

SUMS Collaborative Study on horizon scanning

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey on horizon scanning. It is estimated that it will take around 30 minutes to complete. If you wish to leave further feedback on this activity other than is collected through the question set, please use the free text area on the last page.

The study is made up of two phases. The first is this widely distributed questionnaire, which seeks to understand the breadth of activity, formal or informal, in institutions across the UK HE Sector. The second phase will consist of in-depth interviews on specific aspects of the activity with organisations that show good practice from both inside and outside the HE sector.

Please indicate when requested whether you would be happy to participate in phase two.

Data analysis and sharing: Information from the first phase of the study will be analysed, coded and conclusions will be drawn. Qualitative information from phase two will be used to create case studies on named institutions. A report on the study will be shared with those institutions who took part. Data from the study will be retained and destroyed in accordance with our records retention schedule: working files will be retained for three years, after which they will be deleted. The report will be retained in perpetuity.

This first section asks for information about you and your role.

A. Contextual Information

Name:	
Contact Email:	
University:	
Job Title:	
Please tell us a little bit about your role and what your broad interests are at the University:	
Would you be willing to participate in phase two?	Yes/No
I am happy for my return to be retained a maximum of three years as per SUMS records retention schedule.	Yes/No

Multiple perspectives within institutions

This questionnaire seeks to understand horizon scanning at different levels in universities. We are aware that universities use horizon scanning at a corporate, pan-University level to inform long-term decision making such as institutional strategy development. We are also aware that horizon scanning can be done at a thematic or functional level. This questionnaire should enable you to complete either a corporate return for the University as a whole or one for your particular thematic or functional area.

We expect people in roles such as Heads of Planning or Policy to complete the corporate return and other roles such as leaders in student recruitment, market research, research, teaching and learning or internationalisation to complete it from a thematic or functional basis.

1. From which context does your perspective emerge?

Please select one response:

- A. Corporate (pan-University)
- B. Academic unit (faculty, School, department etc.)
- C. Future student (recruitment, teaching & learning)
- D. Research (Innovation & Enterprise)
- E. Future workforce (Human resources)
- F. Future campus (digital and/or physical infrastructure)
- G. Internationalisation
- H. Finance
- I. Other – please specify

Please select the type of return you are making. If you are a Head of Planning or Policy and you are completing the survey in respect of a whole University approach, please select “Corporate”. If you are completing for a particular function or theme, please select that. If yours is not listed, please select ‘Other’ and name that function or theme in the box provided. These responses are not hard and fast, more an indication of your perspective.

- A. *Corporate refers to any pan-University activity collating information across the breadth of thematic and functional areas or looking very broadly at external policy to inform whole University planning. This could also include pan-University governance activity and high-level risk management.*
- B. *Academic unit refers to a faculty, School or department perspective which covers many of the following themes but focuses on a specific subject portfolio e.g. health sciences or humanities.*
- C. *Future students refers to student recruitment, new course development, models of course delivery, models of pedagogy and the student/graduate of the future and so forth.*
- D. *Research is all about the generation and use of knowledge and includes enterprise and innovation, etc. It applies to new areas of activity as well as new models of delivery. It applies to the commercialisation of intellectual property.*
- E. *Future workforce refers to the staff, working practices and culture of the University.*
- F. *Future campus refers to the physical and digital infrastructure. It also applies to commercial (non-academic) service delivery where this impacts on the physical or digital infrastructure.*
- G. *Internationalisation is a cross-cutting theme. Pick this if you have a global perspective at your institution that is not specific to other functions such as students or research.*
- H. *Finance refers to specific activities undertaken by the finance unit to look at future funding and business models.*

If you have two particular perspectives which are similar in process and output, select other and indicate both. If you have two perspectives which are different in process and output and wish to record both, please complete the survey twice, once for each perspective.

What is horizon scanning in this context?

