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DIGITAL FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION PROGRAM

IFC International Finance Corporation
WORLD BANK GROUP

2025/26 National Digital Maturity Benchmarking Report

A national overview of digital maturity benchmarking results, institutional readiness, and strategic priorities to support digital transformation across South African higher education institutions

Conducted in Partnership with the

Council on Higher Education

South Africa

CHE

Foreword

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, is pleased to partner with the Council on Higher Education (CHE) in advancing a shared vision for a digitally enabled, resilient, and future-ready higher education system in South Africa.

Globally, digital technologies are redefining the landscape of higher education, reshaping pedagogical methodologies, research capabilities, stakeholder engagement, and administrative operations. Concurrently, the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence and data-driven decision-making presents unprecedented developmental opportunities, while requiring institutions to continuously adapt and strengthen their foundational capabilities. Within this dynamic global context, digital transformation is increasingly recognized not merely as a technological intervention, but as a strategic priority that underpins institutional effectiveness, innovation, and long-term systemic sustainability.

This report represents the culmination of a landmark collaboration between IFC and the CHE. Through the participation of 46 public and private higher education institutions, this diagnostic represents the largest national deployment of IFC's Digital Maturity Benchmark framework to date. This exercise establishes a robust, empirical evidence base regarding the current state of digital transformation across South Africa's higher education sector, reflecting a strong commitment to diagnosing progress and planning for the future.

A defining feature of this initiative is its developmental orientation. The primary objective is not to evaluate institutions against a rigid compliance standard, but rather to equip sector stakeholders with actionable, data-driven insights that can inform strategic decision-making, facilitate peer-to-peer learning, and support continuous improvement. By fostering a shared understanding of systemic strengths, challenges, and emerging opportunities, this initiative contributes to a more coordinated, inclusive, and forward-looking approach to digital transformation across the sector.

The CHE provides strategic leadership in convening diverse institutions from across the country for this landmark diagnostic. IFC remains committed to supporting the CHE and the broader higher education community as they translate these insights into action, ensuring that South Africa's higher education system continues to foster competitive, inclusive, and sustainable development in an increasingly digitalized global economy.

DISCLAIMER

The findings, interpretations and views expressed in this report arise from the study and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council on Higher Education, the International Finance Corporation or the World Bank Group.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AI: Artificial Intelligence

BPM: Business Process Management

CHE: Council on Higher Education

CRM: Customer Relationship Management

DHET: Department of Higher Education and Training

DMB: Digital Maturity Benchmarking

GER: Gross Enrolment Ratio

HEPS: Higher Education Practice Standards

HEI: Higher Education Institution

IFC: International Finance Corporation

LMS: Learning Management System

ROI: Return on Investments

SET: Science, Engineering, and Technology

SIS: Student Information System

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1. Executive Summary

Higher education systems worldwide are undergoing rapid digital transformation. Institutions are increasingly expected to deliver high-quality, flexible, and accessible learning experiences while operating more efficiently, supporting student success, and responding to changing labour market demands. Digital technologies and artificial intelligence have become important enablers of these objectives, helping institutions improve teaching and learning, identify students at risk of dropping out, streamline administrative services, strengthen decision-making, and expand access to education with equity. Across many advanced higher education systems, digital transformation is no longer viewed simply as a technology agenda, but as a strategic priority linked to institutional competitiveness, student outcomes, and long-term sustainability.

At the same time, a growing global digital divide risks widening the gap between institutions that can effectively leverage digital technologies and those that cannot. Many higher education institutions, particularly in emerging markets, continue to face challenges related to infrastructure, financial resources, workforce capabilities, technology infrastructure, and the capacity to manage transformation effectively. Addressing these constraints requires more than technology investments alone. It requires clear strategic direction, institutional capacity, and a coordinated approach to digital transformation.

South Africa faces many of these same challenges and opportunities. The country's higher education system serves approximately 2.2 million post-secondary students in a context where improving access, equity, graduate outcomes, and institutional effectiveness remain important national priorities. Digital transformation has the potential to help institutions respond to these challenges by improving student support, expanding learning opportunities, strengthening links to employment, enhancing service delivery, and enabling more evidence-based decision-making. However, the sector must simultaneously ensure that technological advancement does not widen existing disparities between institutions with different levels of resources and capacity.

Purpose of the Benchmarking

To establish a national baseline of digital maturity and identify opportunities for improvement, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group (WBG) and the South Africa Council on Higher Education (CHE) conducted a Digital Maturity Benchmarking (DMB) assessment across 46 public and private higher education institutions. The assessment was designed to identify strengths, gaps, and priorities that can help institutions and policymakers advance digital transformation in a way that

improves student outcomes, operational performance, resilience, and institutional competitiveness.

Key Findings

The benchmarking found that South African higher education institutions have established important foundations for digital transformation, achieving an average digital maturity score of 2.3 out of 4 and reaching an emerging level of maturity. The results suggest that digital technologies are widely used in teaching and learning, and many institutions have already invested in core digital infrastructure. However, progress remains uneven and substantial gaps persist in translating technology investments into measurable institutional outcomes.

The strongest institutions are not necessarily those with the newest technologies. Rather, they are institutions that combine strategic leadership, clear governance, workforce capabilities, and connected digital systems. The assessment found that institutions with a documented digital strategy and governance arrangements consistently perform better across multiple areas of institutional activity. Similarly, institutions with more integrated systems are far more likely to automate processes and use data to inform decision-making.

The assessment also highlights an important implementation gap. While many institutions have made progress in adopting digital tools for teaching and learning, considerably fewer have transformed the underlying administrative and student-service processes that shape day-to-day institutional performance. Student lifecycle management, process automation, systems integration, digital career services and alumni engagement, and workforce development remain areas requiring further attention across much of the sector.

Priority Actions for the Sector

The benchmarking findings suggest that South Africa has established many of the foundational elements required for digital transformation. However, translating these foundations into meaningful institutional outcomes will require a coordinated effort across the sector. Based on the assessment findings, seven priority actions emerged for the sector.

1. **Strengthen digital strategy and governance.** Digital transformation should be treated as an institutional priority rather than a technology initiative. Institutions that combine clear strategic direction, leadership accountability, and formal governance arrangements consistently achieve stronger outcomes across multiple areas of institutional performance. Stronger governance can help institutions align investments with institutional priorities, manage risks, and translate digital initiatives into measurable improvements.

2. **Develop faculty and staff digital and AI skills.** Technology alone does not improve educational outcomes. Institutions need faculty, administrators, and leaders who can effectively use digital tools, data, and AI to support teaching, learning, decision-making, and service delivery. A sector-wide focus on capability development will help ensure that technology investments translate into improved educational practices and operational performance.
3. **Improve data environments and systems interoperability.** Many institutions continue to operate with fragmented systems and disconnected data. Greater integration between core platforms can improve information flows, enable more evidence-based decision-making, reduce duplication of effort, and create the foundation for analytics, automation, and student-success initiatives.
4. **Advance digitally enabled student lifecycle management.** Students increasingly expect seamless digital experiences from recruitment and admissions through graduation and alumni engagement. Strengthening student lifecycle management can help institutions improve service quality, deliver more timely support, identify students at risk earlier, and create more personalized and responsive student experiences.
5. **Enhance cybersecurity preparedness and resilience.** As institutions become more digitally connected, cyber risk becomes a growing concern. Strengthening cybersecurity capabilities will help protect institutional operations, safeguard student and staff data, maintain trust, and ensure continuity of services in an increasingly digital environment.
6. **Promote digital accessibility and effective use of learning technologies.** The next stage of digital transformation should focus not only on access to learning platforms but also on how effectively they support learning, inclusion, and student success. Accessible digital environments can help widen participation, support diverse learner needs, and improve the overall quality of teaching and learning.
7. **Support smaller institutions through shared capacity and collaboration.** Smaller institutions often face greater challenges in accessing specialised expertise, enterprise systems, and digital resources. Shared services, collaborative procurement, communities of practice, and targeted technical assistance can help reduce these barriers while allowing institutions to pursue approaches that reflect their unique missions and contexts.

Together, these priorities provide a practical roadmap for moving from technology adoption toward institution-wide transformation. Ultimately, digital transformation should be measured by the outcomes it enables. South Africa has established many of the foundations required for digital transformation. The opportunity now is to convert those foundations into measurable improvements in educational quality, student outcomes, and institutional effectiveness.

2. Introduction

In our rapidly evolving higher education landscape, an institution's digital maturity is recognized as a vital pillar of student success, institutional resilience, pedagogical quality, and operational efficiency. However, educational institutions are confronted with practical limitations on infrastructure, resources, and institutional capacity which can deepen the divides between institutions able to leverage digital technologies efficiently and those that will continue to rely on largely manual processes. Over time this gap risks creating a dual-standard educational environment, entrenching differences between institutions and negatively affecting equity and student outcomes across the higher education sector. Addressing this digital divide is critical to ensuring that technological advancement does not leave some institutions and student populations behind.

Yet technological evolution also presents practical opportunities. When leveraged through unified frameworks, digital technology can enable institutions to enhance student success by expanding access to academic and career resources, improving academic outcomes by introducing adaptive learning platforms and identifying at-risk students for targeted support, and streamlining the student experience to improve satisfaction and engagement. It can also open up opportunities for administrative efficiencies, improve cost control, and increase accountability through streamlined reporting.

Fostering a digitally mature higher education ecosystem is important for South Africa, where the post-secondary education system currently serves 2.2 million students.[1] While the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for public and private post-secondary institutions reached 23.5% [2] in 2023, challenges related to access, equity and labour-market entry remain relevant in the South African context. The sector is concurrently navigating trends driven by rapid technological evolution, which risks exacerbating pre-existing structural challenges within post-secondary education and between institutions. Many challenges were intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic and are likely to be further amplified by the rapid adoption of artificial intelligence.

To help address these risks and support balanced and equitable sectoral growth, South Africa's Council for Higher Education and the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group deployed IFC's **Digital Maturity Benchmarking (DMB) diagnostic** to 46 participating higher education institutions in order to:

[1] Source: Post-school Education and Training Monitor, April 2024, Department of Higher Education and Training

[2] World Bank Group 360 Data, 2023

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- Provide an evidence-based assessment of institutional digital readiness;
- Identify critical bottlenecks; and
- Equip institutions with actionable recommendations to support their strategic planning.

Concurrently, the diagnostic generates aggregated, sector-wide insights to support the advancement of the higher education sector, providing policymakers and regulatory bodies with a baseline of empirical data.

The scope of this landmark exercise in South Africa encompasses a sample of 46 institutions, comprising a cohort of public and private higher education institutions of varying sizes across the country. By analyzing the enabling institutional infrastructure and capacity for digital transformation, this report presents a diagnostic overview of the sector's current digital maturity. Specifically, this report examines the state of institutional digital readiness and suggests policy responses to support the ongoing development of the sector.

3. Methodology

The Digital Maturity Benchmarking (DMB) is designed to provide an evidence-based assessment of institutional digital readiness, by assessing how effectively digital strategies, technologies, and capabilities are integrated into post-secondary education institutions' academic and administrative operations and by equipping institutions with actionable recommendations to support ongoing development.

At the institutional level, it provides participating institutions with insights into their digital strengths, areas for improvement, and opportunities for future development. At the sector level, the aggregated results offer a robust, empirical evidence base to inform national policy dialogue, support regulatory modernization, and guide strategic decision-making for higher education digital transformation in South Africa.

To achieve this, the benchmarking utilizes a structured assessment methodology that combines quantitative self-assessment, qualitative evidence reviews, a validation process, and tailored reporting. The process is executed in two primary phases:

1. **Institutional self-assessment (quantitative):** Participating institutions completed an online self-assessment questionnaire covering the five dimensions of the Digital Maturity Benchmarking (DMB). The assessment captures information on institutional practices, capabilities, and digital transformation initiatives across key areas of institutional activity. Responses were supported by documentation and evidence submitted along with the survey instrument.
2. **Validation session (qualitative):** Following submission of the assessment, the IFC DMB team reviewed preliminary results against the supporting evidence provided by institutions, relevant publicly available CHE quality assurance and institutional review information, and responses submitted through the Employability Benchmarking exercise conducted in parallel. The IFC team subsequently conducted validation sessions with participating institutions to review findings, clarify responses, discuss supporting evidence, and make any necessary amendments. These discussions were critical in ensuring consistency of interpretation and strengthening the reliability of the results.

The analysis informed individual institutional reports and this National Report. Each participating institution received a tailored benchmarking report summarizing its results, highlighting strengths and opportunities for further development, and providing recommendations to support its digital transformation journey. Institutional results were benchmarked against the national average of participating institutions, enabling institutions

to better understand their relative position within the broader South African higher education landscape.

3.1. Dimensions and Definitions

The DMB assessment is based on a proprietary framework developed by IFC to evaluate the digital maturity of higher education institutions, across five dimensions. Each dimension is defined as follows:

Strategy

The Strategy dimension measures how well an institution's digital strategy aligns with its broader institutional objectives and mission. Key assessment areas include the presence of a documented digital strategy, integration of digital goals into institutional planning cycles with measurable targets, identification of the transformation roadmap, and mechanisms for measuring the return on digital investments.

This dimension assesses whether artificial intelligence and emerging technologies are incorporated into strategic planning processes, ensuring that digital initiatives support long-term organisational goals. Financial management practices for digital investments are evaluated to determine the effectiveness and sustainability of resource allocation.

Institutions with mature Strategy practices demonstrate clear linkages between digital initiatives and institutional priorities, establish dedicated budgets for digital transformation, and regularly review strategic alignment to adapt to evolving technological landscapes and educational needs.

Operations

The Operations dimension assesses the extent to which both academic and administrative processes have been digitized and optimised to enhance efficiency and stakeholder experiences. This includes evaluating digital platforms for student services, enrolment management, financial operations, and human resources. Stakeholder relationship management systems are examined to determine how effectively institutions engage with prospects, students, faculty, staff, alumni, and external partners through digital channels. The dimension also evaluates technology-enabled services that support alumni engagement, career services, and lifelong relationships with graduates.

Strong operational digital maturity is characterized by seamless integration of digital tools across administrative functions, automated workflows that reduce manual processing, self-service capabilities for stakeholders, and data-driven decision-making processes that continuously improve operational effectiveness.

Technology

The Technology dimension evaluates an institution's IT infrastructure readiness to support current operations and future digital initiatives. Assessment focuses on network capacity, cloud computing adoption, system integration capabilities, and the scalability of technology platforms.

Data management practices are evaluated to determine how effectively institutions collect, store, analyse, and protect institutional data while ensuring compliance with privacy regulations. Security practices are assessed across multiple layers, including cybersecurity protocols, access controls, disaster recovery capabilities, and incident response procedures.

Mature Technology practices demonstrate robust and resilient infrastructure, effective data governance frameworks, secure digital environments, and scalable architectures capable of supporting future digital transformation needs.

Academics

The Academics dimension focuses on how institutions leverage digital technologies to improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning. This includes the use of student feedback mechanisms to inform continuous improvement, the maturity and functionality of learning management systems, and the extent to which digital tools support learner engagement, progress monitoring, accessibility, and data-informed decision-making.

The dimension further examines institutional readiness for the adoption of artificial intelligence in higher education, including the existence of policies governing the ethical use of AI, its integration into curricula, and its application in research activities.

High levels of academic digital maturity are characterized by the strategic and effective use of digital platforms and data to enhance educational delivery, improve student experience, and support innovation in teaching, learning, and research.

Organisation

The Organisation dimension focuses on the cultural and structural foundations that enable or constrain digital transformation. It evaluates the institutional capacities required to sustain digital transformation over time, including leadership, governance, culture, and workforce development.

Cultural readiness for digital change is assessed by examining attitudes towards innovation, change management capabilities, and institutional openness to new ways of working. Governance support for digital initiatives is evaluated through the presence of digital

leadership roles, steering committees, and decision-making structures that prioritise and oversee transformation efforts.

The dimension also measures the clarity of digital roles and responsibilities, ensuring that ownership of digital initiatives is well defined and supported by appropriate accountability mechanisms. Commitment to digital skills development is assessed through professional development programmes, digital literacy initiatives, and investments in organisational capability building.

Mature organisational practices demonstrate a culture that embraces digital innovation, leadership that actively champions transformation, clear governance structures that accelerate digital decision-making, and systematic approaches to building digital capabilities across all levels of the institution.

