City Campus: Your space

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For the past 18 months ILS has been heavily involved in the University's latest development in the City Centre. The City Campus comprises four levels, 15 teaching spaces, 618 study seats, and 135 PCs. The building is fully enabled for wireless use, incorporates the latest AV technologies and offers innovative teaching spaces. This new and exciting development, launched in September, has been developed with engagement and flexibility at its core.

The ethos of City Campus…

- The pursuit of learning, teaching, collaboration and inclusion is a concept throughout the entire building not just specific areas.

- The building includes social spaces. Areas designed to encourage ideas, thinking and collaboration, with access to technologies and resources if needed.

- The building is enabled for the use of mobile technologies; teaching areas and facilities will allow the user to use the tools they prefer. For example laptops, netbooks, and other mobile devices such as smart phones, iPads and iPods.

- The building contains a mix of flexible lecture rooms that can be used in a variety of ways, and informal meeting spaces.

Teaching elements

The building comprises seminar spaces, lecture theatres, meeting rooms and group study areas, all of which have been designed with technology, flexibility and student and staff experience in mind.

Each and every space from main reception to large seminar rooms has been created with the building ethos at its core, from the choice of chair, to the design of teaching lectern and technology. Everything is there to enable staff, visitors and students to get the most out of the building.

The following is an overview of what the key spaces at City offer. The finished spaces have evolved from staff and student consultation, observation and reflection of what works well on our existing sites, and embracing the latest views and recommendations in learning and teaching spaces.

Social Learning and breakout:

This space has been designed to be utilized by staff, students and visitors, offering them an environment where they can reflect, collaborate, work with a laptop or relax. The space includes two of the group study screens that have proved so popular in Peirson Library, whiteboards, open access PCs and different types of flexible furniture. The idea is that the chairs and tables can be moved anywhere the users want, they're there to support their particular needs. Each morning the room is reset to default – each evening the space looks nothing like this – a great sign that it's working.

Gaming
We have created a 'Gaming environment' on the lower ground floor where students can test out and discuss the latest games, with flexible furniture, large LCD screens and all the latest games consoles.

PC Suites – a real world experience:
Taking inspiration from an office environment the PC lab space offers two open plan offices, breakout areas, spaces for reflection, and a central boardroom to discuss and build on ideas. The teaching model will allow students total control over their choice of development tools, either individually or as a team, and seeks to mirror the way they may find themselves working in their future employment.

Ultimately the way they (the students) work, research and develop in this space is their decision, they use what works for them and fits their way of working. The space acknowledges that time spent at the PC is only part of the developmental process. This is a very exciting and innovative area; allowing two teaching sessions to take place on either side of the lab simultaneously; or one lecturer to open up the entire lab by moving central partition screens, and teach 76 students.

Design concept for PC suite:

The key is that this space is not intended to be used for a standard lecture format – if it's an hour-long Powerpoint presentation this isn't the space to do that. This environment is designed for the tutor to spend much of their time away from the lectern, guiding, discussing and inspiring students through direct engagement.

Seminar
The building is very much a 'person plus' environment, where students and staff can actively engage with the environment and technology, with the environment being flexible to suit the various needs and demands made upon it.

We spent 18 months working with furniture designers to come up with a solution that was right for the City campus. This system, designed to be used in a variety of ways, allows for a very innovative environment.

The end result is a entirely new circular table system, comprising three flexible sections, designed to be easy to move, interlock in different configurations and offer integration with a power pole for laptop use.

The system after two months of intensive use has proved popular, with innovative use of secondary LCD screens to combat issues of students not being able to see the main teaching focal. Again this space easily allows groups to form and staff to engage with students easily within the room. Another key objective was that the room can easily be

reset to a default layout - the porters can now reset a 48-seat space to default in less than 2 minutes.

AV
The AV installation underpins the ethos of the building, allowing teaching to be flexible, ensuring that the technology is there when needed and can be used in a number of different ways.

This is the most advanced teaching facility at the University in terms of AV, all rooms have the latest teaching equipment, incorporating the very latest in control systems and projection.

In summary…
After observing the use of the building throughout its first few months the spaces seem to be fulfilling the brief originally set, staff and students are making the spaces their own, mobile technologies are evident throughout the building and in every space groups form to discuss and collaborate. It is the hope that the finished spaces at City Campus do represent the ethos and truly provide an innovative, engaging and truly inspiring environment for staff and students, but only the users can really comment…..