

Campus spaces and places: Impact on student outcomes – a review of evidence, and visit to The Town House at Kingston University



February 17th 2022



Over 70 delegates attended the presentation on 17th February 2022 on the first phase of a major research study which seeks to answer key questions such as “How can we measure the value of the Higher Education built environment in terms of impact on students and student outcomes? What types of campus and what campus facilities deliver the most benefit for our students?”

These are among the questions that are being considered by the research project launched in February 2021 and jointly steered by AUDE (the Association of University Directors of Estates), HEDQF (the Higher Education Design Quality Forum) and Willmott Dixon (one of the UK’s leading construction companies and a specialist in higher education building).

Pre-Covid, Universities were spending more than £3.5bn a year on capital developments because of a strong belief in the impact this has on the delivery of high-quality teaching, research and student experience; post Covid future investments will have to deliver even more value. This research focuses on the value to students in particular; measurable value during their studies and after they finish in enabling them to achieve better longer-term outcomes.



One year into the research what have we learnt? Our report of this phase of the research was published in advance of this event.

The evening was opened with an Introduction to The Town House by Sean Woulfe, Director of Estates at Kingston University. This was followed by a visit from which we could see it was a worthy winner of the RIBA Stirling Prize with its variety of spaces that flow one into another, the connection with the outside communities which are invited into the public areas of the building such as the ground floor café and exhibition space, the masterful central staircases which create a heart and identity to the building and the

exceptional quality of detailing in a limited, high quality, palette of materials. The architects Grafton Architects and the university as client have created a building which sets an example of how universities are responding to the subject of the research study, with the building creating a lively diverse atmosphere for a rich mix of activities including study space, library, dance and drama.

Following tours around the building, Ghazwa Alwani-Starr, Chief Operations Officer, QMUL, and HEDQF Chair introduced the Research Partners and the Research Project, with key results from the first phase being presented by Professor Sonja Dragojlovic-Oliveira, Department of Architecture at the University of Strathclyde and lead researcher for this Project. A lively discussion explored the fact that there is not much research literature in the UK related to the link between physical environment and student outcomes and the difficulty of carrying out research in this area when there are so many factors that can affect outcomes.

Thanks to the partners in the Research Project, the team from Kingston University for hosting the event, to Professor Sonja Dragojlovic-Oliveira for her presentation and to Willmott Dixon and HEDQF for sponsoring the event.

We are interested to hear how you and your university could join in the next phase of the study. Contact admin@hedqf.org to find out more.

You can view and download the full report [here](#).