3.2. Scoring System

The DMB methodology utilizes a structured, five-level maturity model based on a calculated institutional score ranging from 0.0 to 4.0. To ensure granular diagnostic utility, institutions receive not only an overall composite score for digital maturity, but also discrete performance scores for each of the 15 subdimensions that comprise the 5 core dimensions. This quantitative scoring index allows higher education institutions to diagnose their current digital readiness, benchmark operational capabilities relative to the national average, and identify specific capacity-building pathways to pursue over time. Rather than operating as a rigid compliance metric, this scoring framework serves as a strategic developmental diagnostic, with scores calculated at both the dimension and overall institutional levels to reflect the extent to which digital strategies, workflows, and organisational practices are embedded across the institution.

To ensure consistency in systemic analysis, the diagnostic framework defines five distinct tiers of digital progression:

Table 1: Scoring System

Maturity Level	Score Range	Description	Characteristics
Level 0 Non-Existent	Below 1.0	Very limited evidence of digital maturity	Indicates very limited evidence of digital maturity, with minimal adoption of digital practices and little strategic focus on digital transformation
Level 1 Nascent	1.0 - 1.9	Early stages of digital maturity development	Initial digital initiatives are present but remain fragmented and difficult to sustain

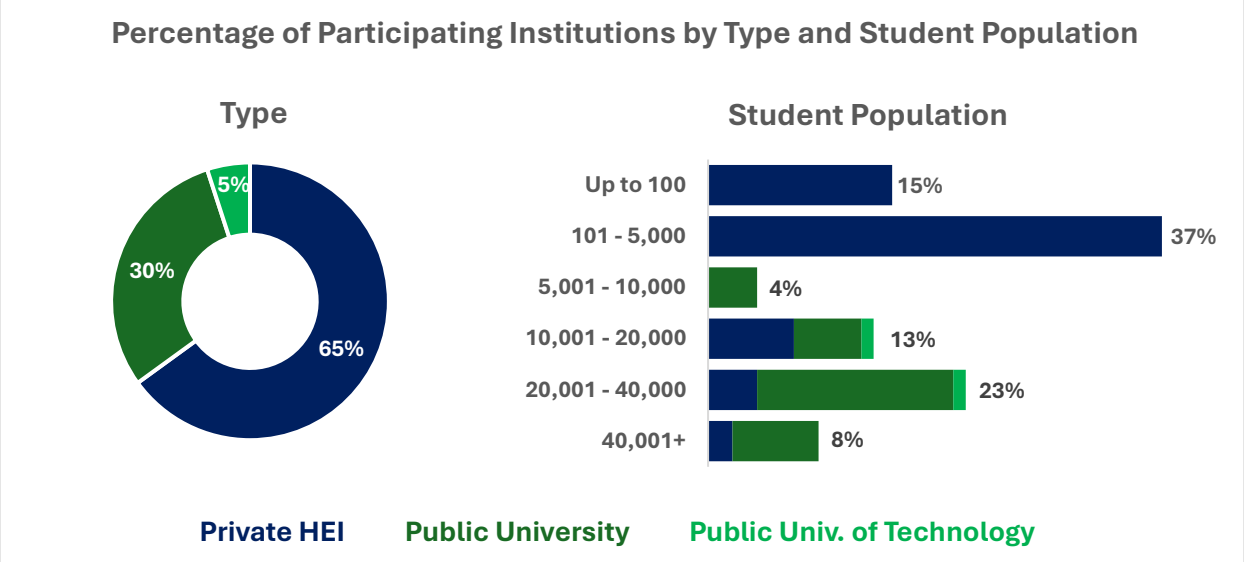
Level 2 Emerging	2.0 - 2.9	Growing evidence of digital maturity practices	Indicates growing digital capabilities and evidence of established practices, although implementation may be inconsistent across the institution
Level 3 Advanced	3.0 - 3.5	Well-developed digital capabilities and practices	Represents a mature stage characterized by well-developed digital capabilities, coordinated implementation, and measurable outcomes
Level 4 Best in Class	Above 3.5	Comprehensive and demonstrable digital maturity	Reflects sector-leading performance, where digital practices are strategically embedded, continuously improved, and supported by strong evidence of impact and innovation.

4. Profile of Participating Institutions

South Africa's higher education system comprises a highly diverse network of public and private institutions serving students across a wide range of academic disciplines, qualification levels, and modes of delivery. Within this national landscape, the higher education sub-sector accounts for approximately 1.3 million enrolled students. According to official data from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) of South Africa (2023), this student body remains heavily concentrated within the public sector, with the country's 26 public universities enrolling approximately 79% of the national student population. At the same time, registered private institutions accommodate the remaining 21% of enrolments, serving as a critical complementary mechanism that contributes to increased systemic access, programmatic diversification, and innovation in delivery models across the broader post-secondary landscape.

The Digital Maturity Benchmarking diagnostic encompasses 46 higher education institutions from across South Africa, capturing a highly representative sample of this complex ecosystem. Of the participating cohort, 30 institutions (65%) were private providers, while 16 institutions (35%) were public universities and universities of technology. Although private institutions represented the numerical majority of participating institutions, public universities continue to account for a substantially larger share of total student enrolment represented in the benchmarking exercise. Together, participating institutions provide a broad and representative cross-section of the South African higher education sector, supporting meaningful institutional benchmarking and national-level analysis.

Figure 1: Chart - Overview of Participating Institutions



Participating institutions varied considerably in size and profile, ranging from small specialized colleges enrolling fewer than 100 students to comprehensive universities serving more than 66,000 students. Institutions were distributed across major metropolitan and regional centres, including Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Bloemfontein, Pietermaritzburg, and Thohoyandou, providing broad geographic coverage of the sector.

Nevertheless, the sample reflects a strong concentration of institutions in the country's primary economic hubs. Gauteng and the Western Cape together accounted for 32 participating institutions and 66% of total student enrolment represented in the study. This distribution mirrors broader patterns of economic activity, population concentration, and higher education provision within South Africa.

Figure 2: South Africa Provinces

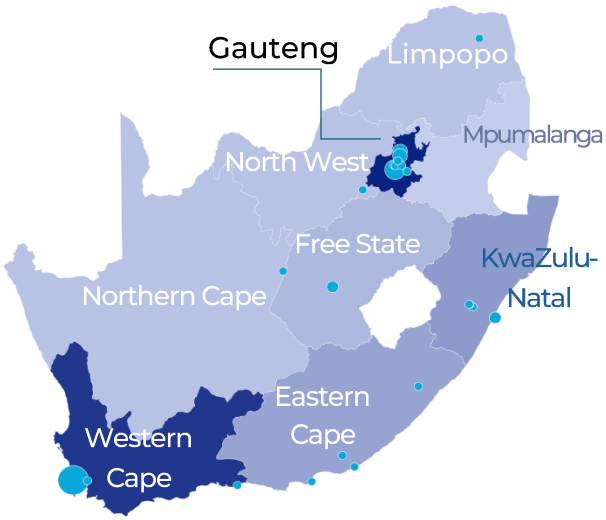


Table 2: Institutions by Province

Province	Number of Institutions	% of Students
Gauteng	17	40%
Western Cape	15	26%
KwaZulu-Natal	5	4%
Eastern Cape	4	11%
Free State	2	8%
Limpopo	1	3%
North West	1	8%
Northern Cape	1	1%
Mpumalanga	-	-

Most participating institutions offered qualifications across multiple levels of study, and undergraduate education was universally represented. In addition, 18 institutions offered doctoral programmes, reflecting the presence of both teaching-focused and research-intensive institutions within the sample.

The study also highlights notable differences in approaches to online learning across institution types. Overall, 65% of participating institutions reported that fewer than 20% of their students were enrolled in online courses, indicating that in-person delivery remains the dominant mode of provision across much of the sector. However, important differences emerge when comparing public and private institutions. Among private institutions, 43% reported that more than 20% of enrolments were in online learning modalities, suggesting a

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relatively higher degree of adoption of online and hybrid delivery models. In contrast, public institutions reported that the overwhelming majority of students remain enrolled primarily in face-to-face programmes (81%).

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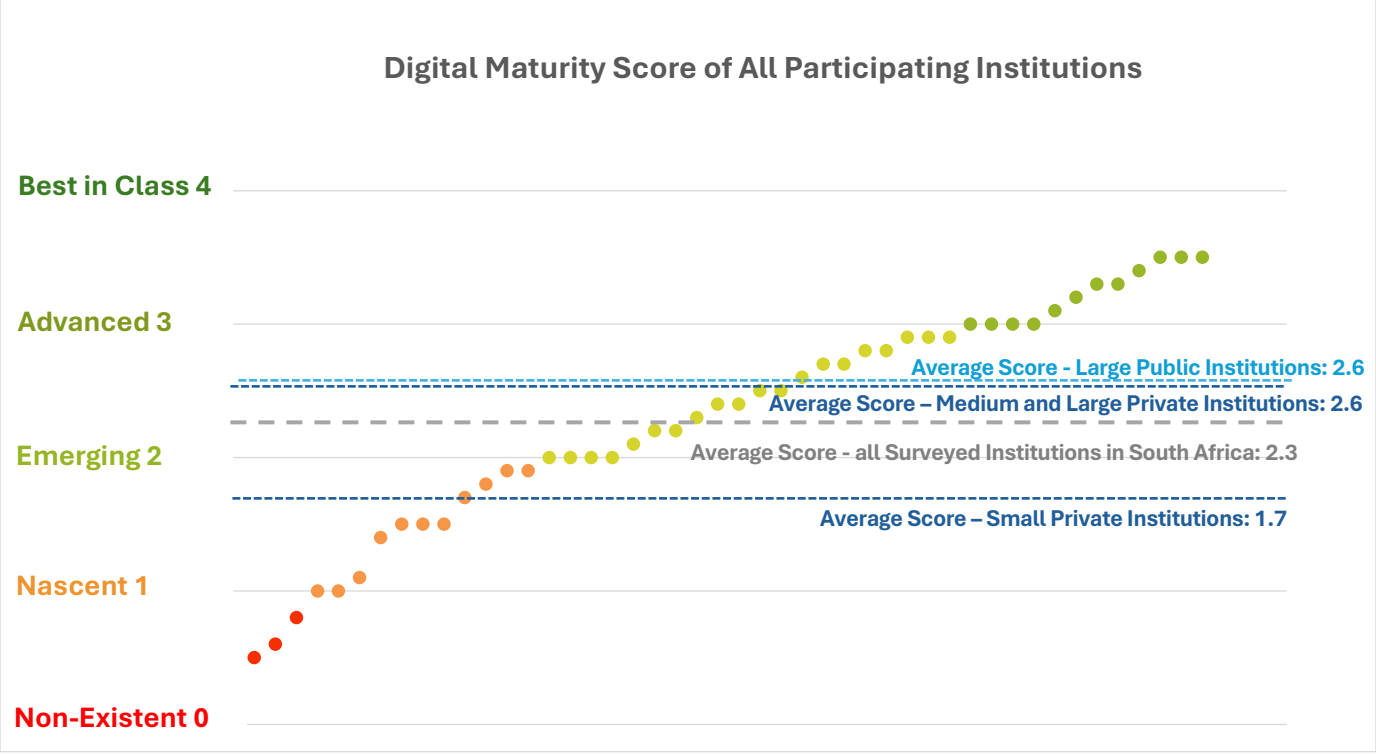
5. Overall Results

5.1. Overview

The 46 participating institutions in the DMB recorded an average digital maturity score of 2.3, placing the sector within the Emerging maturity level. This indicates that digital capabilities and established practices are evident across the participating institutions, although implementation remains uneven and opportunities exist to embed these practices more consistently.

The distribution of institutional scores reveals considerable variation across the sample, ranging from the Non-Existent level to the Advanced level. While several institutions have progressed beyond the Emerging level and demonstrate more established digital practices, others remain at earlier stages of maturity. This dispersion highlights that South African higher education institutions are progressing along different digital transformation pathways and at different rates. In the figure below, each marker represents an institution's score:

Figure 3: Chart - Participating Institutions' Digital Maturity Score

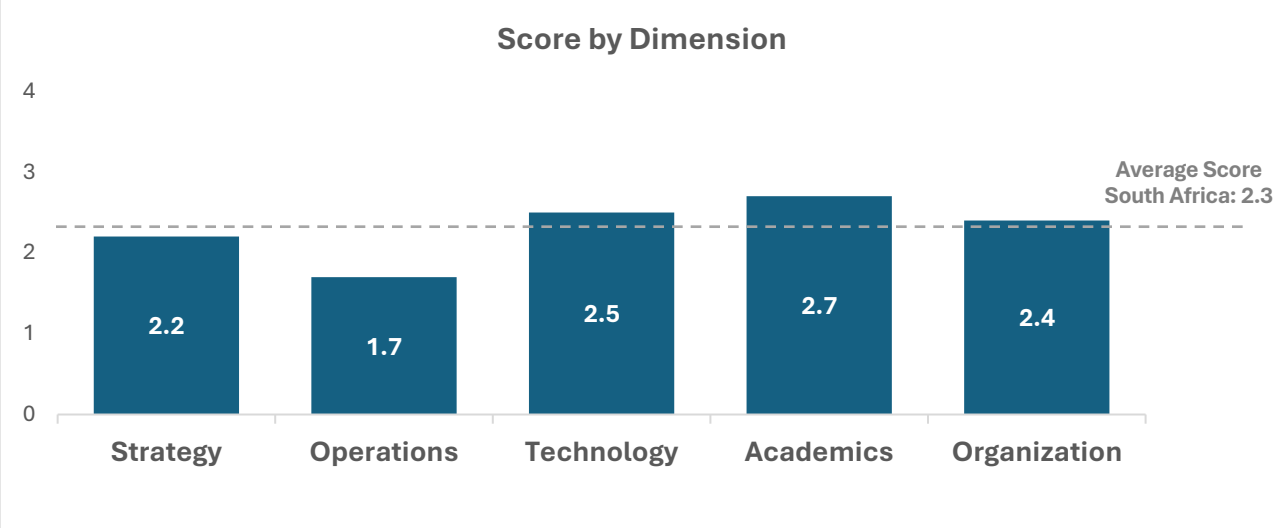


Institutional size is associated with notable differences in performance. Large public institutions and medium and large private institutions recorded the highest average score,

at 2.6. These groups were positioned in the upper half of the Emerging maturity range. By contrast, small private institutions averaged 1.7, placing them within the Nascent level. This gap suggests that institutional scale may influence digital maturity, potentially reflecting differences in resources, operational capacity, infrastructure, and the ability to implement digital initiatives systematically. At the same time, the variation across institutions indicates that size alone does not determine digital maturity.

Digital maturity differed substantially across the five dimensions. Academics was the strongest-performing dimension, with an average score of 2.7, followed by Technology at 2.5, Organisation at 2.4, and Strategy at 2.2. Operations recorded the lowest average score, at 1.7, making it the only dimension assessed at the Nascent level.

Figure 4: Chart - Score by Dimension



The strong performance in Academics was driven by the use of digital tools for student feedback and the optimization of learning management systems. These results indicate that participating institutions have made substantial progress in deploying digital platforms to support teaching and learning, engage with students, and manage learning activities.

Operations was the least mature dimension, with an overall score of 1.7. The results point to a gap between the adoption of digital technologies in teaching and learning and their integration into institution-wide operational processes. Strengthening interoperability, process automation, and digitally enabled stakeholder services could therefore represent an important next stage in institutional digital transformation.

5.2. Analysis per Dimension

a. Strategy

The Strategy dimension recorded an average score of 2.2, placing it within the Emerging maturity level. The findings indicate that many participating institutions have established a foundation for digital transformation through documented strategies (59%), alignment with broader institutional priorities (54%), and dedicated digital initiatives (57%). Budget allocations for digital transformation are also relatively widespread (67% of institutions), signaling institutional commitment to advancing the digital agenda.

Performance nevertheless varies across the sector. Public institutions recorded Strategy maturity scores approximately 1.5 times those of private institutions, with a particularly marked difference in the alignment of digital strategies with institutional objectives and the clarity of associated digital projects. Smaller institutions, particularly those with fewer than 5,000 students, also tend to demonstrate lower levels of strategic maturity. Many have yet to translate their digital ambitions into clearly defined objectives, implementation roadmaps, and measurable performance indicators.

Strategic readiness for artificial intelligence remains at an early stage. Only 39% of institutions reported explicitly referencing AI in their strategic planning documents. This indicates that institutional strategies have not yet fully adapted to the growing use of AI across teaching, learning, research, and administrative functions. It also points to the need for institutional leaders to consider AI within broader strategic planning, governance, investment, and risk-management processes.

