

Estates **Matter!**

Report on Survey of Students' views of their universities' estates 2013



HEDQF

The Higher Education Design Quality Forum (HEDQF) is a unique partnership between higher education clients and design professionals. Its aim is to improve the performance of higher education buildings and estates

Research led by LSE for the HEDQF, sponsored by Osborne.

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SHEPPARD ROBSON

Foreword

For over a decade, the Higher Education Design Quality Forum (HEDQF) has been promoting quality of design in university buildings and estates. It does this by a variety of activities including debates, exhibitions, visits and research projects. The Forum is a unique partnership between university clients and design professionals with the mutual aim of ensuring that the buildings of today will be of appropriate quality to serve the needs of tomorrow. Our buildings have to respond to changes in student expectations, changes in learning and teaching methods and the ever-changing world of technology, supporting world-class research and giving students a memorable experience of this important time in their lives.

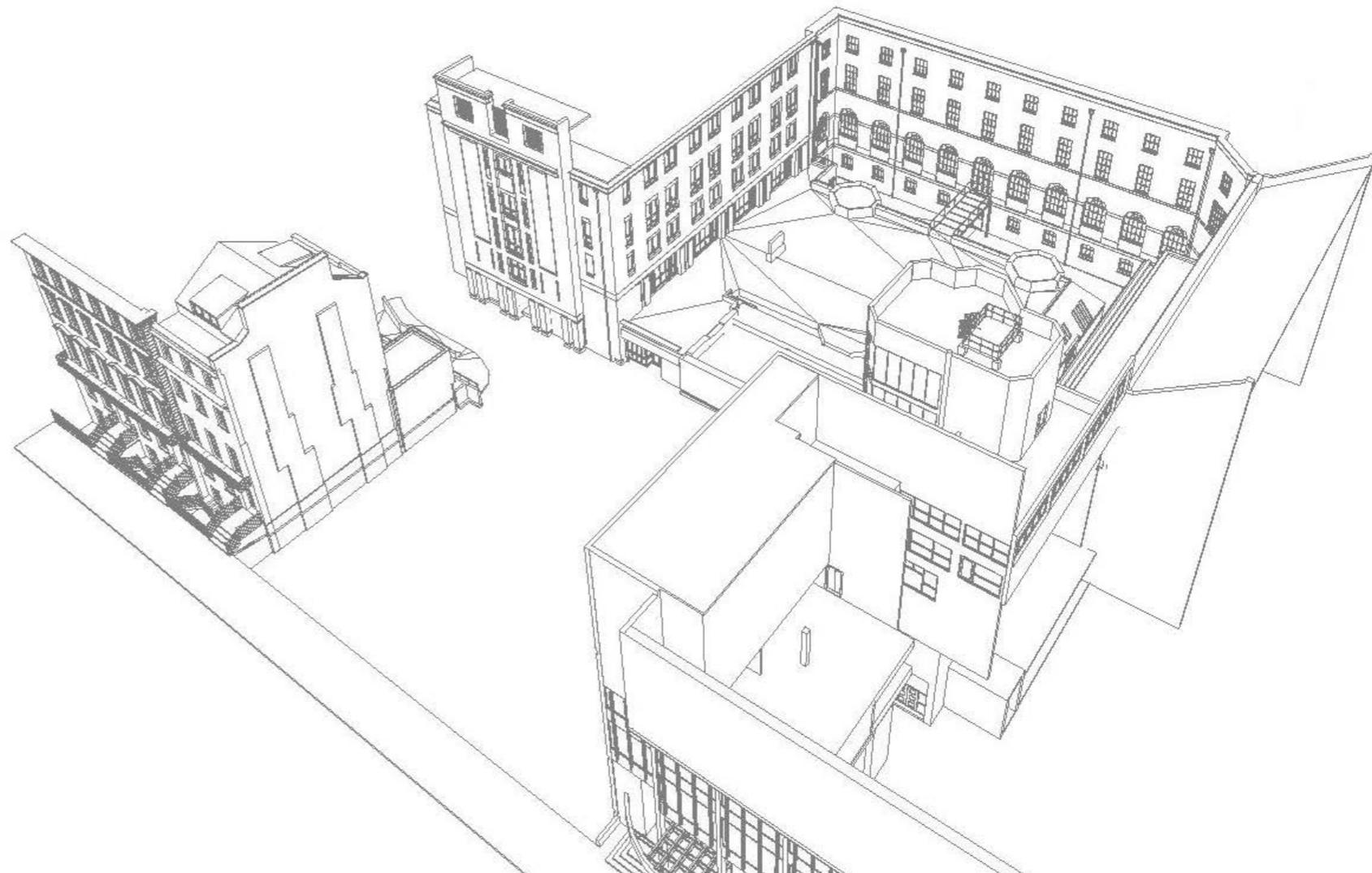


In this context, this is an important project, undertaken by HEDQF and supported by the Association of University Directors of Estates to better understand the student perspective on the university estate and thanks are due to all those who contributed to this project.

