

Annual Conference 2026: 'Less is More'.



The 2026 Conference will be held in Belfast at Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University on the 9 and 10 of June 2026, with a drink's reception and announcement of the Student Prize on the evening of the 8th. Reflecting current times, the theme of the conference is 'Less is More', a theme that could embrace subjects such as the circular economy, sustainability, retrofit and new efficient ways of using the estate and space.

Draft Programme (*subject to change*)

Monday 8 June 2026 – *School of Architecture, Queen's University Belfast*

Trustees to note that there will be a short AGM at 17.30

18:00 - 20:00 Pre-Conference Drinks Reception introduced by Clare Mulholland, School of Natural and Built Environment, Queen's University Belfast and the results of the University Design Forum Student Prize at the Bartlett School of Architecture by Andy Macfee, A.M.A.

Tuesday 9 June 2026 – *Riddel Hall, Queen's University Belfast*

08:30 Registration with Refreshments

09:30 Welcome and Introduction to the Conference by Trevor Wills, Director of Estates, University of Plymouth and Ian Duddy, Director of Estates, Queen's University Belfast.

09:45 Keynote: More From Less - Thoughts from a Small Practice by Ian McKnight, Hall McKnight.

10:30 Introduction to Queen's University Belfast and an overview of its future strategy, including buildings under construction and planning and information on the university's procurement for value and quality in design by Conor McGowan, Head of Estates Planning, Queen's University Belfast & Jonathan Thompson, Estates Manager (Planning), Queen's University Belfast.

With presentations on recent building projects, including those to be visited later in the day:

- TODD Architects: Queen's Business School Student Hub & the Main Site Tower/Peter Frogatt Centre, Peter Minnis.
- Kennedy Fitzgerald Architects: Computer Sciences Hub & the Ashby, Engineering Building Refurbishment, Gareth McKnight.
- RPP Architects: Student Centre, One Elmwood (in partnership with Hawkins Brown) & Student Accommodation Dublin Road, Belfast, Harry McConnell.
- Consarc Design Group: Graduate School & Lanyon Building restoration, John Savage & Dawson Stelfox.

12:30 Lunch

13:15 International Reference Visits to Dublin and Paris by Rod McAllister.

13:45 Less is More – Members' Submissions

- Realising the potential of Ireland's oldest university estate: Lessons to be learned from adopting a sustainably driven approach to masterplanning by Kieran Brassil, Trinity College Dublin; Paul Eaton & Peter Sagar, Allies & Morrison.

14:15 University Design Forum Student Prize 2026, School of Architecture, QUB, Overview of winning designs and discussions on the lessons to be learnt for future university design. Facilitated by Andy Macfee, A.M.A.

15:00 Research Group Session: Doing More with What We Have: Rethinking the Future of Large Learning Spaces with Carol Costello, Cullinan Studio and Dr Clare Mulholland, Queen's University Belfast. Facilitated by Cora Kwiatkowski, Stride Treglown and Alex Grigull, Grimshaw Architects.

15:45 Tea & Coffee

16:00 Guided tours to recent buildings at Queens University Belfast:

- Queen's Business School Student Hub – Guide: Jonathan Thompson (Queen's University Belfast)
- Computer Sciences Building – Guide: Gareth McKnight (Kennedy Fitzgerald Architects)
- Student Centre, One Elmwood – Guide: Julia Roberts (Hawkins Brown)
- Graduate School – Guide: John Savage and Dawson Stelfox (Consarc Design Group)

18:00 - 22:00 Drinks and networking dinner in the Great Hall, with a dinner speech My Adventures in the Technoscape by Professor Greg Keeffe, Queens University Belfast.

Wednesday 10 June 2026- Lower Ground Floor, Ulster University

08:30 Arrival & Refreshments

08:55 Welcome and Introduction to Day 2 by Trevor Wills, Director of Estates, University of Plymouth and Michael Fitzpatrick, Ulster University.

09:00 Ulster University and Urban Regeneration: Introduction to Ulster University and its development, including short presentations by the related architects, and interesting projects from other campuses. Focus on urban regeneration and also on the culture change initiatives in reducing the size of the campus in the move from the previous location in Jordantown with Elaine Hartin, Chief Strategy & Finance Officer, Ulster University, Michael Fitzpatrick, Director of Estates, Ulster University, Phillip Wright, Head of Planning and Development, Ulster University, Keith Bradley, Founding Partner, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, Ana Cristobal, Director, Page Park Architects & James Redman, MAKE Architects.

10:30 Tea and Coffee

11:00 Less is More – Members' Submissions

- Seeing Estates Differently: Using Data Visualisation to Inform Better Decisions, Helen Groves & Gill Smith, AtkinsRéalis & Norion Ubechel, Place Intelligence.
- Adding user value: Research and adaptation to enhance user experience, Julian Robinson, LSE & Ziona Strelitz, ZZA Responsive Environments.

12:00 Lunch and Building Tours

14:00 Less is More – Members' Submissions

- When Less is More turns into Yes is More, Andy Young, BIG – Bjarke Ingels Group.

14:30 AI in Design: friend or foe, Dr Ciarán O'Kelly, School of Law, Queen's University Belfast and Helen Groves, AtkinsRéalis.

15:30 Finish & Conclusion, New Chair of University Design Forum.