Overall, the results suggest that the sector has made progress in defining its digital ambitions, but that execution and performance monitoring remain uneven. Only 39% of institutions measure the return on investments (ROI) in digital initiatives. Moving to higher levels of maturity will require institutions to establish clearer accountabilities, measurable targets, and mechanisms for regularly monitoring the implementation and impact of their digital strategies.

b. Operations

Operations recorded the lowest average score of all five dimensions, at 1.7, and represents the main area for development across the sector. While many institutions reported that core academic and administrative processes have been mapped, the design and visualization of process flows remain manual or paper based to 67% of institutions. The lack of a Business Process Management (BPM) solution constrains their ability to standardise, optimise, and continuously improve processes at scale.

For that reason, automation also remains uneven. Only 43% of institutions reported automating more than 60% of their workflows, while 33% remained at earlier stages to no automation. Furthermore, only half of participating institutions reported systematically reviewing their processes at least annually. Limited process mapping, harmonization, review, and automation can restrict efficiency, consistency, and the scalability of institutional services.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solutions provide an important foundation for digitally enabled stakeholder engagement, with 59% of participating institutions reporting that they have implemented a CRM system. However, the findings suggest that adoption has not yet been translated into effective institutional integration and data-driven decision-making. Most institutions do not use advanced CRM capabilities such as lead funnel analytics, enrolment forecasting, workflow automation, or omnichannel communications, and only 37% have integrated their CRM with their Student Information System. As a result, many institutions continue to operate fragmented processes and disconnected data environments. The findings point to a maturity gap between owning a CRM and leveraging it as a strategic platform to support student recruitment, engagement, retention, and institutional decision-making.

The findings indicate that digital platforms supporting career services and alumni engagement remain underdeveloped across participating institutions. More than half of institutions (52%) lack a dedicated career services platform. Alumni relationship management is even less mature: 70% of institutions lack a platform specifically designed to manage and strengthen alumni relationships. These results suggest that most institutions have yet to use digital platforms strategically to connect students and graduates with employment opportunities, employers, professional networks, and ongoing institutional services. Strengthening these capabilities could help institutions provide more continuous support across the transition from study to employment while sustaining longer-term relationships with alumni.

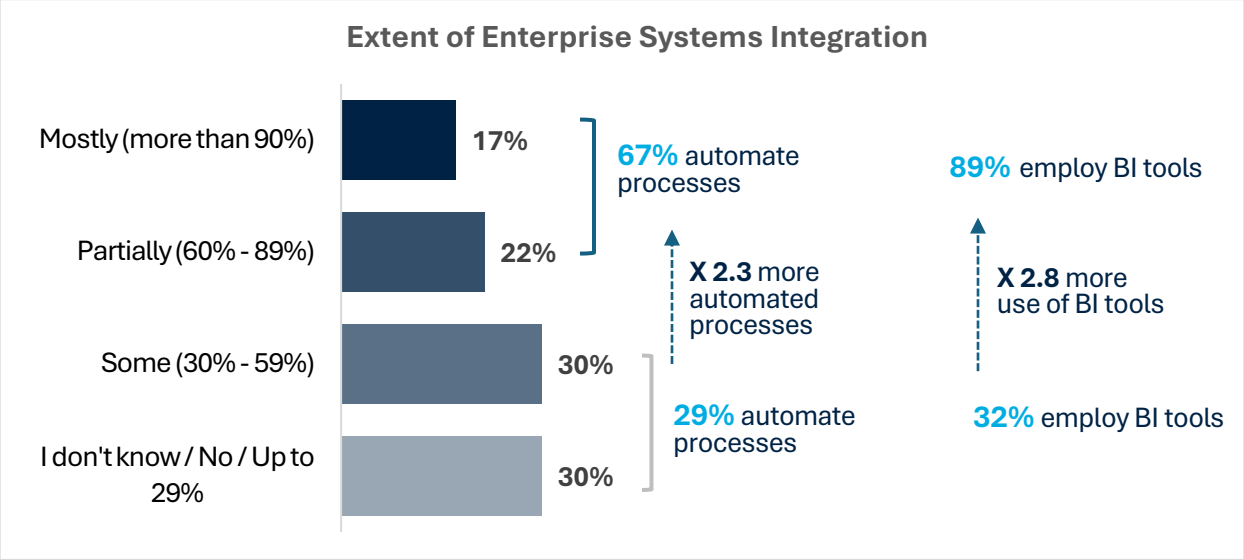
Overall, the findings suggest that investments in strategy and technology have not yet translated consistently into integrated, automated, and continuously improving institutional operations.

c. Technology

Technology was the second-highest-performing dimension, with an average score of 2.5. Most participating institutions reported that their data were sufficiently accurate and reliable and that authorized personnel could access data for analysis and reporting. However, limited systems integration may constrain the consistency and usability of these data across institutional functions, even where data held within individual systems are considered

accurate and reliable. Systems integration remains an important constraint, with only 39% of institutions reporting partial or extensive integration across enterprise systems.

Figure 5: Chart - Extent of Enterprise Systems Integration



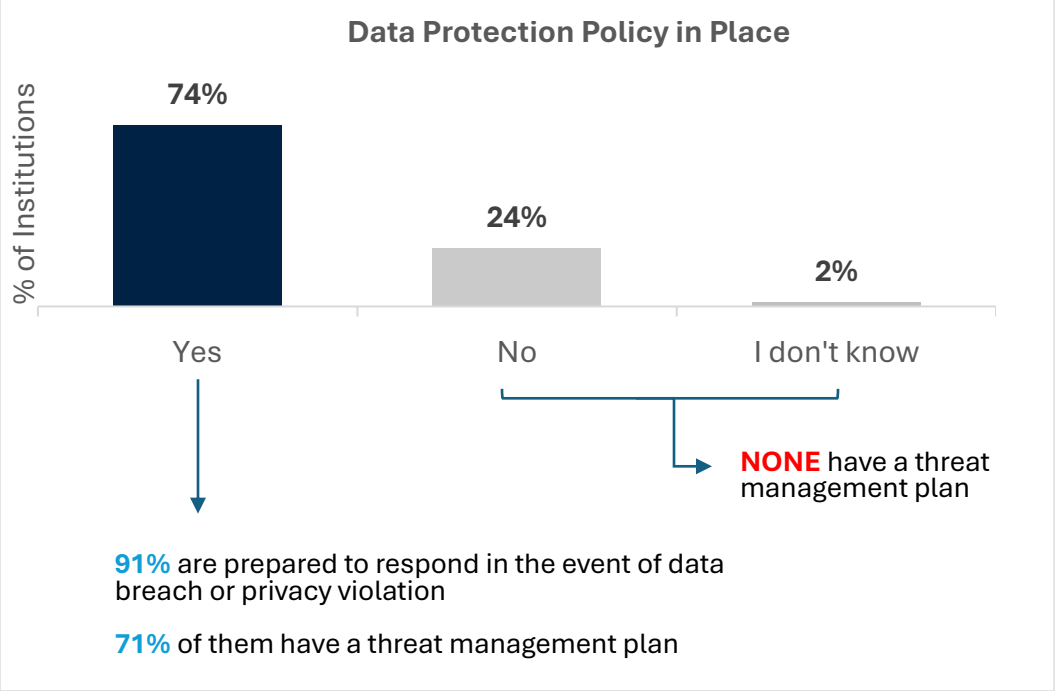
Furthermore, the analysis shows a strong association between systems integration and the adoption of more advanced digital practices. Among institutions reporting integration across more than 60% of their enterprise systems, 67% automated processes, compared with 29% among institutions with integration levels of up to 59%. Highly integrated institutions were therefore 2.3 times more likely to automate processes. Similarly, 89% of highly integrated institutions employed business intelligence tools, compared with 32% of institutions with lower integration, making them 2.8 times more likely to use such tools.

These findings underscore the foundational role of systems integration in enabling automation and data-informed decision-making. Connected systems allow data to move more consistently across institutional functions, while fragmented architectures can perpetuate duplicate records, manual processes, and information silos. For institutions seeking to expand the use of analytics and AI, strengthening integration and data foundations is therefore an important enabling step. The observed relationships are associations and should not, on their own, be interpreted as proof of causation.

Data protection represents a relative strength, although important implementation gaps remain. 74% of institutions reported having a documented data protection policy, while 24% did not and 2% were uncertain. Of the institutions with a policy, 91% reported preparedness

to respond to a data breach or privacy violation, and 71% had a threat-management plan. By contrast, none of the institutions without a documented data protection policy reported having a threat-management plan.

Figure 6: Chart - Data Protection Policy in Place



d. Academics

Academics was the highest-performing dimension, with an average score of 2.7, close to advanced. The widespread adoption and optimization of learning management systems provide a strong foundation for digitally enabled teaching and learning. Participating institutions also reported substantial use of digital tools to collect student feedback and support the management of learning activities.

Public institutions generally reported LMS platforms capable of supporting in-person, online, synchronous, and asynchronous learning. However, the availability of these capabilities has not translated into equivalent levels of online enrolment. Only 19% of students at participating public institutions were reported as enrolled in online courses. This suggests that technological capability and the scale of adoption should be considered separately as institutions may have the infrastructure to support online provision without using it as a dominant delivery model.

Several areas nevertheless require further attention. Only 52% of institutions reported that their learning management systems complied with W3C accessibility standards. This points to a need to strengthen digital accessibility so that platforms and learning resources can support a wider range of learners.

Readiness for AI also varies across academic functions. Half of participating institutions reported having a formal policy for the ethical and effective use of AI, and the same proportion reported integrating AI technologies into curricula. AI use was more widespread in research, where it was reported by 65% of institutions.

Overall, the sector has established a strong technological base for digital learning, but further progress will depend on expanding accessibility, translating platform capabilities into effective academic practice, and establishing coherent approaches to AI governance and curriculum integration.

e. Organisation

The Organisation dimension recorded an average score of 2.4, reflecting moderate progress in establishing the governance, roles, culture, and workforce capabilities required for digital transformation. 67% of institutions reported having governance structures that oversee digital initiatives. However, only 46% reported actively defining digital roles and aligning them with institutional digital strategy.

This gap suggests that governance structures are more widespread than the clear allocation of responsibilities required to implement digital transformation consistently. Although many institutions reported agile decision-making arrangements and established responsibilities, these structures have not always translated into coordinated changes across institutional functions.

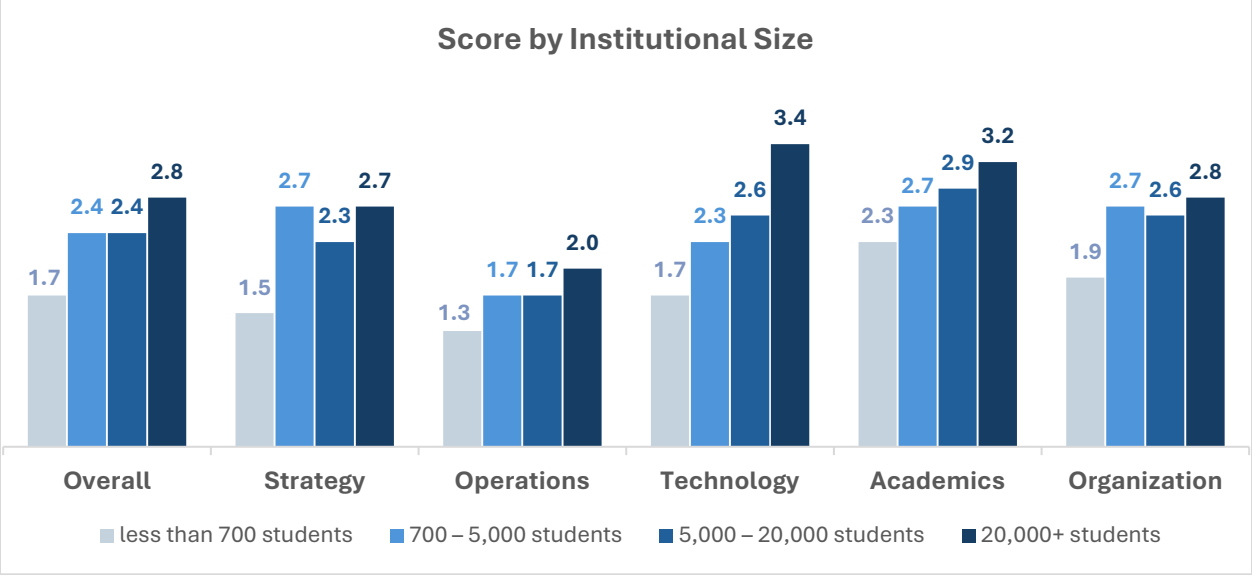
Implementation challenges are particularly apparent in organisational culture, change management, and workforce capabilities. Limited institutional visibility into these areas also suggests that most institutions do not yet systematically assess whether employees possess the capabilities needed to implement digital priorities or whether change initiatives are being adopted consistently. In particular, only 35% of institutions offer professional development training on digital and AI skills to faculty and staff, and 37% have developed change management plans to support the implementation of digital initiatives.

Overall, many institutions have begun establishing the structures needed to govern digital transformation, but stronger alignment among governance, accountability, change management, and workforce development will be necessary to sustain implementation over time.

5.3. Impact of Institutional Size

Institutional size emerges as one of the strongest differentiating factors in digital maturity across the South African higher education sector. Institutions with fewer than 700 students recorded the lowest overall maturity score, averaging 1.7, compared with the sector average of 2.3. Their lowest scores were observed in the Operations (1.3), Strategy (1.5) and Technology (1.7) dimensions, indicating challenges in establishing the strategic, operational, and technological foundations required for digital transformation.

Figure 7: Chart - Score by Institutional Size



The gap is evident in strategic planning and resource allocation. Only 31% of institutions with fewer than 700 students reported having a documented digital strategy with clear objectives, compared with 79% of institutions enrolling more than 20,000 students. Similarly, 50% of the smallest institutions reported dedicated budgets for digital transformation, compared with 71% of the largest institutions. These findings suggest that institutional scale is associated with the ability to establish the planning and investment structures needed to support sustained digital transformation.

Differences by size are most pronounced in the Technology and Organisation dimensions. Technology maturity scores increased from 1.7 among the smallest institutions to 3.4 among the largest, while Organisation maturity scores rose from 1.9 to 2.8. These patterns indicate that larger institutions are more likely to have established the infrastructure, governance, roles, and organisational capabilities required to implement digital initiatives systematically.

Size-related differences are less pronounced in the Academics dimension, which remains the strongest-performing dimension across all evaluated groups. Institutions of all sizes reported widespread adoption of learning management systems and digital tools for teaching and learning. However, medium and larger institutions were more likely to effectively use their LMS to support learning outcomes assessment, course administration, student progress monitoring, learning analytics, and personalized learning. This suggests that while access to core educational technologies is widespread, larger institutions generally derive broader educational and administrative value from these platforms.

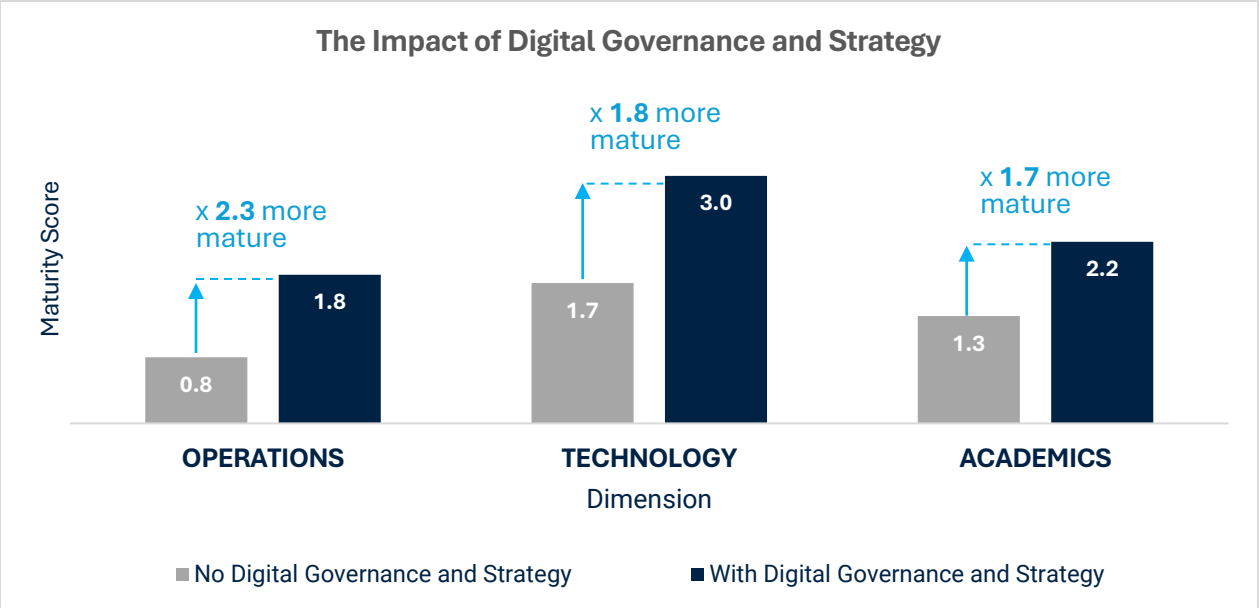
The Operations dimension remains the least mature across all size groups, increasing from 1.3 among the smallest institutions to only 2.0 among the largest. This indicating that operational digitalization is a sector-wide challenge rather than one affecting only smaller institutions.