Horizon scanning is one of several tools organisations can use to help build resilience and prepare for future risks. These include forecasting, driver mapping, trend analysis, scenario planning and stress testing. The survey will ask you which of these other tools you use to inform long-term decision making in the last section.

Here we are focusing on horizon scanning. The Government Futures Toolkit defines it as:

“Horizon scanning is the process of looking for early warning signs of change in the policy and strategy environment”.

2. If different from the above, what is your interpretation of horizon scanning?

If you have a formal definition of horizon scanning please copy and paste it here. If you have an informal interpretation, please add it here. Please preface with formal or informal as appropriate. If your definition or interpretation of horizon scanning is as above, please leave blank.

3. How far into the future do you look?

Please select one response:

- A. 1-2 years
- B. 3-5 years
- C. 5-10 years
- D. 10-20 years
- E. Other – please specify

Information: what is the furthest point in the future you are considering? You may be scanning multiple horizons; these are covered in the next question. Here, we’re interested in how far out you look.

4. Do you use multiple time horizons?

Please select one response

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Unsure

If so, what are they and what processes do they inform?

Horizon	Time frame	What are these horizons used for?
1		
2		
3		

The Government Futures Toolkit defines three horizons (short, medium and long term). Short-term horizons might be 1-2 years and be used to inform course development, medium term horizons might 3-5 years and might inform staff recruitment for specialist areas or entirely new courses, long term horizons might be 8-10 years and might inform estates development plans for around new models of pedagogy.

Inputs

This section is about the sources of data and the skills and experience that act as inputs to the process of horizon scanning.

5. Which sources do you gather data from?

Examples could include bulletins from sector or professional bodies or thinktanks (HEPI, WonkHE, SMF), demographic data, local, national and international government policy, government departments areas of research, future skills analysis etc. You may include specific people or groups of people as sources, for example, you may canvas local government representatives, use networks of business contacts or use University council members as contributors.

6. Do you have specific roles within your organisation or organisation unit for which job titles or job descriptions specifically reference horizon scanning?

Please select one response.

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Unsure

If yes, please indicate relevant job titles, their units and if available, required knowledge, skills or expertise:

You may have specific members of staff in your unit who have this kind of activity as part of their job description. For example, commercial organisations have Insight Directors who “will relentlessly identify and evaluate key strategic trends, opportunities & risks ... and frame the found opportunities, including organic and inorganic growth options, into specific initiatives and obtain agreement”. If you are completing a corporate return, include people from across the University, if you are completing a thematic return, only include people influencing that theme or function.

The process of horizon scanning

This section deals with how you go about horizon scanning: when you do it, what steps make up the process and who is responsible, and how you collate the information that is generated.

7. When do you conduct horizon scanning?

Please select one or more responses

- A. On an on-going basis
- B. Once a year in preparation for the planning round
- C. On a cyclical basis outside the planning round
- D. On a cyclical basis as part of the strategic planning process
- E. On an "as-needed" basis in response to significant external change
- F. On an "as-needed" basis in response to significant internal change
- G. Other – please use the box below to add more information

You may consistently collate data, or you may start a horizon scanning project specifically to inform a new strategic plan. You may have an informal process happening all the time but institute a formal process on a cyclical basis. Add more information to the expansion box if required.

8. Do you have a formal process for horizon scanning?

Please choose one response

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Unsure

Whether your process is formal or emergent, please share the broad steps in the process:

These steps might be identifying people to involve, identifying sources to use, collating data and perspectives, synthesising information and identifying themes, evaluating relevance and importance, writing and communicating outputs and acting on outputs/decision making.

9. How do you collate data and information emerging from horizon scanning?

This is a system and data-oriented question. Do you use templates in particular applications such as Excel or Word to collate data? Do you use a specific system such as FutureScaper to map findings? Do you store findings on a shared drive?

The outputs and outcomes of horizon scanning

This section deals with the outputs or findings from horizon scanning. Who is the information shared with, how is it communicated and so forth; what impact do those findings have on the organisation?