Ian Caldwell
Director of Estates and Facilities,
King's College London & Chairman of HEDQF

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Between 1996 and 2011 universities invested a massive £27.5 billion in their buildings and estates. This has resulted in some amazing buildings of world class quality, which incorporate innovative design, environmental sustainability and flexible use.

However this halcyon period of building and investment occurred whilst there was a seismic shift in both the numbers participating in higher education and the mode of funding. Students are now the main funder of higher education in the UK and in 2012 commenced paying tuition fees of up to £9,000 per annum in England, in addition to funding their housing and living costs.

Universities have always operated a quasi market for students but the changes in funding have significantly changed the dynamic; students have become paying customers rather than grateful beneficiaries of higher education and now consider much more closely just

what they are getting for their money. Where do the universities' buildings and physical assets come into the equation? Does investment in the university estate make a difference and does it matter to students?

Remarkably, although universities survey students to within an inch of their lives on a whole host of variables, the impact of the buildings, places and spaces on the student experience have never before been comprehensively evaluated. The two main external surveys, the International Student Barometer and the National Student Survey have a limited number of facilities related questions but do not focus on the quality of the buildings per se.

This was something I, in my role as Director of Estates was very much aware of at the LSE and I decided to commission my own research into the views of LSE students on the buildings and facilities that are provided

to them. The LSE is a relatively small institution located on a compact campus in central London and I selected a qualitative research methodology, based on structured face to face interviews on a relatively small sample of 100 students. The results proved to be very interesting. In the LSE case only 25% of students considered the quality of the campus and buildings as a factor in their decision to study at the LSE but once here 75% thought it important to their experience as a student. The survey provided an important insight for the Estates Division on student perceptions of the built environment, confirming the importance of recent capital investment and informing us where future investment should be directed.

I therefore felt that a similar but more quantitative nationwide survey would prove invaluable to my peers in their quest to improve the quality of their universities estates. A natural partner for such an exercise was the Higher Education Design Quality Forum (HEDQF) and

hence the idea for this research was born. Financial support was obtained from the Association of University Directors of Estates (AUDE) and the building contractor Geoffrey Osborne Ltd. This sponsorship has enabled HEDQF to produce both this booklet and associated film

Julian S Robinson
Director of Estates
London School of Economics and Political Science
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The Student and Staff Perspective

The research undertaken by ZZA Ltd for the LSE Estates Division in 2011 indicated the quality of the estate mattered to students.

- *“Update more of the buildings – create a newer feel. The library isn’t big enough to house everyone.”*
- *“I would renovate all the buildings to make them more modern and remove the weariness, and create more small spots on the campus.”*
- *“I would update the toilets in all the buildings apart from the NAB.”*
- *“Knock down all of the ugly buildings so it doesn’t feel like you’ve living in Croydon!”*

In common with the LSE, many universities seek to understand the impact of their estate on their students. For example Bath Spa University have asked students for several years what they feel about the estate and buildings and how important this is to them, a feature strongly supported by Amy Dawson, their Students’ Union President.

“At Bath Spa University a high percentage of the student body considered the look of the buildings in making their decision to study here. They also rated the attractiveness of the campus as highly important. With the investment in new buildings and the fact we have such beautiful campuses, I hope new students continue to value what the University’s facilities have to offer.”

The Student and Staff Perspective

The investment in the quality of universities’ estates is a conscious decision by senior management. Professor Philip Ogden, Senior Vice Principal of Queen Mary University of London, at the time major estate investments were being planned and implemented, agrees.

“Investment in the estate has proved of fundamental value in enhancing the experience of both students and staff, improving research productivity and giving the institution a clearer identity and sense of pride in itself after a series of mergers and rapid growth. A crucial factor was the availability of contiguous sites for new buildings and a decision early on to appoint first-rate architects and do everything possible to make sure that budgets were adequate to deliver buildings of high quality”.



Image Credit: Wayne Matthews-Stroud

Rod McAllister seeks to define the USP of some of the most memorable and surprising built environments on a journey around Academia. Interviews with students, academics and professionals form the background to this exploration of enterprising and inspiring projects. Each one driven by the ambition to forge a truly special student experience.

