



Innovative, effective, enjoyable?

Creating the evidence base to deliver productive academic workplaces

Project overview

This HEFCE funded project, led by Loughborough University in conjunction with Nottingham Trent University, will develop an evidence base to support the delivery of innovative, effective and enjoyable academic workplaces. It will focus on the:

- design team, stakeholder engagement, procurement and the delivery process
- physical outcomes (buildings and layouts)
- subsequent effect the spaces have on the academic community

Activities

The data collection will centre on a series of case studies of exemplar academic workplaces from around the UK. The purpose of the case studies will be to highlight examples of good practice, innovation and learning. Each case study will be examined using a standard suite of data collection techniques (comprising a walk-through, stakeholder interviews and questionnaire surveys), supplemented by other research methods, such as participant observation and social network analysis.

Other core activities include the:

- development of an HEI build database, which will be made available through the project website.
- creation of the Forum for Academic Space design, which will provide a platform for an ongoing dialogue, exchanging thinking and best practice regarding HE workspace
- investigating the priorities and perspectives of different stakeholders, from policy makers to occupants



Innovative, effective, enjoyable?

Creating the evidence base to deliver productive academic workplaces

Deliverables

1. A strategic briefing document that provides a clear business case for developing new types of academic spaces

Target audience: Directors of estates and HEI senior managers.

Scope: This briefing document will articulate the costs and benefits (financial and non-financial) of investing in innovative academic workspaces. It will also examine how investment in academic workspace may be linked to current policy priorities, and how it can be used to support and reflect organisational strategic objectives.

2. A white paper on the development of new academic workspaces

Target audience: HEFCE and policy makers.

Scope: This paper will make policy recommendations concerning the development of new academic spaces, via capital building programmes and other funding streams. It will review recent trends (post-war), focusing on examples of innovation and the key influences that may have shaped workspace provision (addressing, for example, the impact of funding policies and other government initiatives, as well as changes in academic working practices). It will also give a snapshot of current academic office-space provision, considering issues such as the extent to which universities view academic working environments to be a strategic resource, and what proportion of existing academic workspaces may be deemed fit-for-purpose. Finally, it will outline future challenges in this area, considering the drivers behind, and the barriers to, the development of new academic office accommodation.

3. A briefing handbook that presents a best practice protocol for interaction between designers and occupants in the development of academic work environments

Target audience: Estates personnel, users and practitioners.

Scope: This handbook will present a best practice process for interaction between designers and occupants in the design and construction of academic work environments. It will focus specifically on HE office environments, but draw on learning from other sectors.

For readers who have little prior knowledge of this area, (e.g. a head of department who is undertaking the role of project sponsor for the first time), this handbook will provide high level advice on the project process and team roles, as well as best practice guidance and case study examples of how client and occupant inputs can help to ensure a successful end-product. For estates personnel and practitioners, it will also provide a source of new ideas for meaningful and effective user consultation and communication.

4. A best practice guide about the physical product

Target audience: Users, estates personnel, designers.

Scope: This handbook will present case study examples of innovative work environments in HE. It is intended that this document will serve as an aid to project visioning and the development of outline briefs, by showcasing how particular aims (such as making a strong visual impact, or supporting collaborative working) have been achieved by projects in different ways. The choice of design aims will be determined by the current trends in HEI builds. Each design aim will be illustrated by reference to three or more contrasting case studies. In addition to a strong visual content, with photographs and floor plans of the space, the information presented about each case study will include: aims and objectives, context, initial outlay and maintenance costs, performance (in terms of its impact on behaviour and user satisfaction).

In addition to the above outputs, there will be a number of project events to launch the findings to HEIs and practitioners working within the HE sector. Findings will also be disseminated through the project website, as the project progresses.