Overall, the findings indicate that institutional size influences digital maturity primarily through its impact on organisational capacity, investment capability, and operational scalability. While several smaller institutions outperform what their size alone would predict, the results suggest that digital transformation remains substantially more challenging where financial, human, and technological resources are constrained. Consequently, targeted support mechanisms, shared services, and collaborative approaches may play an important role in helping smaller institutions accelerate their digital transformation journeys.

5.4. Cross-Dimensional Insights: Strategy, Governance, and Operations

The analysis reveals a strong positive association between digital strategy and governance and maturity in other dimensions. Institutions reporting both a documented digital strategy and governance arrangements achieved higher average scores in Operations (1.8 compared with 0.8), Technology (3.0 compared with 1.7), and Academics (2.2 compared with 1.3).

Figure 8: Chart - The Impact of Digital Governance and Strategy



The largest difference is observed in Operations, where institutions with a documented digital strategy and governance framework achieved maturity scores 2.3 times higher than those without these foundations. This suggests that strategic direction and governance arrangements are particularly important for translating digital ambitions into institutional practices. Institutions with these foundations are better positioned to establish priorities, allocate resources, clarify accountability, and coordinate implementation across functions. These conditions can support process standardization and automation, and the effective deployment of student success platforms across the student lifecycle.

The relationship also extends to Technology and Academics. Institutions with digital strategy and governance structures recorded maturity scores 1.8 times higher in Technology and 1.7 times higher in Academics than institutions without these foundations. This suggests that strategy and governance not only influence how institutions manage digital initiatives, but also how effectively they align technology investments, data capabilities, and digitally enabled teaching and learning with broader institutional objectives.

The findings therefore position strategy and governance as important enabling conditions for digital transformation. While the results demonstrate association rather than causation, they consistently show that institutions with stronger strategic direction and governance structures tend to achieve higher levels of maturity across multiple dimensions. Strengthening these foundations may therefore represent a high-impact lever for institutions seeking to accelerate their digital transformation journeys, particularly in areas such as operational effectiveness, technology adoption, and digitally enabled education.

6. Recommendations

The benchmarking findings point to a to an evolving sector, with relevant achievements in advancing digital maturity. Nonetheless, it also points to an opportunity to advance a more coordinated, inclusive, and outcome-oriented approach to digital transformation across South African higher education. These interventions should remain developmental, proportionate, and responsive to institutional diversity. They should establish clear expectations and shared directions without prescribing a uniform technology model or imposing identical pathways on institutions with different mandates, sizes, and levels of maturity.

System-Level Interventions

CHE could advance these priorities through its quality-enhancement mandate, sector convening role, and relevant policy instruments, including the Higher Education Practice Standards.

1. Position digital strategy and governance as priority for the transformation process

Digital transformation should be recognized as a cross-cutting institutional capability linked to institutional identity, mission, quality, and long-term development. Institutions should be expected to establish a documented digital transformation strategy supported by measurable objectives, an implementation roadmap, dedicated resources, and clear leadership accountability.

Governance structures should enable coordination across academic, administrative, and technology functions and provide oversight of implementation, investment, risk, and performance. They should also support the responsible consideration of emerging technologies, including AI, within institutional planning and decision-making.

This recommendation is supported by the finding that institutions combining a documented digital strategy with formal governance arrangements achieved substantially higher maturity in Operations, Technology, and Academics. Clearer sector-level expectations would help reposition digital transformation from a predominantly technical responsibility to a strategic institutional priority.

2. Develop a sector-wide approach to digital and AI skills development

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Institutions should establish structured, continuous, and forward-looking approaches to developing digital and AI skills among academic, administrative, technical, and leadership staff. Skills development should move beyond one-off or tool-specific training and become an integral component of institutional workforce planning and professional learning.

Institutions should systematically identify and periodically update capability needs, differentiate learning pathways according to staff roles, and align professional development with institutional strategies and planned transformation initiatives. They should also monitor participation, assess progression, and evaluate whether professional learning contributes to improved institutional practices and outcomes.

This recommendation is reinforced by the association between structured digital and AI training, stronger student lifecycle management, and higher levels of process automation. Developing workforce capabilities is therefore not a supporting activity separate from transformation. It is one of the conditions necessary to translate technology investments into institutional improvements.

3. Build interoperable, integrated and decision-ready institutional data environments

The sector should prioritise systems interoperability and data integration as foundations for effective institutional management. Institutions should establish clear approaches to enterprise architecture, data ownership, common definitions, data quality, information exchange, and the integration of core systems.

They should also strengthen their capacity to translate data into actionable insights through business intelligence tools, dashboards, and analytical capabilities. Institutional data should inform strategic planning, resource allocation, performance management, quality enhancement, and decisions affecting student success.

The benchmarking found that institutions with higher levels of systems integration were considerably more likely to automate processes and implement business intelligence. This indicates that integration is not simply a technical consideration. It is an enabling condition for more timely, coordinated, and evidence-informed institutional decision-making.

4. Advance digitally enabled student lifecycle management

Institutions should be encouraged to develop integrated approaches to student administration that connect recruitment, admissions, registration, academic progression, student support, career services, graduation, and alumni engagement.

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This requires more than the acquisition of individual platforms. CRM, SIS, LMS, and related systems should exchange information securely and consistently, enabling authorized teams to develop a more complete view of the student journey and coordinate interventions across institutional functions. Institutions should also systematically map, review, optimise, and automate student administration processes where appropriate.

The sector's relatively low operational maturity demonstrates the importance of this recommendation. Although many institutions have adopted CRM and other digital tools, weak interoperability, fragmented information, and limited workflow automation continue to constrain their effectiveness. A more integrated approach would support administrative efficiency, continuity of services, data-informed student support, and improved student experiences.

5. Strengthen cybersecurity preparedness and institutional resilience

Institutions should move beyond policy adoption towards demonstrable operational readiness to prevent, detect, escalate, manage, and recover from cybersecurity incidents and data breaches.

Sector-level expectations should address threat-management planning, incident-response arrangements, clearly assigned responsibilities, regular risk assessments, staff awareness, business continuity, and periodic testing of institutional response procedures. Cybersecurity should be embedded across institutional governance, procurement, systems design, cloud adoption, data management, and workforce development rather than treated solely as an information technology function.

The widespread presence of data protection policies provides a valuable foundation, but the benchmarking identified less consistent development of cybersecurity capabilities. Closing this gap will become increasingly important as institutions expand systems integration, digital learning, cloud services, analytics, and AI-enabled applications.

6. Promote accessible and educationally effective digital learning environments

Digital accessibility should be recognized as an essential component of educational quality, equity, and inclusion. Institutions should ensure that their learning platforms and digital content meet recognized accessibility standards, including relevant W3C standards, and that compliance is regularly assessed, monitored, and improved.

Digital learning environments should also be integrated with student information and other institutional systems. This integration should enable consistent data flows, effective student

tracking, coordinated academic support, and timely access to information on learning progress and outcomes.

The widespread adoption of learning management systems represents an important sector strength. The next stage should focus on how effectively institutions use these platforms to support course administration, assessment of learning outcomes, student progress monitoring, collaborative learning, analytics, accessibility, and personalized student support. The policy emphasis should therefore shift from platform availability towards inclusive and effective educational use.

7. Provide differentiated support and shared capacity for smaller institutions

Sector-level implementation should recognize that institutional scale is strongly associated with digital maturity. Smaller institutions may face greater constraints in accessing specialist expertise, implementing and integrating enterprise systems, strengthening cybersecurity, meeting accessibility requirements, and sustaining structured digital transformation programmes.

CHE and sector partners could facilitate shared services, common resources, targeted technical assistance, collaborative procurement, professional learning, model policies, and communities of practice. Such support should be differentiated rather than remedial. Institutional size does not determine maturity, and some smaller institutions demonstrate strong performance. The objective should be to reduce structural barriers and enable institutions to select approaches appropriate to their missions, priorities, and operating models.

Taken together, these interventions provide a coherent policy agenda connecting institutional strategy, governance, student administration, data, cybersecurity, digital learning, and workforce capabilities. Relevant HEPS could provide one important mechanism for translating these priorities into institutional reflection and practice, but the recommendations extend beyond any single quality-enhancement instrument.

The objective is not technology adoption for its own sake. It is to ensure that digital transformation contributes to access, educational quality, inclusion, student success, institutional effectiveness, resilience, and informed decision-making. A coordinated policy approach, combined with differentiated implementation support and continued sector learning, can help institutions move from fragmented digital initiatives towards sustainable institutional transformation.

Priority Actions for Higher Education Institutions

The recommendations below are intended to support continuous improvement rather than prescribe a single pathway for all institutions. Implementation should reflect institutional size, mandate, delivery model, existing capabilities, and strategic priorities.

1. Strengthen digital strategy, governance, and accountability

Institutions should position digital transformation as a strategic institutional priority rather than a series of isolated technology projects. Digital strategies should be aligned with institutional objectives and supported by clear implementation roadmaps, measurable targets, dedicated resources, and defined leadership accountability.

Governance structures should clarify decision-making authority, ownership of digital initiatives, and coordination across academic, administrative, and technology functions. Institutions should also establish mechanisms to monitor implementation, assess the value and impact of digital investments, and adjust priorities as institutional needs and technologies evolve.

This is particularly important given the strong association observed between digital strategy and governance and higher maturity in Operations, Technology, and Academics. Strengthening these foundations can help institutions translate strategic intent into coordinated and sustainable implementation.

2. Move from technology adoption to operational transformation

Institutions should prioritise the redesign, harmonization, and digitalization of core processes across the student lifecycle. This includes recruitment, admissions, registration, student support, retention, career services, graduation, and alumni engagement.

Process mapping and regular process reviews should precede automation to ensure that institutions do not reproduce inefficient or fragmented practices in digital form. Where appropriate, institutions should consider Business Process Management solutions to support process mapping and monitoring.

The objective should be to move beyond ownership of individual tools towards connected institutional services that reduce manual processing, improve the consistency of the student experience, and provide timely information for decision-making. Career services

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and alumni engagement require particular attention, as dedicated digital platforms remain with low adoption across the participating institutions.

3. Develop integrated, secure, and decision-ready data environments

Institutions should treat systems integration and data governance as foundational components of digital transformation. The benchmarking findings show a strong association between higher levels of systems integration and greater adoption of process automation and business intelligence.

Institutions should therefore develop clear enterprise architecture and interoperability priorities, supported by common data definitions, appropriate data ownership arrangements, quality assurance processes, and secure mechanisms for sharing information across systems. Strengthening these foundations can reduce duplication and data silos while enabling more effective institutional reporting, student support, performance monitoring, and strategic planning.

The use of business intelligence and, increasingly, artificial intelligence depends on data that are accurate, accessible, appropriately governed, and connected across institutional functions. Institutions should therefore sequence investments carefully, addressing integration and data-quality requirements alongside the introduction of more advanced analytical capabilities.

4. Strengthen cybersecurity preparedness and institutional resilience

The relatively widespread adoption of data protection and cybersecurity policies provides an important foundation. However, institutions should complement policy frameworks with tested operational capabilities to identify, assess, escalate, and respond to cybersecurity threats and data incidents.

Priority measures should include formal threat-management and incident-response arrangements, clearly assigned responsibilities, regular risk assessments, staff awareness, and periodic testing of institutional response procedures. Cybersecurity should be embedded in governance, business continuity, procurement, systems design, and workforce development rather than treated solely as an information technology responsibility.

This shift from policy adoption to operational preparedness will be increasingly important as institutions expand interconnected systems, cloud-based services, digital learning, data analytics, and AI-enabled applications.

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5. Expand the value, accessibility, and effectiveness of digital learning

The widespread adoption of learning management systems provides a strong platform for further development. Institutions should now focus on using these systems more effectively to support course administration, assessment of learning outcomes, monitoring of student progress, collaborative learning, learning analytics, accessibility, and more personalized forms of student support.

Digital accessibility should be treated as a core component of educational quality and inclusion. Institutions should assess their learning platforms and digital content against recognized accessibility standards, including relevant W3C standards, and establish processes to identify and address barriers experienced by learners.

Technology availability alone does not ensure effective educational use. Institutions should therefore monitor how digital platforms contribute to teaching quality, student engagement, learning outcomes, and the wider student experience.

6. Build digital and AI capabilities across the institutional workforce

Institutions should establish structured and continuous professional learning programmes that develop the digital and AI capabilities of academic, administrative, technical, and leadership staff. Training should progress beyond tool-specific instruction to address data literacy, digital service delivery, process improvement, responsible AI use, change management, and the application of technology within different institutional functions.

The findings indicate that structured digital and AI skills development is associated with stronger student lifecycle management and higher levels of process automation. Workforce development should therefore be connected to institutional strategy and implementation priorities, with training designed around the capabilities required to deliver planned transformation initiatives.

Digital transformation also requires active change management. Institutions should assess workforce readiness, communicate the purpose and implications of change, engage affected stakeholders, and monitor whether new practices are being adopted consistently.

7. Establish coherent frameworks for responsible AI adoption

Institutions should develop formal policies and governance arrangements for the ethical, secure, and effective use of AI in teaching, learning, research, and administration. These

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frameworks should clarify acceptable use, academic integrity, data protection, accountability, transparency, and institutional oversight, while allowing responsible experimentation and innovation.

AI considerations should also be incorporated into institutional strategies, investment decisions, curricula, research governance, staff development, and technology procurement. The findings indicate that institutions with formal AI policies are better positioned to integrate AI into academic activities. Policy development should therefore be viewed not only as a risk-management measure, but as an enabler of responsible adoption.

7. Conclusion

The Digital Maturity Benchmarking provides a comprehensive assessment of the current state of digital transformation within the South African higher education sector. Through the participation of 46 public and private institutions, the exercise offers a robust evidence base on the current state of digital maturity, highlights areas of strength, and identifies priority opportunities for institutional and sector-wide development.

The findings indicate that South African higher education institutions have established important foundations for digital transformation. The sector achieved an overall maturity score of 2.3, placing it within the Emerging maturity level. Strong performance in the Academics and Technology dimensions demonstrates that institutions have made substantial progress in deploying digital platforms to support teaching, learning, and core technology functions. The widespread adoption of learning management systems, the growing use of digital student feedback mechanisms, and the increasing availability of institutional data all provide a solid platform for further advancement.

The benchmarking also highlights important opportunities for improvement. Operational processes remain the least mature aspect of digital transformation, suggesting that investments in technology have not yet been consistently translated into integrated, automated, and data-driven institutional operations. The findings further reveal significant variation across institutions, with smaller institutions generally facing greater challenges in establishing the governance, infrastructure, and organizational capabilities required to sustain digital transformation. At the same time, the results demonstrate that institutional size alone does not determine success, and that clear leadership, strong governance, and institutional capacity can significantly influence outcomes.

One of the most important findings emerging from the analysis is the central role of strategy and governance as enabling conditions for digital transformation. Institutions that combine a documented digital strategy with formal governance arrangements consistently demonstrate higher levels of maturity across Operations, Technology, and Academics. Similarly, institutions with more integrated digital ecosystems are substantially more likely to leverage automation and data analytics to support institutional decision-making. These findings reinforce the view that successful digital transformation depends not only on technology investments, but also on institutional capacity, leadership, data practices, and organizational readiness.