The 10-minute film covers both old and new universities from across the UK and also contain references to international examples. It looks at how the estate and buildings help project the image of HEI's and how they feature in promotional material and explore why HEI's think they are important. It considers whether the facilities deliberately support the University's competitiveness and create a USP and how this came about? Most importantly it focuses on students' views as they are now the main funder of Higher Education in the UK.

Who is the audience?

The target audience is senior staff within institutions, who have an impact on the quality of the built environment and the competitiveness of the sector.

The film and research was sponsored by Sheppard Robson and was premiered at AUDE Annual Conference 2012. The film is on YouTube, the AUDE and RIBA websites, where other films about the design of higher educational facilities produced by HEDQF can also be found.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=330UuQR8Qo4>

Click any of the thumbnail images opposite to view the film online.



The Higher Education Design Forum (HEDQF) supported by the Association of University Directors of Estates (AUDE) were concerned that the main student surveys in the public domain only touched on the issue of university estates, tangentially. Furthermore, research by HEDQF found no in depth studies on the importance and impact of estates on the student decision-making process when selecting universities as well as the students' experience whilst at university.

HEDQF therefore commissioned research to look into students' views on the quality of the buildings, places and spaces that make up a university campus.

Research questions and requirements

The research was conducted to explore the following issues:

- What are the importance and impact of various facets of the university estate on the quality of the student experience?
- How do importance and impact vary by region, university type and demographics?

A review of the field indicated there were relatively few companies that had access to a nationwide data base of students. One of these companies, OpinionPanel (now called YouthSight) was selected to provide a quantitative survey of 1,000 students' views on the quality of their estates. OpinionPanel was in a position to run the relevant questions on its weekly Student Omnibus survey.

Specifically, OpinionPanel:

- Provided a calibrated sample for the online survey
- Assisted HEDQF in the development of seven survey questions
- Scripted and hosted the online survey questions
- Processed survey data and provided standard omnibus data tables.

The questions themselves were derived following consultation with HEDQF members, YouthSight and three AUDE Regions. The full survey sheet can be found at Appendix 1 at the back of this booklet.

The sample size had to be carefully calibrated to ensure that there was coverage of all universities across the UK and that there was no bias in favour of gender, year group, region and type of university (i.e. Russell Group, pre 1992/post 1992 universities, other specialist

institutions). Weighting is based on data supplied by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

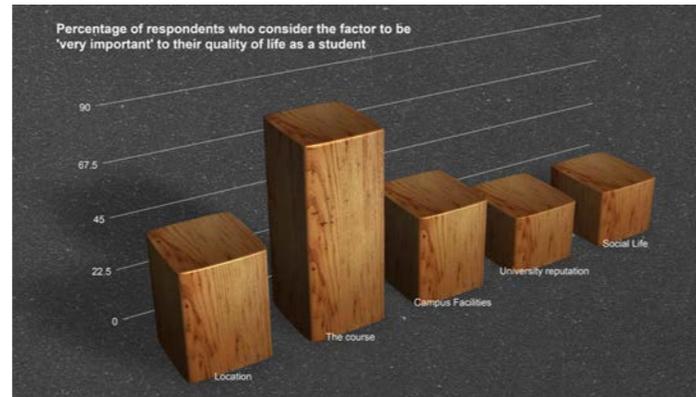
The survey was conducted on line, with fieldwork for this research undertaken by Opinion Panel between 5-7 March 2012. The sample consisted of 1,024 interviews with students at 119 Higher Education (HE) institutions representative of the UK HE population in terms of gender, year group and university type.

Results

The first question asked how important various factors, including the quality of the buildings and estate were to students, when selecting a university. Unsurprisingly the highest ranked factor was the course, followed by location. These were followed by university reputation and campus facilities. Overall 76% of students thought campus facilities as either quite or very important when deciding where to study, while only 8% thought it was not very or not at all important. As students progress through their undergraduate years the importance of the quality of the estate falls slightly from 81% (first years) to 71% (third years) suggesting that other factors such as graduate employability may come to colour their views. It may also be in part that, once established in a place, people become accustomed to its characteristics and may no longer focus on how important these seemed at the start of their university experience.

Once students have chosen a university, estate quality

remains an important factor in the quality of their life as students, with 83% of respondents saying it was very or quite important, though again this decreases slightly as students progress through their studies (from 86% in year one to 79% in year three). Location is important or very important for 84% of students.



