Benchmarks at Brunel
EUNIS, Jisc and others

Zürich, 27 November 2018

Benchmarking at Brunel

- **BBWA**

- **UCISA**

- **Government agencies**

- **National Student Survey**

- **Jisc X-ray**

- **BencHEIT**

Benchmarking at Brunel
A brief history — UCISA

- **UCISA *ad hoc* polls**
  Group e-mail with replies collated by the requester
  Single subject — so pot luck whether it is relevant

- **UCISA formal surveys**
  Still tend to be at niche level (though bigger niches)
  Relevance is there, but true comparability limited

- **Why is this limitation here?**
  All the work is done 'pro bono' within the sector
  There is always a tinge of very British embarrassment about asking

Benchmarking at Brunel
A brief history — Government

- **HEFCE, HESA, etc.**
  Official statistical returns on an annual basis
  Outcomes decide funding for institution
  Data vulnerable to 'guided light-scattering' (bias?)

- **Teaching Quality Assessments**
  Reports indicate where improvements might be made
  Prestige depended on results, so no displays of dirty linen

- **UCAS**
  Data from UCAS are used in admissions policy
  For many years, a zero-sum game
  Now, competitive advantage means little disclosure

Benchmarking at Brunel
A brief history — National Student Survey

The elephant in the room since its first appearance in 2005.

Like Kipling's elephant, the crocodiles and serpents go after it, but its sheer bulk means that it can carry on regardless, and nobody questions its existence.

Again, like an elephant, nobody can really describe what it is, but they know it when they see it.

Benchmarking at Brunel
A brief history — National Student Survey

A very public benchmarking of student experience

❖ **Highly leptokurtic**
   Sneeze and you drop 50 places

❖ **Population is final-year students**
   who have nothing to gain or lose

❖ **Only one question on ICT**
   Little or no concrete information

❖ **A mantra, like "Hillary's e-mails"**
   You end up throwing fish to seals

Benchmarking at Brunel
A brief history — Jisc X-ray

Deep-dive analysis of time, effort and money

❖ **A paid-for service with professional auditors, but worth every €0.01 (from 30 March 2019, worth every groat)**

❖ **Every ICT transaction, all ICT staff effort is weighed and sifted**

❖ **Spectacular data origami brings out hidden information**

❖ **The British love of opacity makes per-aspect comparison challenging**

Benchmarking at Brunel
A brief history — BencHEIT

First time out on the ice was in 2018

- ❖ **Took a little time to find our feet**

- ❖ **Where raw data were difficult to find, we had two options:**

  - ❖ **guess**
  - ❖ **triangulate from our Jisc X-ray data as part of the intelligence-gathering**

- ❖ **Good flexible working ability with the multi-institution data**

- ❖ **Easy to put the results to practical use**

Benchmarking at Brunel
How have we used Jisc X-ray?

Cost reduction

- ❖ **Identified supplier population growth: procurement rules**

- ❖ **Uncovered spending without adequate control: audit compliance**

Overlap between central and devolved IT effort

- ❖ **Redundancy or resilience?**

- ❖ **Multiple solutions — poor financial sense; poor business continuity**

Benchmarking at Brunel
How have we used BencHEIT?

Arguments for WiFi investment
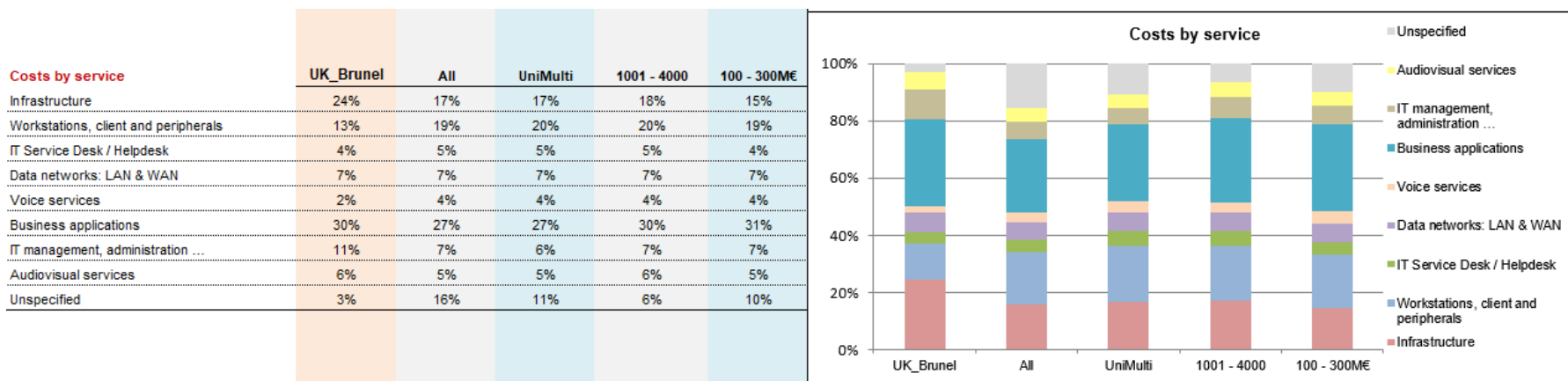*Comparators chosen to match Brunel's desktop/mobile split*

❖ **Are we already ahead of our comparators? [No]**

❖ **What spend would bring us to the comparators' average?**

Service-desk staff: expand team or work harder?
Compare against overall mean, and against standard comparators

❖ **How does our spend/complement compare to others?**

❖ **How does our work-rate compare to others?**

EUNIS benchmarking (2017)

Costs by service	UK_Brunel	All	UniMulti	1001 - 4000	100 - 300M€
Infrastructure	24%	17%	17%	18%	15%
Workstations, client and peripherals	13%	19%	20%	20%	19%
IT Service Desk / Helpdesk	4%	5%	5%	5%	4%
Data networks: LAN & WAN	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%
Voice services	2%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Business applications	30%	27%	27%	30%	31%
IT management, administration …	11%	7%	6%	7%	7%
Audiovisual services	6%	5%	5%	6%	5%
Unspecified	3%	16%	11%	6%	10%

Brunel spends 4% of its ICT budget on Service Desk: apart from the biggest universities, this is less than the average of 5%. Because of rounding, we don't know whether this is 4.4% against 4.6% (insignificant) or 3.6% against 5.4% (more interesting), or some point in between.

