think there's lots and lots of mutual respect, actually. I mean, the fact that I would defer to her, and I think that she would defer to me. I mean, there's no egos there. And, and she's approachable and she seems to – she's always delivered, put it that way. So, I mean, everyone trusts her explicitly. Umm hopefully, she trusts us. It's always been like that. There's no backstabbing, there's no trying to get, you know, one over on somebody else. There's no politics apart from when we jointly polit – politicise our decisions against, against the Faculty of Arts, for example. But you know, in terms of that level, I don't think – I think it's... I can't remember what your question was now, I've gone off on a tangent.
JR	No, well it was about her relationship with you and your peers, and I think you, you have answered that.
AC/T	Yeah. OK.
JR	And her relationship with people like Chris and, and other very senior staff of the institution, is that kind of the same?
AC/T	Chris Twine or Chris Hughes?
JR	I meant Chris Twine, so her line manager, yeah.
AC/T	Yeah. No, no. I would expect, I would expect exactly the same. I mean, she's also Secretary to Senate, so she has to, on a day-to-day basis, deal with the Vice-Chancellor as well. So I think, I think, I haven't seen anything for me to think otherwise, put it that way.
JR	Yeah. Thank you. I appreciate that obviously that's slightly asking you to speculate.

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	AC thank you. The only other question I have for you is whether there is anything else that we haven't talked that either that you think might be important or that you sort of expected us to, and I haven't asked about.
AC/T	Probably not. Probably not. Yeah.
JR	Then can I thank you very, very much. I really appreciate your time. Also thanks for just a really interesting conversation, which is one of the nice things about doing this, because I get to talk to interesting people and find out interesting things. So thank you.
AC/T	No problem. Okay? Thanks a lot then, have a good weekend.
JR	Thank you. Cheers, bye.

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