Centralised Teaching Laboratories Project

Workshop 1

University of Sunderland

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Attendance

Simon Britton		Consultant
Iain Garfield	Head of Estates Services	University of Sunderland
Phil Marsh	Director of Facilities	University of Sunderland
Jeff Teasdale	Senior Technician	University of Sunderland
Steve Dickson	Director of Facilities Management	University of Liverpool
Steve Plant	Human Resources Manager (Organisational Development & Diversity)	University of Liverpool
Phil Woodward	Project Manager	University of Liverpool
Gary Robinson	Senior Electrical Engineer	University of Sheffield
Cliff Barraclough	Estates Development Manager (College of Science and Engineering)	University of Edinburgh
Sandra Lawrie	Technical Services & Estates Manager (Biological Sciences)	University of Edinburgh
Julie Scarratt	Director of Learning Spaces	University of Birmingham
Owen Thompson	Estates Planner (Arts & Social Sciences)	University of Birmingham

Background (Phil Marsh)

The Science Complex Redevelopment is a change project conceived to improve links to business, academic attitudes and support services.
The University of Sunderland has a turnover of about £126m, 1,400 staff, 20,000 students and is highly dependent on local recruitment.
Recent developments have focussed on consolidation onto two campuses St Peter's and City.
There has been a 17% reduction in space over the last five years and the target is to make a further 15% reduction over the next five years.

Science Complex Redevelopment (Iain Garfield)

Public engagement
In order to engage with the public the project focused on local residents rather than widening participation specialists. The public was encouraged to use other recently developed university facilities rather than encouraging use of the SCR. The University of Liverpool plan to use the Central Teaching Laboratories for school engagement, some VI form teaching events.

Space rationalisation
Some SCR space use was inappropriate but resulted in high utilisation e.g. some departments resisted using general teaching space resulting in overcrowding of dedicated departmental specialist space for general teaching.

Data was collected by regular space surveys carried out during two weeks in each semester. General surveys were based on 0, 25%, 50%, 75% and 100% occupation at times defined to ensure that rooms were likely to be in use. Sciences were surveyed on a headcount basis for the last five years to provide more robust data for the SCR project. Efficient space use required good timetabling. Investigations had shown that Teesside University had identified that inserting odd room bookings first before auto-scheduling significantly improved the system efficiency.

There was a pressing need to make front line teaching space as flexible as possible and it was decided to separate open access computer space from that used for teaching. Lap top computers were used to enable space to be used for both general and computer teaching.

Specialist equipment was concentrated into discrete areas which enabled all departments to benefit from the best equipment and it was also found that this enabled the University to offer a more comprehensive commercial service.

In order to maximise the use of space and increase flexibility large laboratories were divided so that plasma screens used for teaching were capable of independent control.

Buy in

The SCR project was driven by the determination of the leading academic which resulted in limited academic resistance. Small group champions were used to communicate with staff in all departments. It was found that consistency of message, representation and ownership was key to the success of the process. Extensive time was spent on the communications but was well worth the input. There was a noticeable lack of progress and buy-in in departments where the project team were less engaged. It was essential to emphasise that everyone recognised that facilities were for general use and not dedicated to any one department.

An academic lead was appointed for each laboratory. It was not necessary for the person to be an academic manager since the role was to advise and oversee issues related to the use of the space.

Support issues

All stores arrangements had been reorganised and processes reviewed. Stores had been bar coded and a more commercial approach introduced to holding stores.

It was planned to examine multiskilling of support staff at the next stage.

Occupation

A pre-occupancy evaluation of existing space had been undertaken before staff and students were able to compare with the new facilities. This would be invaluable in measuring the success of the project alongside post occupancy evaluations.

Commissioning agents had been appointed at the commencement of the contract which fitted well with the appointment of the main contractor at the earliest possible time.

A ‘soft landings’ approach had been taken to handover. A small team of ‘men in orange jackets’ from Facilities was established to answer questions from users on site whilst work was in progress. Other measures included local signage, blogs and the Facilities Helpdesk.

One person from Facilities was seconded to the main contractor three days a week to develop a liaison role, this person was made available on site for the first month of occupation to ease users in and address ‘teething issues’.

Liverpool Central Teaching Laboratories (CTL) (Phil Woodward, Steve Plant)
It was essential to have a strong academic lead for the success of this type of project. Discussions are continuing to determine the most appropriate management structure for the project but HERA role profiles are being prepared to support a new structure.

As part of general carbon management a league table was being produced for all buildings on campus. It was hoped that the design of experiments, particularly teaching, would be linked to energy minimisation.

Technical support needs to be flexible, team orientated and multi-skilled. A skills matrix of requirements and staff had been produced to assist will role allocation. It was anticipated that there would be strong links to Central Technical Services, Central Computer Department, and Health & Safety to maximise resources and technical knowledge. The CTL was being established as an Apprentiship Training School which would assist with succession planning and resource allocation.

Visit to SCR
A very instructive visit to the SCR project took place.