The results also highlight several emerging priorities for the sector. These include strengthening student lifecycle management, improving systems interoperability, enhancing cybersecurity preparedness, expanding accessibility within digital learning environments, developing digital and AI-related workforce skills, and establishing coherent institutional

approaches to the governance and adoption of artificial intelligence. As AI continues to transform higher education globally, ensuring that institutions are equipped to adopt these technologies responsibly and effectively will become increasingly important.

Ultimately, digital transformation should not be viewed as an end in itself. Rather, it is a means of improving educational quality, expanding access, enhancing student success, strengthening institutional resilience, and enabling more informed decision-making. The findings presented in this report suggest that South Africa's higher education sector is well positioned to build on existing strengths while addressing persistent implementation challenges.

By fostering collaboration, strengthening institutional capabilities, and maintaining a commitment to continuous improvement, higher education institutions and sector stakeholders can work together to ensure that digital transformation contributes meaningfully to a more inclusive, responsive, and future-ready higher education system. The Digital Maturity Benchmarking provides an important baseline for this journey and a platform from which future progress can be measured, shared, and accelerated across the sector.

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8. Annex

Consolidated Results per Question:

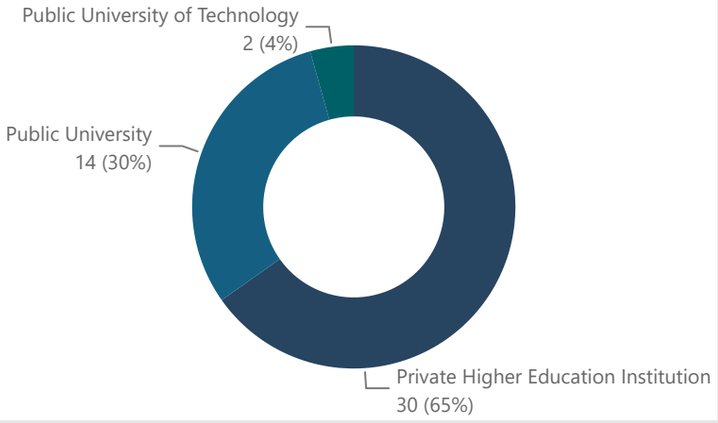
IFC International Finance Corporation WORLD BANK GROUP

D4TEP

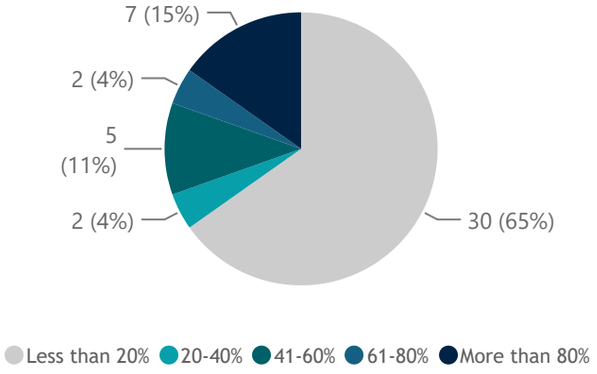
DMB - Institutions' Profile

South Africa

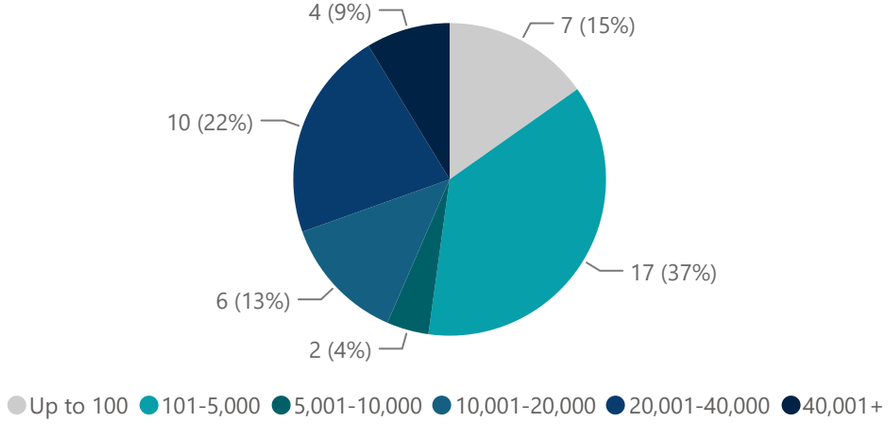
Type of Institution



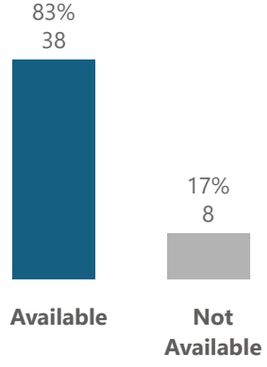
% of Students Enrolled in Online Classes



Student Population



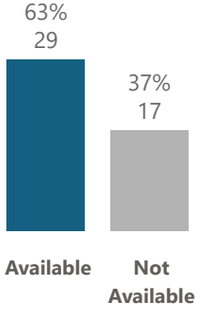
Undergraduate Degree



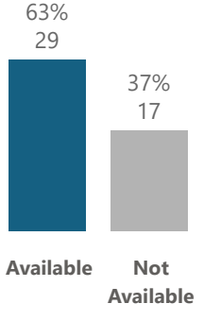
Undergraduate Diploma/Certificate



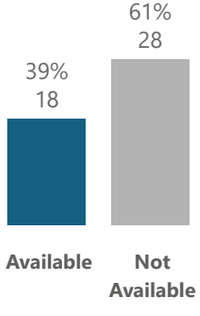
Postgraduate Degree



Postgraduate Diploma



Doctoral Degree



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D4TEP

DMB - Score

South Africa

Final Score: 0.0 **2.3** 4.0

STRATEGY 2.2

- 01. Digital Strategy Alignment and Actionability: 2.0
- 02. Financial and Investment Management Optimization: 2.4

OPERATIONS 1.7

- 03. Process Automation: 1.7
- 04. Digital tools for student lifecycle management: 1.5
- 05. Employability Services Platform: 1.8
- 06. Alumni Relationship Management Platform: 1.6

TECHNOLOGY 2.5

- 07. Data-Driven Organizational Decisions: 2.5
- 08. Data Hosting in an Accessible Warehouse: 2.5
- 09. Data Protection and Threat Management: 2.4

ACADEMICS 2.7

- 10. Digital Tools for Student Feedback: 3.0
- 11. Optimization of Learning Management Systems: 3.0
- 12. AI in Curriculum and Research: 2.2

ORGANIZATION 2.4

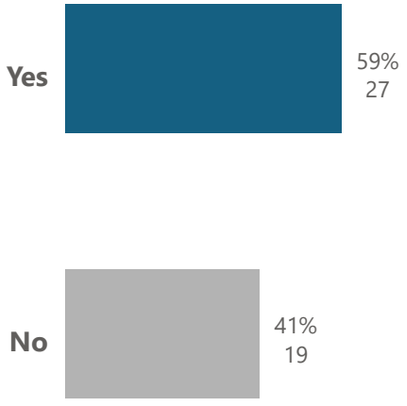
- 13. Culture and Governance Support for Digital Transformation: 2.4
- 14. Well-Defined Digital Roles and Responsibilities: 2.5
- 15. AI Readiness and Skills Training: 2.3

DMB - Strategy Dimension

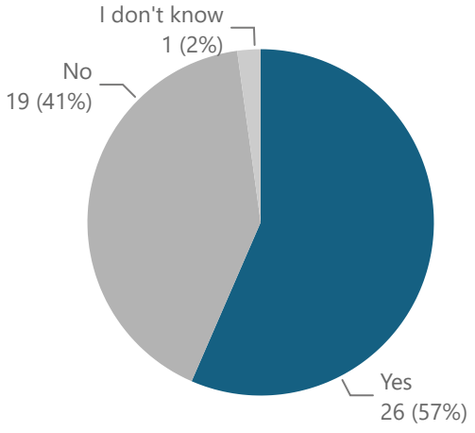
Digital Strategy Alignment and Actionability

South Africa

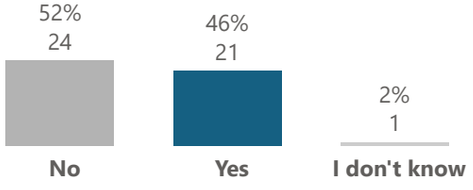
1.1 Your institution has a documented digital strategy



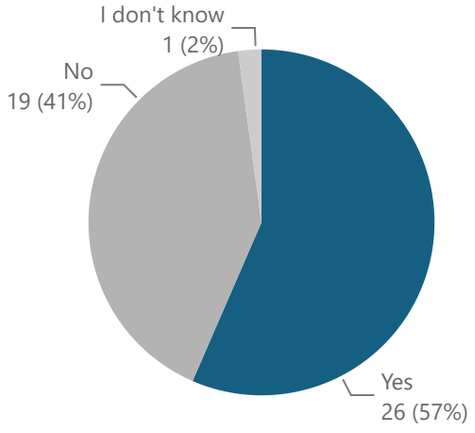
1.1.1 Your institution's digital strategy outlines clear objectives



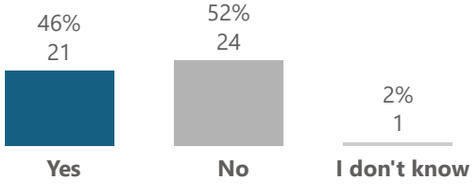
1.1.1.1. The objectives in the digital strategy include specific KPIs or success metrics



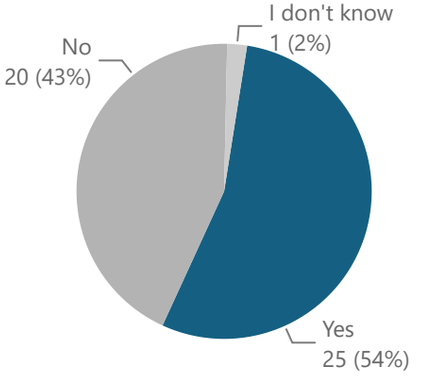
1.1.2. The digital strategy has identified specific initiatives or projects



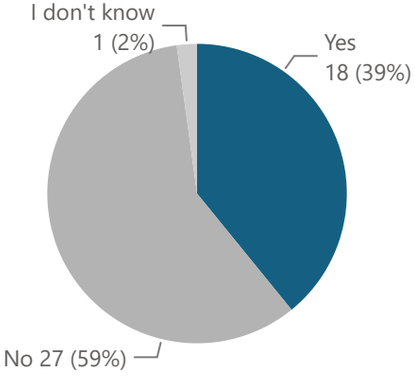
1.1.2.1. Some of the digital initiatives or projects are focused on AI utilization



1.1.3 The digital strategy is aligned with the institution's overall strategic plan



1.1.4. AI integration or exploration is addressed in the strategic planning documents

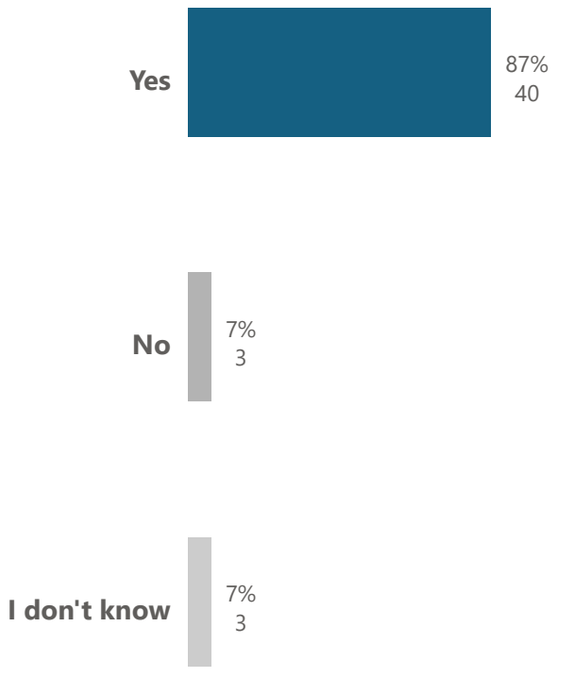


DMB - Strategy Dimension

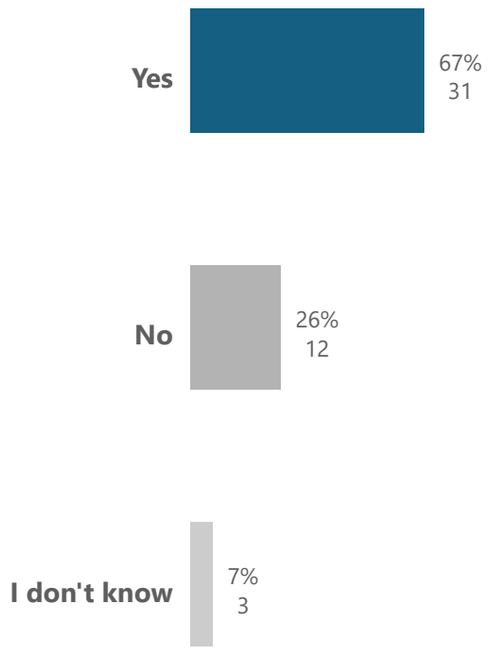
Financial and Investment Management Optimization

South Africa

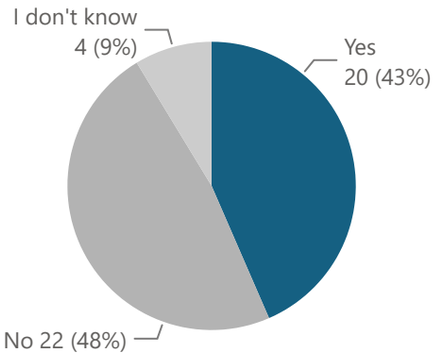
2.1 The institution's budget for IT is sufficient to maintain current IT operations



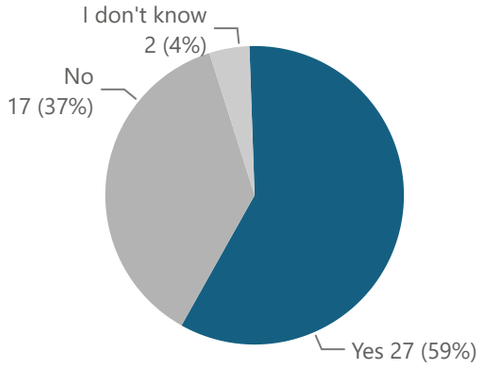
2.2 The institution has allocated a specific budget for the implementation of its digital strategy



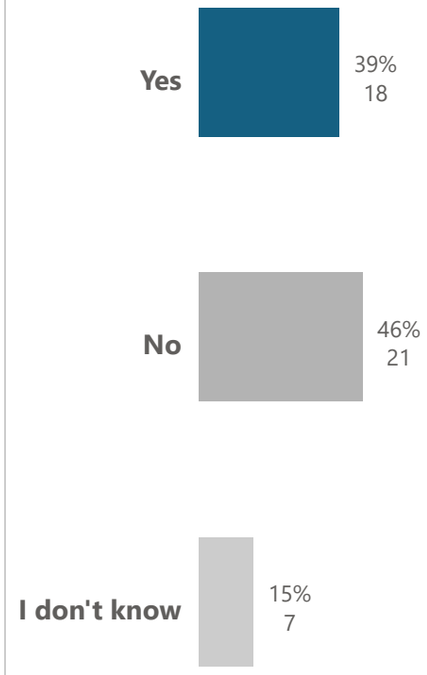
2.2.1 The budget for digital transformation is sufficient to carry out key planned initiatives and new projects



2.2.2 Digital projects are funded with a multi-year financial commitment



2.3 The institution measures the ROI of digital initiatives

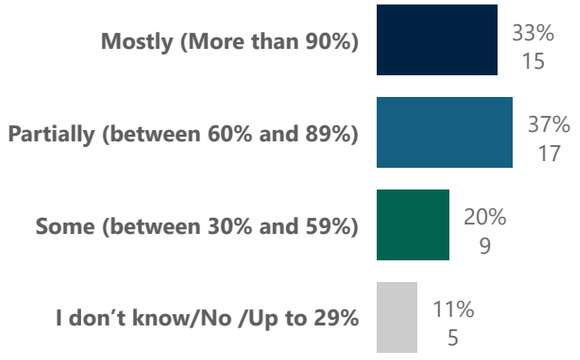


DMB - Operations Dimension

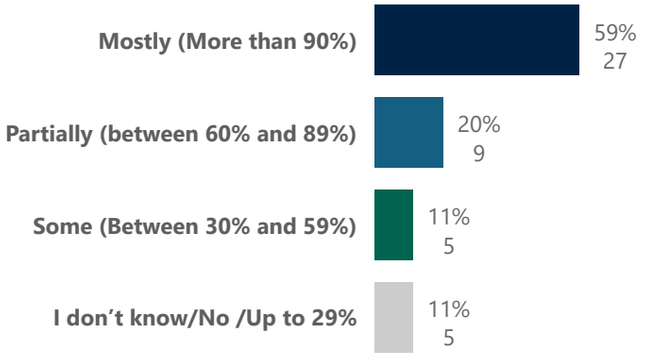
Process Automation

South Africa

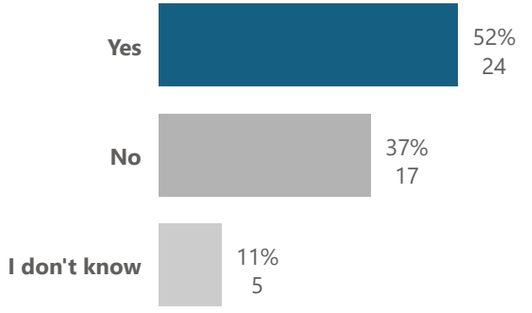
3.1 Are the administrative processes mapped?