Results

It is surprising that social life is not rated more highly. This could, in part, be because it is linked with sports facilities in question 1, which seeks to understand how students choose their preferred university. 'Social life, including sports and recreation' also shows declining importance over time for quality of life as a student falling from 67% to 51% finding it very or quite important.

Sports activities have become less important to students generally in recent years, which is confirmed by the small percentage of support for improved sports facilities elicited from the question asking for top priorities for expenditure on campus related facilities. However this may also reflect recent investment in sports facilities (some of which related to the 2012 Olympics) so facilities now meet students' expectations.

Perhaps the most striking finding is that over a third of students said they had rejected a university due

When deciding which universities to study at, just over one third of students (36%) said they rejected certain institutions because of the quality of their buildings, facilities or physical environment.

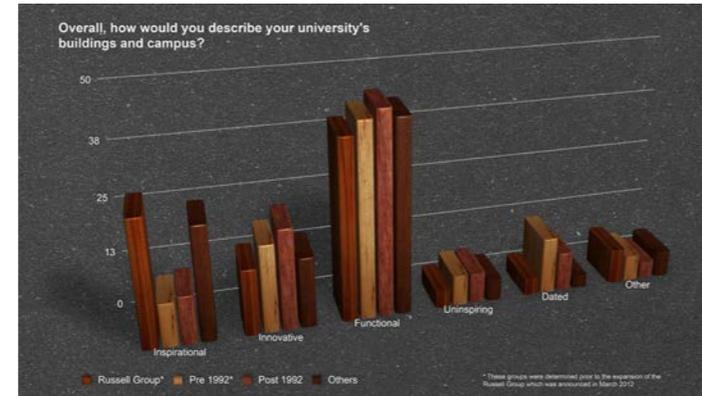
Results

to the quality of their buildings, facilities or physical environment, highlighting the importance of the built environment in higher education. Those students who cited this most prominently were those studying in the East Midlands which contains universities with high quality estates such as Cambridge, Lincoln, Nottingham and Loughborough. Those who appear to be least concerned about building quality issues are those studying at Scottish universities which either suggests that building quality there is not a problem or there are other factors at play i.e students in Scotland do not have to pay tuition fees.

Students were asked to describe their university's building and campus, choosing from a list of six options (see fig. 1). At 44%, the overwhelming descriptor for their university buildings was 'functional', which should not necessarily be considered a pejorative term. Whilst some might wish for a higher rating to be given to inspiring

and innovative buildings, the perceptions of the students probably reflect those of the public at large. Interestingly greater numbers of females describes buildings as inspiring whilst the gender position was reversed with the 'innovative' descriptor.

Fig. 1



Results

The good news is that only 6% of respondents thought their buildings to be uninspiring.

When university type is considered, the highest score +25% in the 'inspiring' category is given by students at Russell Group universities. However this is closely followed by the students in the newest universities such as Lincoln, Gloucestershire and Ravensbourne. This pattern was repeated when students were asked to rate the overall design and quality of their estate with the highest scores in the 'excellent' categories coming from students in the newest universities and Russell Group. The highest scores in the 'average' category came from students in the pre and post 1992 universities.

Students were then asked to select the top three priorities, from a pre-formed list of nine building and facilities related items, which would improve their university experience. Unsurprisingly these

were clustered around improved teaching and learning facilities, (with 42-48% of the overall vote), reinforcing the need for universities to keep up with the expectations of the younger generation brought up with wifi, mobile technology and social networking etc. Catering was of next importance at 37% and libraries and accommodation lower at 32% indicating that the role of these space types in teaching and learning may not yet have been fully exploited.

The majority of respondents two thirds - feel that enough is spent on existing buildings and facilities, which reflects the huge investment that has been made in prestigious new buildings and facilities.

Students were asked to choose their top three priorities from six options¹ for investing money, if they were given charge of their university's finances. Their top two options were smaller classes and interestingly,

Results

bursaries for poorer students which polled 70% and 69% respectively. Of the top three choices 59% went to new buildings and facilities.