10. Who receives the outputs of horizon scanning?

Do particular governance committees receive the findings? Is information shared across particular executive groups? Is the information shared with the University board or council? Is the information just shared within the function or a small group of people leading the theme?

11. In what form are these outputs communicated?

Is the information contained in briefing papers or committee papers? Is the information made available through internal websites or shared areas? For functional or thematic returns does the information cross organisational siloes?

12. What are the outcomes of horizon scanning? How are the outputs used?

What impact does the activity have? How is the information used? What decisions does it influence? What might you expect to change as a result of the activity? Is the information used as an input to risk management processes?

13. What are the demonstrated or expected benefits from this activity?

Please provide examples of the sort of benefits that you have gained from horizon scanning. Examples might include improved risk management and risk mitigation, improved decision making and/or identification of opportunities for expansion of activity. Benefits could be tangible or intangible.

Your reflections on horizon scanning

This section asks about your reflections on successful and unsuccessful experiences in horizon scanning.

14. What are your top three critical success factors for horizon scanning?

- A.
- B.
- C.

For example: getting the right people involved at the beginning, having a clear process, making sure the right people receive the findings, doing it at the right time.

15. When things haven't gone well, what do you think the underlying reasons were?

For example: lack of engagement, appeared to be a finance-driven exercise, focussed only on threats and not on opportunities, didn't identify anything new

16. How do you see horizon scanning developing in the future?

Are there changes in the process of horizon scanning? Changes to roles and responsibilities? Might you apply horizon scanning to other areas?

17. What is your perception of your level of maturity in horizon scanning?

Please choose one response

- Highly developed
- Developed
- Developing
- Least developed

SUMS Consulting will be using this study to generate a maturity model for horizon scanning, which will be provided to all participants in the report. Your reflections here are indicative: you will be able to use the maturity model in the report to more accurately self-assess and identify potential improvements based on that self-assessment.

Alternatives to horizon scanning

As per the initial question on your interpretation, horizon scanning is one of a number of tools that universities can use to inform long-term decision making.

18. Which other tools do you use to inform long term decision making?

Tool	Used?
Forecasting	Yes/No/Unsure
Driver mapping	Yes/No/Unsure
Trend analysis	Yes/No/Unsure
Scenario planning	Yes/No/Unsure
Stress testing	Yes/No/Unsure
7 questions	Yes/No/Unsure
Issues papers	Yes/No/Unsure
Delphi	Yes/No/Unsure

To add additional tools, please use the blank rows.

Definitions of additional tools

Forecasting - using qualitative and quantitative techniques, including: historical data and statistics; individual and collective judgement; and environmental monitoring, to predict the future

Driver mapping - using an analytical tool such as STEEPLE (societal, technological, economic, environmental, political, legal, ethical) or PESTLE (political, economic, societal, technological and legal) to consider a wide range of potential sources of future risk

Trend analysis - using mathematical techniques on historical data to predict potential trends

Scenario planning - looking at possible future states on the basis of different starting states

Stress testing - testing how the organisation copes in the face of a range of potential situations

7 questions - an interview technique for gathering the strategic insights of a range of internal and external stakeholders

Issues papers - presenting quotes from the 7 questions interviews to illustrate the strategic issues and choices around the policy and strategy agenda

Delphi – a consultation process used to gather opinion from a wide group of subject experts about the future and to prioritise the issues of strategic importance

More information on the tools named above can be found in two documents:

1. The UK Government Futures Toolkit document:
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/futures-toolkit-for-policy-makers-and-analysts>)
2. The Institute of Risk Management document “Horizon Scanning: A Practitioner’s Guide”:
https://www.theirm.org/media/4047721/Horizon-scanning_final2.pdf

If you use other tools, please provide information below:

Any additional comments

To leave any other comments relating to horizon scanning, please use this box:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.