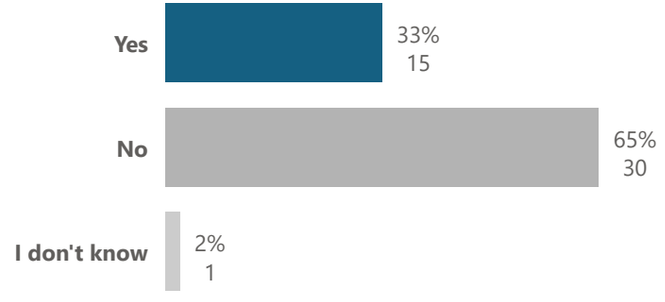
3.2 Are the academic processes mapped?



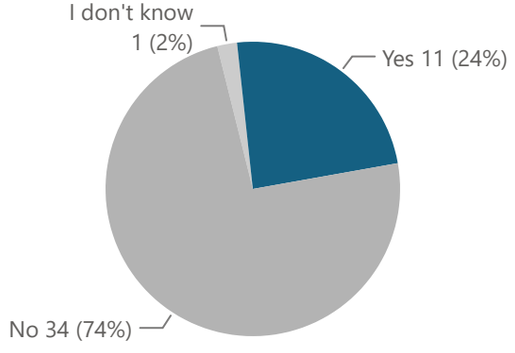
3.3 Mapped processes at your institution are reviewed at least once per year



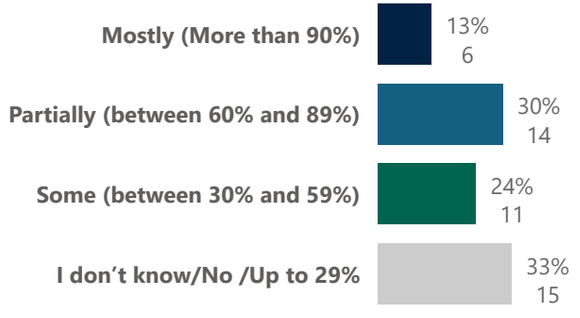
3.4 Your institution utilizes a Business Process Management (BPM) solution for designing and visualizing administrative and academic processes with flowcharts or diagrams that map out each step in a process



3.4.1 Your institution employs a BPM solution for real-time monitoring and tracking of administrative and academic processes with dashboards and reporting tools



3.5 To what extent are the administrative and academic processes automated (process or a series of tasks within a process is performed by a system, software, or machine with minimal to no human intervention)?

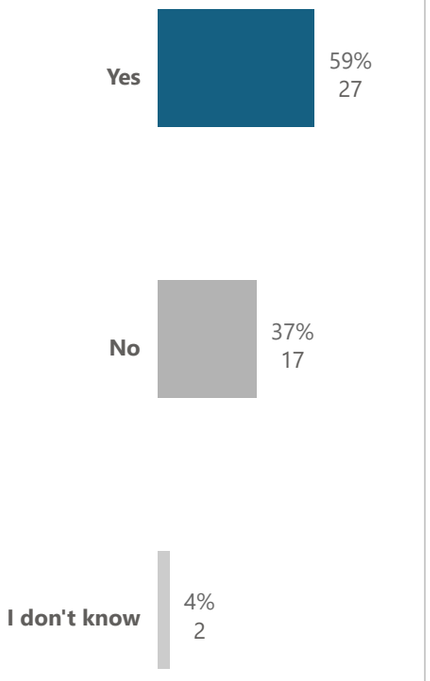


DMB - Operations Dimension

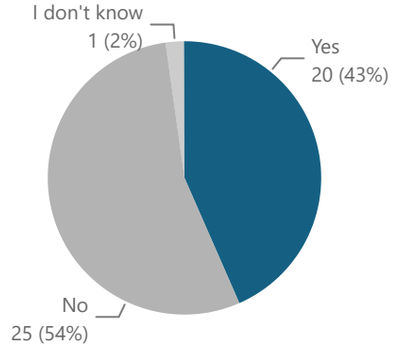
Digital Tools for Student Lifecycle Management

South Africa

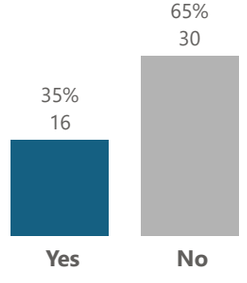
4.1 The institution has a CRM system in place?



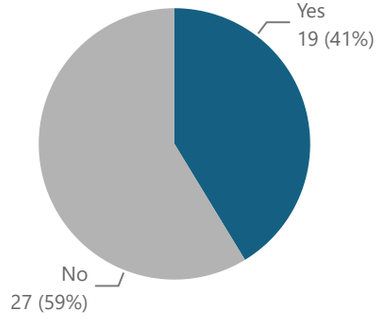
4.1.1 A Marketing CRM module is utilized at the institution for lead capture, nurturing, and scoring



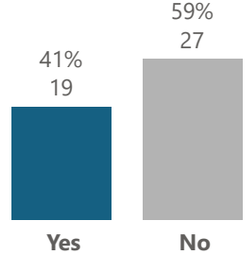
4.1.1.1 The Marketing CRM at the institution is integrated with other marketing applications, including social media, massive mailing, events, et...



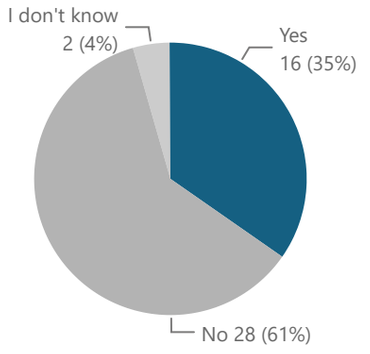
4.1.2 The institution uses a Sales CRM module to streamline the recruitment process of qualified leads



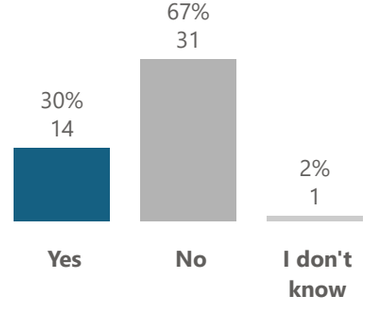
4.1.2.1 The institution tracks and analyzes the lead funnel, conversion rates at each stage of the prospect student lifecycle



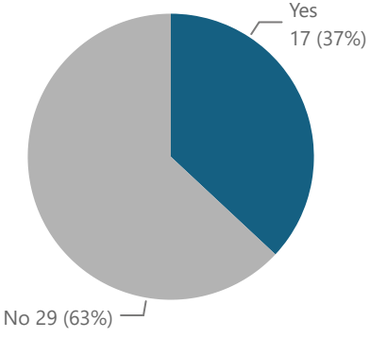
4.1.3 Various communication channels are unified into an omnichannel approach within the CRM



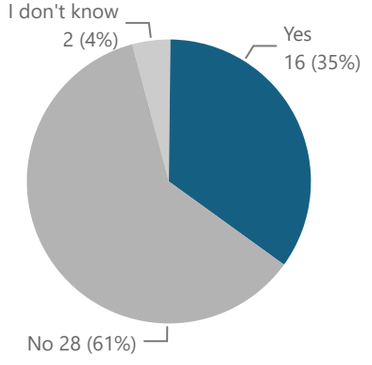
4.1.2.2 The institution is able to forecast enrollment projections with an acceptable level of precision



4.1.4 The CRM is integrated with the institution's Student Information System



4.1.5 The institution's CRM supports automated workflow functionalities

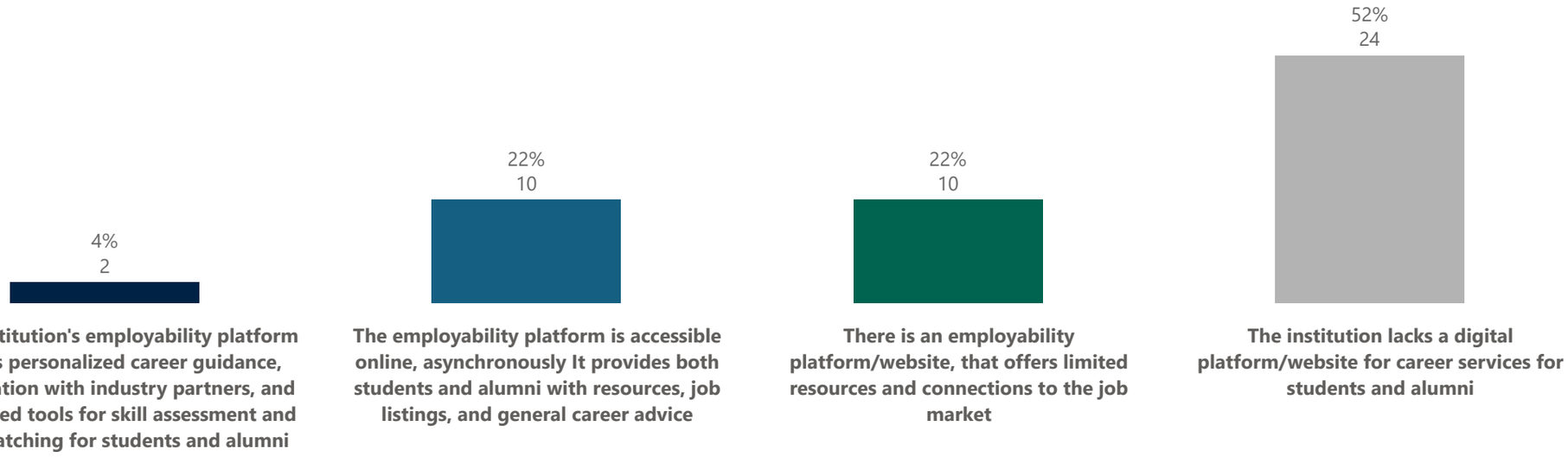


DMB - Operations Dimension

Employability Services Platform

South Africa

5. Does the institution have a platform to support employability services (Career Management Solution) that offers tools for resume building, interview preparation, and networking, while also enabling employers to recruit and engage with potential candidates?

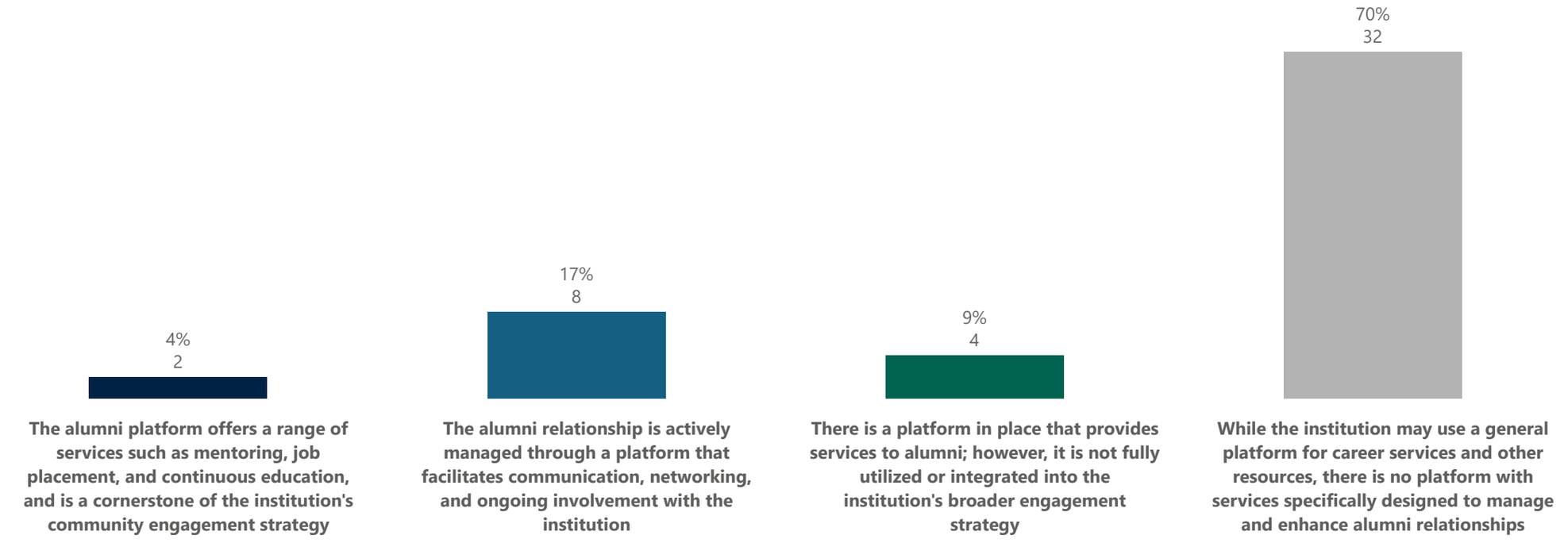


DMB - Operations Dimension

Alumni Relationship Management Platform

South Africa

6. Is the alumni relationship managed through a platform?

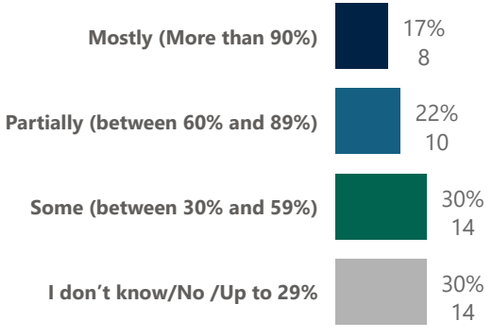


DMB - Technology Dimension

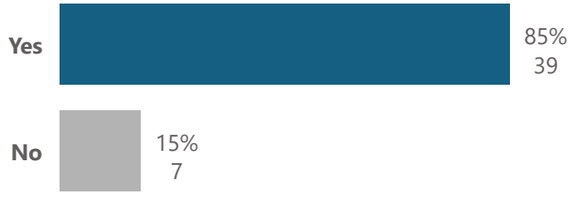
Data-Driven Organizational Decisions

South Africa

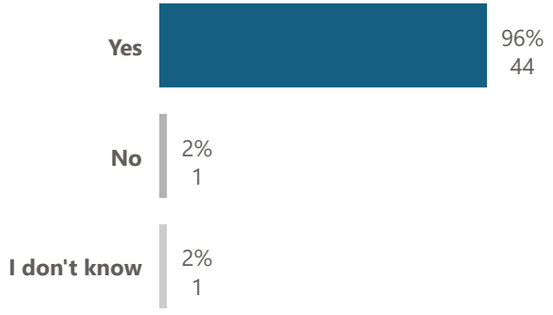
7.1 To what extent are your institution's enterprise systems integrated?