The key difference between Brunel and the other (59) universities is its infrastructure cost percentage: the infrastructure/service-desk cost ratio here is 6:1, while it is 3.6:1 for our same-size counterparts.

EUNIS benchmarking (2017)

Tickets	UK_Brunel	UK_NTU	FI_Aalto	NL_TUe	NO_NTNU
Number of tickets opened	20,795	77,165	33,747	43,240	169,220
Number of IT personnel handling tickets	6	9	13	61	220
Tickets / Handling person	3,466	8,574	2,596	709	769
Ticktets / Staff FTE	11	23	9	14	24

Comparators are selected to match a mix of profile, size and name-recognition within Brunel. These are

- **Nottingham Trent University**
- **Aalto University (Finland)**
- **NTNU Trondheim (Norway)**
- **TU Eindhoven (Netherlands)**
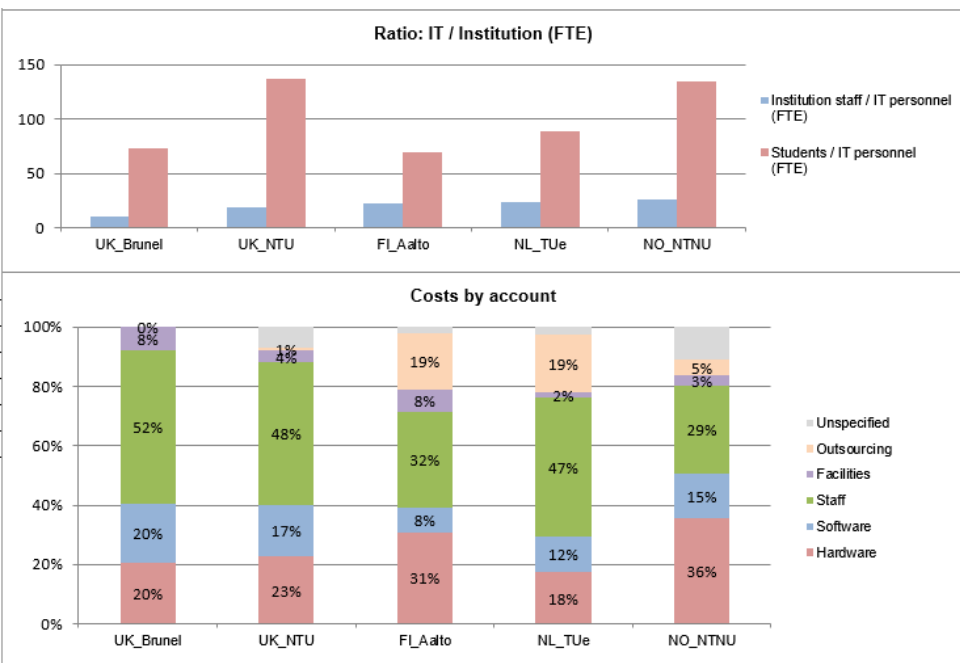
For every 8 tickets processed by a Brunel service-desk person, other universities' staff process 9.

Brunel service-desk staff handle 40% of the tickets per working day each than at Nottingham Trent.

At Brunel, each IT staff member serves 11 staff and 72 students; only Aalto has a comparable student ratio (others are higher), and all have higher staff ratios.

Staff costs account for a higher percentage at Brunel than any of our comparators

Benchmarking at Brunel
Benchmarking X-ray and BencHEIT

X-ray

❖ **Transaction-level non-pay spend and post-level pay spend captured: gravitate here for financial strategy, particularly within UK market**

❖ **Deeper analysis of central *v* devolved activity**

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❖ **Broader spread of institutions opens us to wider consideration of service strategy, and without insularity**

❖ **Ability to choose and change comparators (and data transparency) helps focus decisions specific to an aspect of service**

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A bridge to the future?

Unbiased comparators

❖ **We can always guess our comparators, but statistical analyses undertaken without human selection can tell us more**

❖ **Cluster analyses based on**

    ❖ **cost profiles**

    ❖ **service profiles**

    ❖ **university profiles**

❖ **HEFCE have explored this with other data sets**

BencHEIT
A bridge to the future?

More comparators

❖ **How do we extend the reach of the operation?**

❖ **We need more contributing institutions to**

    ❖ **increase reliability**

    ❖ **give better comparator matching opportunities**

    ❖ **achieve a better spread of nationalities**

BencHEIT
A bridge to the future?

Report layout fine-tuning

❖ **Tables and accompanying graphs need to be better aligned, and better separated from others**

    ❖ **have no fear of using more Excel tabs**

    ❖ **increase font size**

    ❖ **make it easier to excerpt into local presentations**

BencHEIT
A bridge to the future?

BencHEIT and national exercises

❖ **Work with national benchmarkers to make clear the differences**

   ❖ **look at re-use of data**

   ❖ **be honest about relative strengths**

   ❖ **don't try to sell anyone Brooklyn Bridge**

   ❖ **… nor Breukelen Bridge (that's the one on the right)**

Brunel University London
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