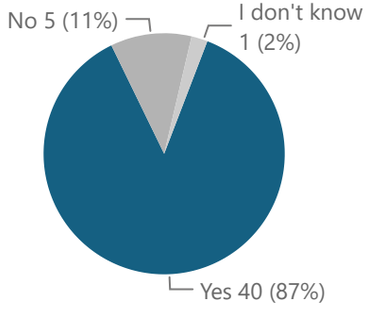
7.2 Authorized personnel can easily access necessary data for analysis and reporting



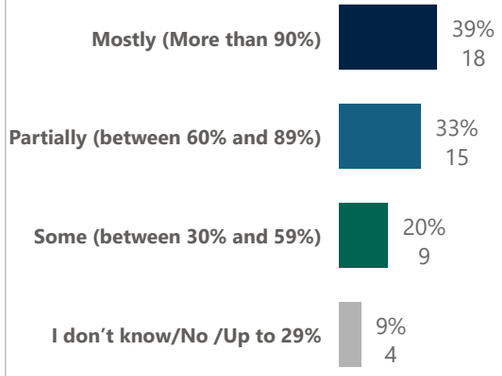
7.3 The data maintained by the institution is accurate and reliable



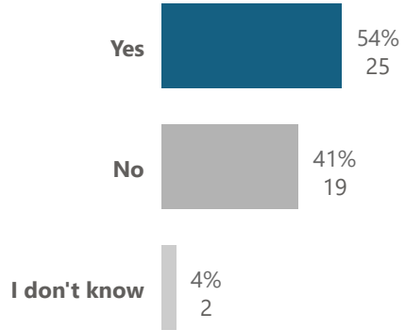
7.3.1 There is a process in place to ensure that the institution's data remains current and up-to-date



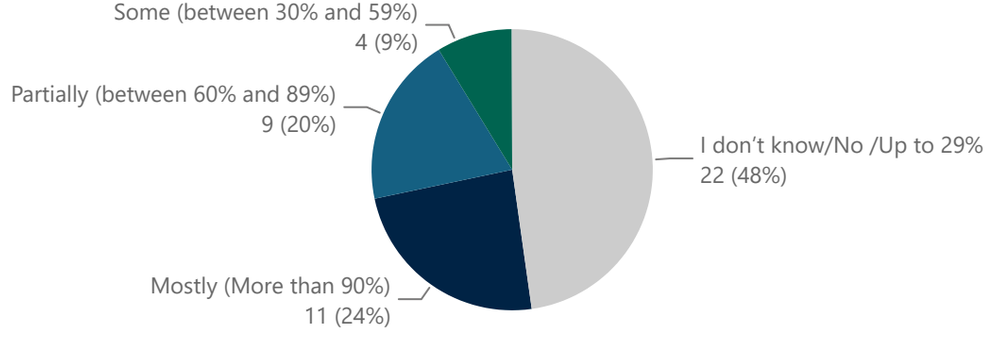
7.4 To what extent is department-specific data available for analysis within each department?



7.5 The institution employs Business Intelligence Tools (e.g., Power BI, Tableau) for reporting purposes



7.5.1 How many departments have access to department-level Business Intelligence dashboards or reports?



DMB - Technology Dimension

Data Hosting in an Accessible Warehouse

South Africa

8. Is data hosted in a data warehouse / data lake where all teams can access it?



Data is readily available, accurate, and up-to-date, and is hosted in a fully integrated Data Warehouse, where data is continuously synchronized with operational systems throughout the day

Data is hosted in a near-real-time Data Warehouse, where data is frequently updated at regular intervals (eg, hourly or daily) from operational systems

Data is stored in an offline Data Warehouse, which is not entirely up-to-date but is regularly updated from operational systems This setup emphasizes reporting-oriented data structures to meet specific objectives of the Data Warehouse

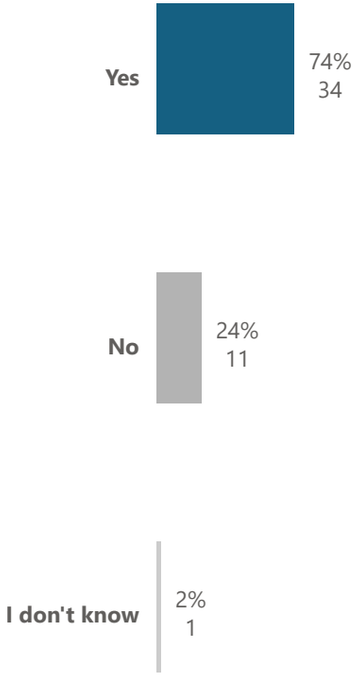
Data is forwarded from operational systems to an external server for storage, often as Excel downloads to user computers This data remains unused unless manually extrapolated and analyzed

DMB - Technology Dimension

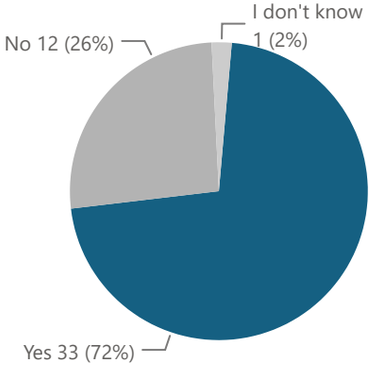
Data Protection and Threat Management

South Africa

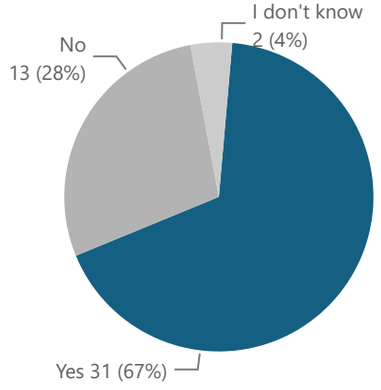
9.1 The institution has a data protection policy in place



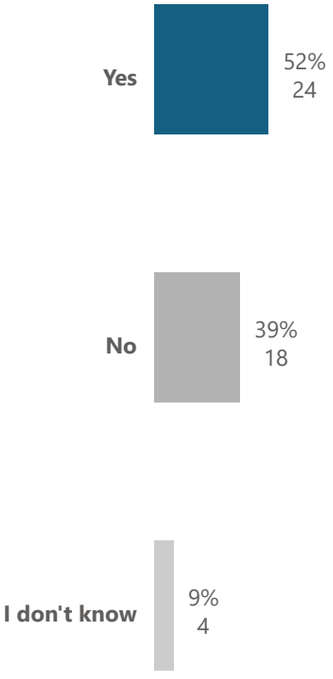
9.1.1 Data protection measures at the institution are compliant with national or international regulations



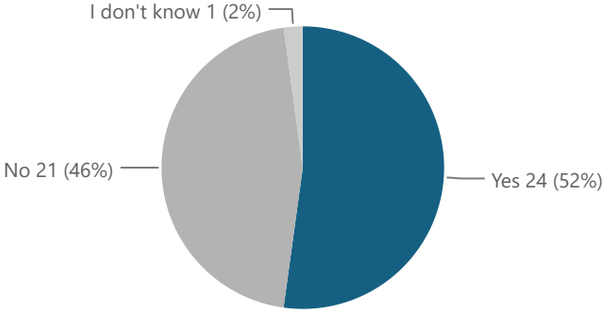
9.1.2 The institution is prepared to address and rectify the situation in case of a data breach or privacy violation



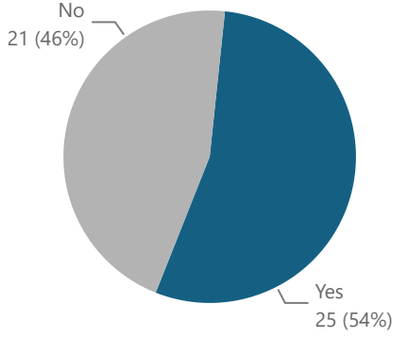
9.2 The institution has a formal threat management plan



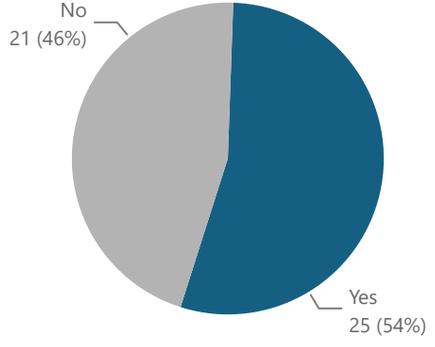
9.2.1 The threat management plan includes detailed procedures for escalation in the event of a security threat



9.2.2 There are established procedures for the resolution of security incidents at the institution



9.2.3 Measures are in place at the institution for mitigating the impact of security threats

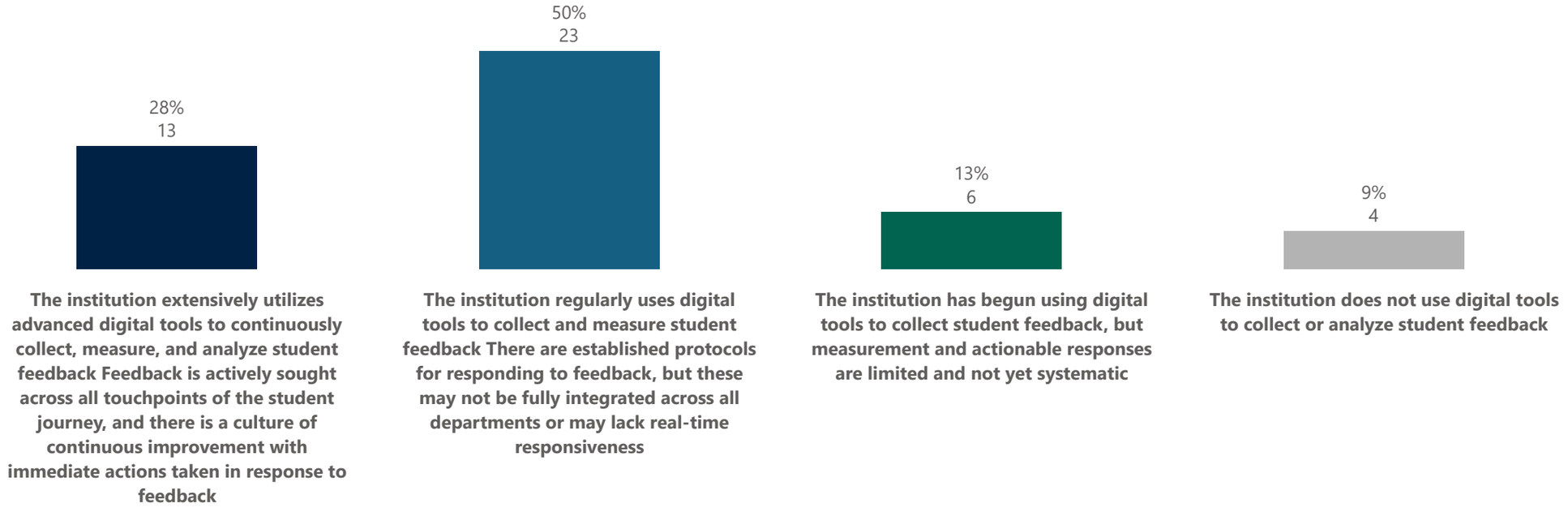


DMB - Academics Dimension

Digital Tools for Student Feedback

South Africa

10. Does your institution use digital tools to listen to, measure, and act upon student feedback to enhance the student experience?

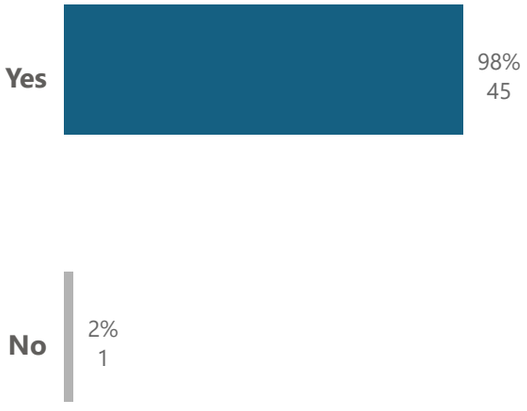


DMB - Academics Dimension

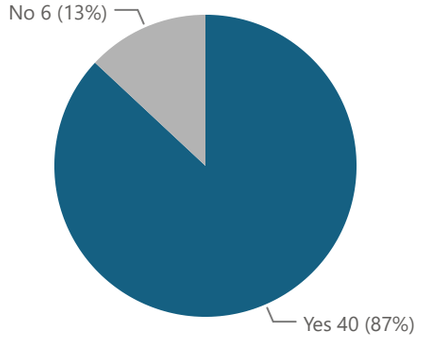
Optimization of Learning Management Systems (1/2)

South Africa

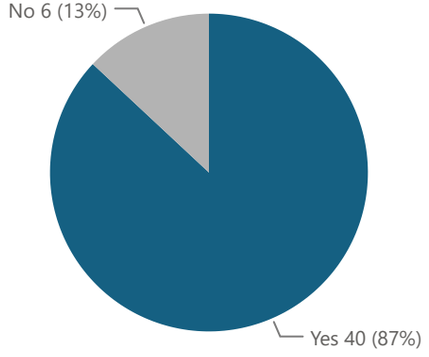
11.1 Your institution utilizes a Learning Management System



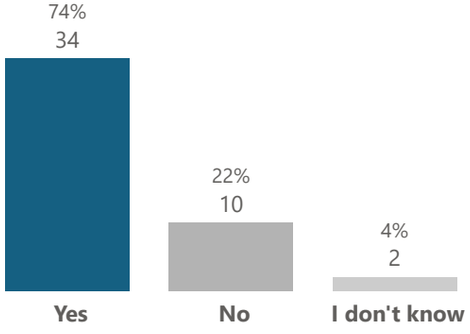
11.1.1 It supports students enrolled in in-person study modalities



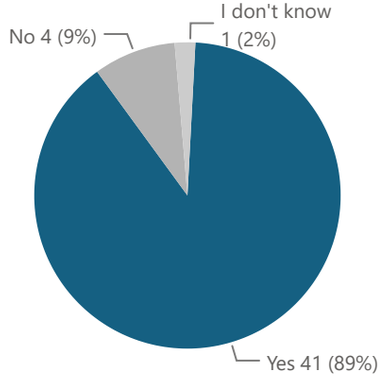
11.1.2 It supports students enrolled in online



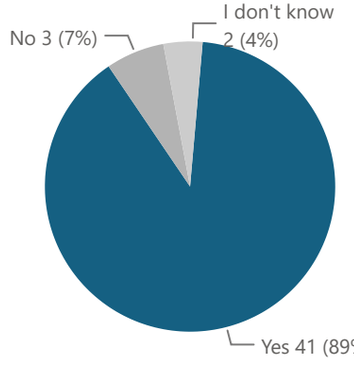
11.1.2.1 It supports synchronous (live) sessions



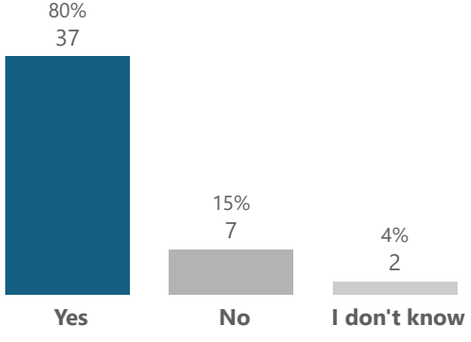
11.1.3 It facilitates, manages, and assesses learning outcomes



11.1.4 It streamlines course administration and management, including content organization, scheduling, and assignment submissions



11.1.2.2 It supports asynchronous (self-paced) sessions

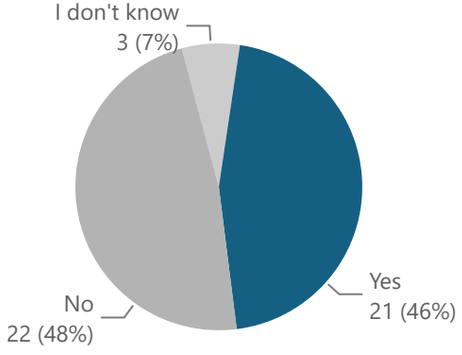


DMB - Academics Dimension

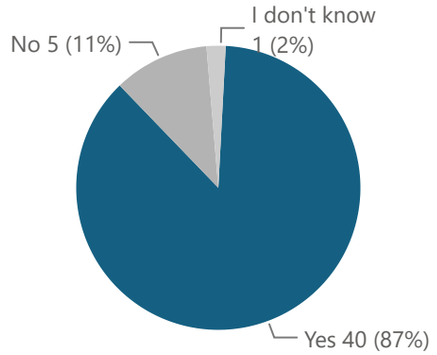
Optimization of Learning Management Systems (2/2)

South Africa

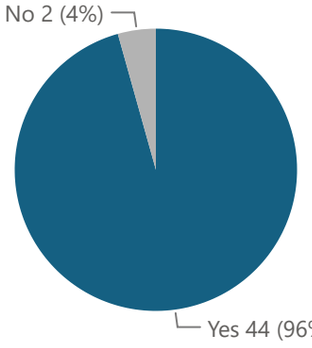
11.1.5 It enables personalized learning experiences, such as adaptive learning paths and customizable learning modules



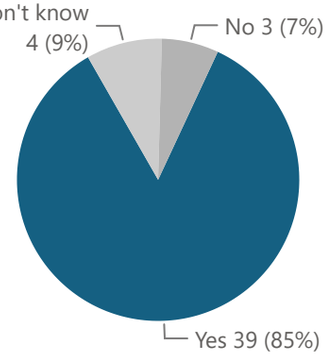
11.1.6 It includes collaborative learning tools, like forums, group assignments, and real-time discussions



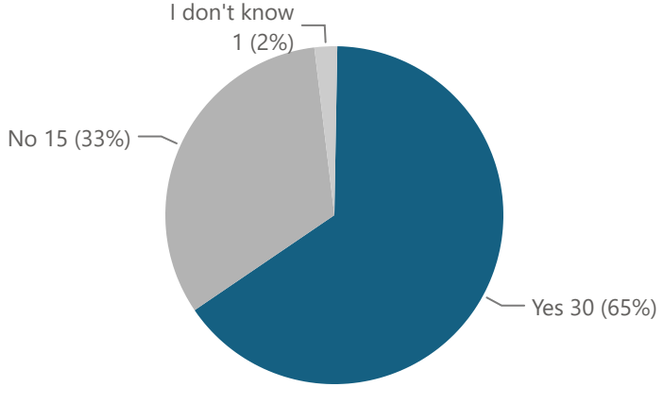
11.1.7 It effectively manages tracking and reporting of student progress, including grades, completed modules, and participation



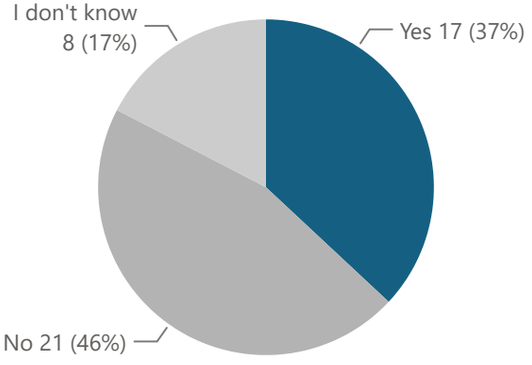
11.1.8 It provides analytics that offer meaningful insights to help educators and administrators make informed decisions abou...



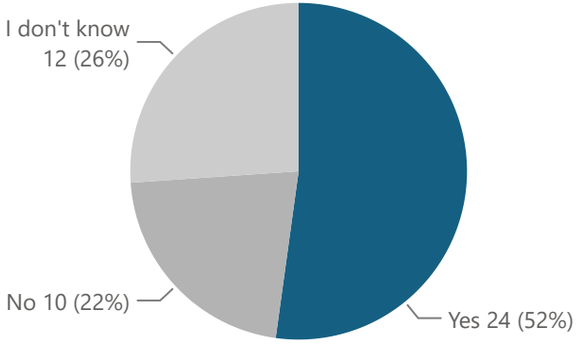
11.1.9 It is integrated with the Student Information System (SIS)



11.1.10 Its applications are AI-enabled



11.1.11 It maintains compliance with W3C Accessibility Standards

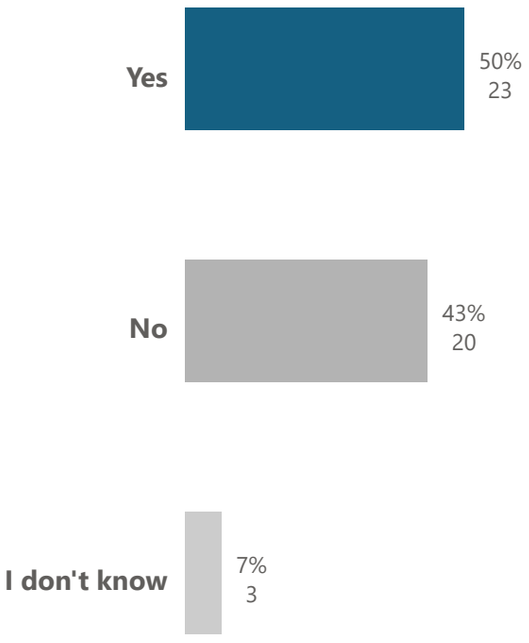


DMB - Academics Dimension

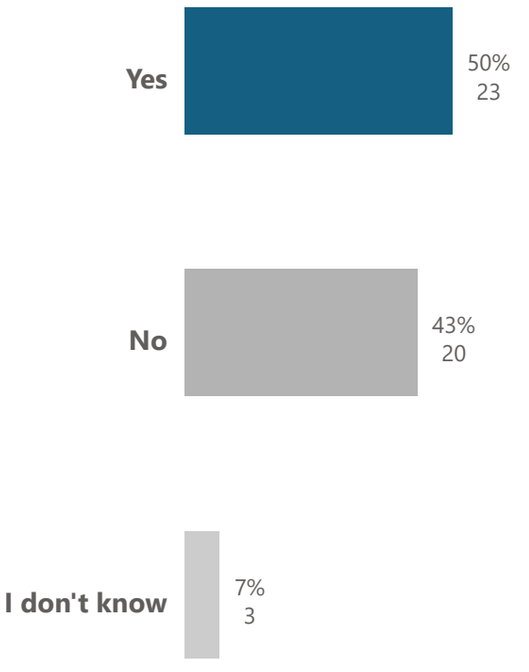
AI in Curriculum and Research

South Africa

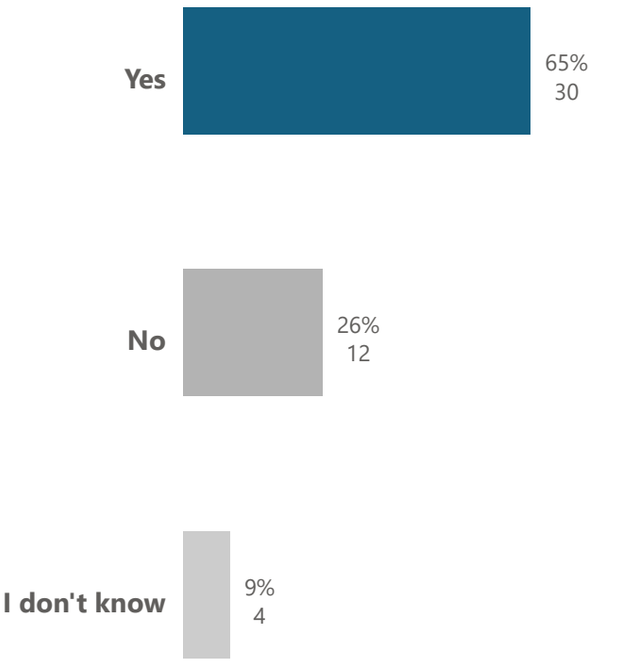
12.1 The institution has a formal policy providing clear guidelines and principles for the ethical and effective use of AI in learning, teaching, and research



12.2 The use of AI technologies, such as ChatGPT, GPT-3, DALL-E, etc., is integrated into the curriculum



12.3 AI technologies are actively used in the institution's research initiatives

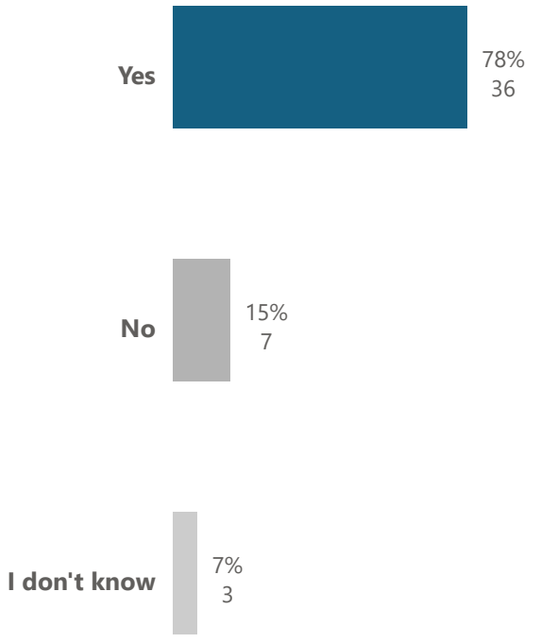


DMB - Organization Dimension

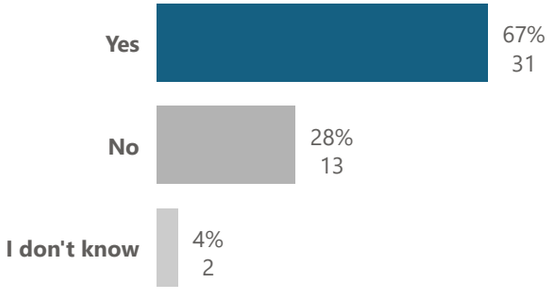
Culture and Governance Support for Digital Transformation

South Africa

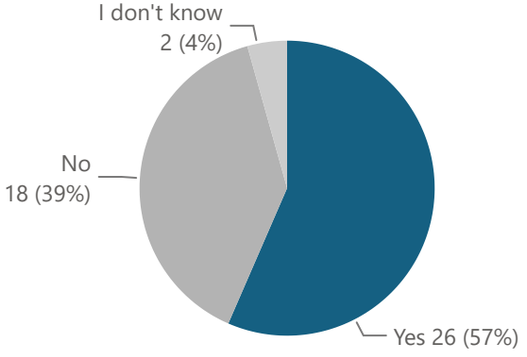
13.1 The institution promotes and supports opportunities for trying and piloting new digital projects



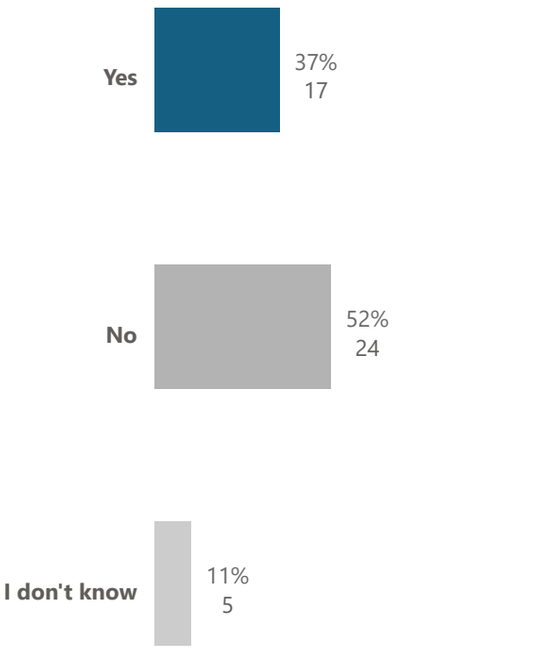
13.2 There is a governance structure that oversees the approval, funding, and monitoring of digital transformation initiatives



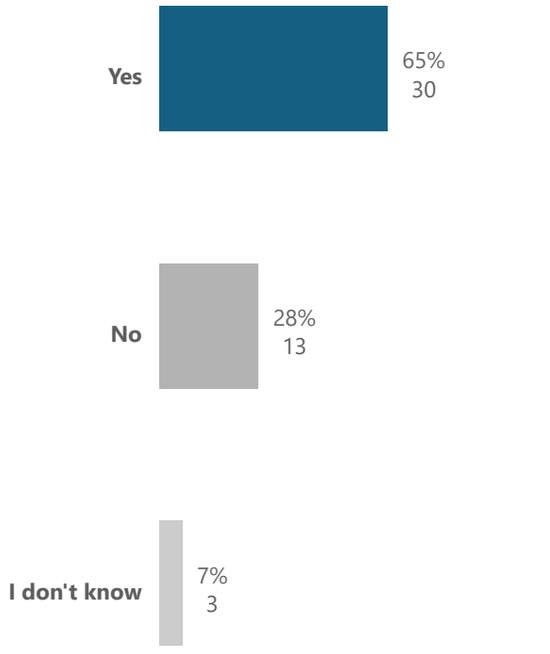
13.2.1 The institution's decision-making processes are agile and flexible enough to facilitate the timely rollout of digital projects



13.3 The institution has developed a change management plan to address the organizational impacts of digital transforma...



13.4 Department or functional-level teams are empowered with decision-making authority for their digital projects

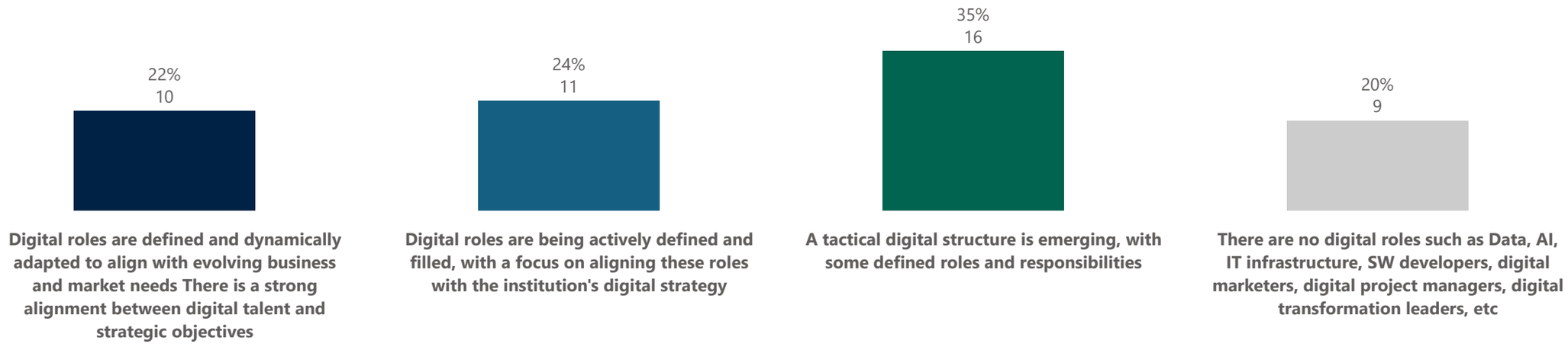


DMB - Organization Dimension

Well-Defined Digital Roles and Responsibilities

South Africa

14. Are digital roles (such as Data, AI, IT infrastructure, SW developers, digital marketers, digital project managers, digital transformation leaders, etc.) and responsibilities defined within your institution?

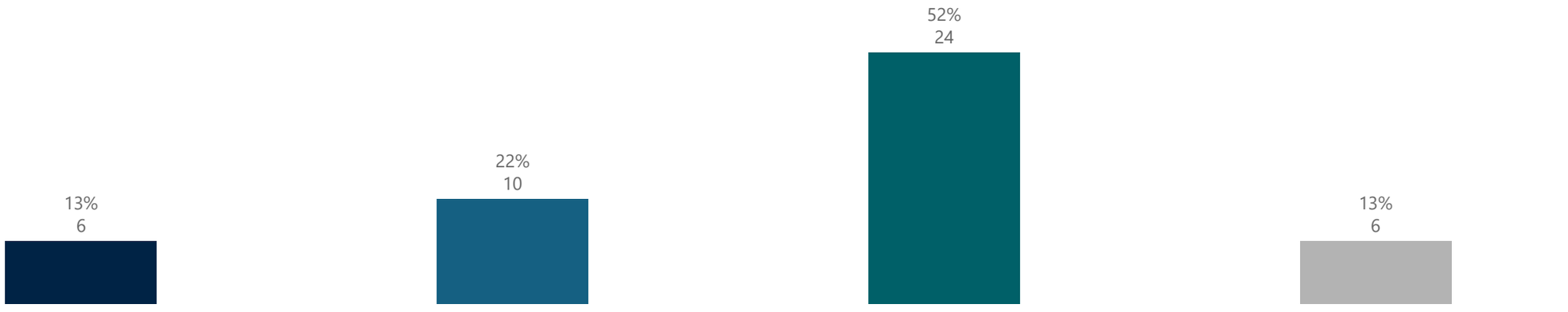


DMB - Organization Dimension

AI Readiness and Skills Trainings

South Africa

15. Does the institution train staff and faculty to enhance AI readiness and skills, digital tools and manage digital talent for digital transformation?



- Extensive and ongoing AI programs ensure high AI readiness and continuous and advanced professional development programs focused on digital competencies with proactive digital skills training and strategic hiring
- One-off programs to enhance AI readiness, identify skill gaps, and develop positive cultural attitudes, including strategies for effective change management
- Initial efforts to identify AI readiness and skill gaps, basic digital tools training for staff & faculty (not yet comprehensive or mandatory), with reactive digital skill training, and hiring for new digital skill sets as needed
- No AI readiness programs in place, no digital tools training, and rare digital skill training or hiring