While largely feeling enough is spent on existing buildings, if funds could only be spent on university buildings and facilities, repair and maintenance came at the top of the list, with 77% of respondents putting this in their top three choices (see fig 2). This could suggest that whilst students respond positively to shiny new buildings, these should not be pursued at the expense of the rest of the estate. In fact it could be argued that a new building only shows up the neglect and lack of maintenance in the remainder of the building stock! Security and cleaning, at 22% and 20%, were on average well below the other options, although in London 32% wanted more spent on cleaning and East Midland and the South East campuses attracted more votes for improved security – 29% and 27%. The other options

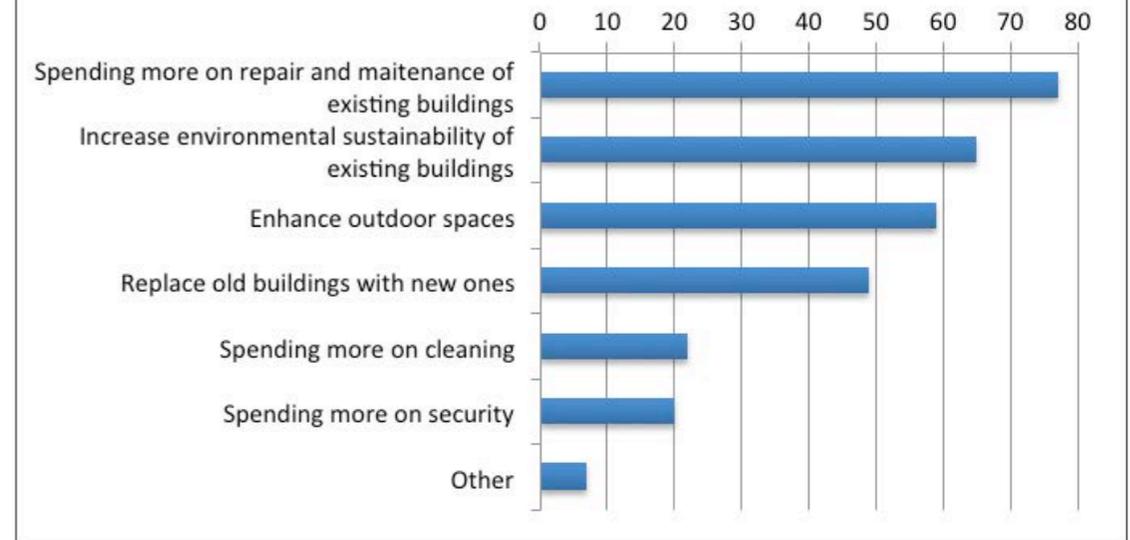
received intermediate numbers of votes: improved sustainability (65%), better outdoor spaces (59%) and replacing old building with new ones (49%).

Results

The source of the data represented in the graphs on pages 19, 21, 22 & 23 is:
EMS data 2010-11

The six options were:
smaller class size/more contact with lecturers, bursaries for poorer students, new buildings and facilities, subsidised accommodation, more social and/or sports facilities, other.

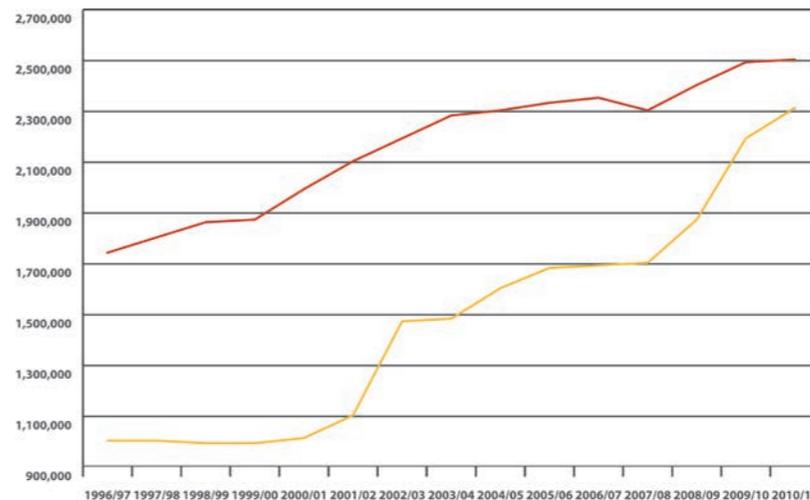
Fig. 2: Priorities for spending on university buildings and facilities





Additional Research and Case Studies

In 2011, Capital Expenditure on universities estates was £3.58 billion compared to around £1 billion in 1997. Adjusting for inflation, this represents an increase of over 130%. Over the same period, the total number of UK students in Higher Education had risen by around 43% from 1.76 million in 1996/7 to just over 2.5 million in 2010/11.



Capital Expenditure on Estates and Student Numbers

- Total HE Student Numbers
- Capital Expenditure on Estates (£000s) RPI Adjusted

Sources:
Capital Expenditure Data Pre 2004: HESA 'Resources of Higher Education Institutions'

Capital Expenditure Post 2004: Estates Management Statistics

Total HE Student Numbers: HESA 'Students in Higher Education Institutions'

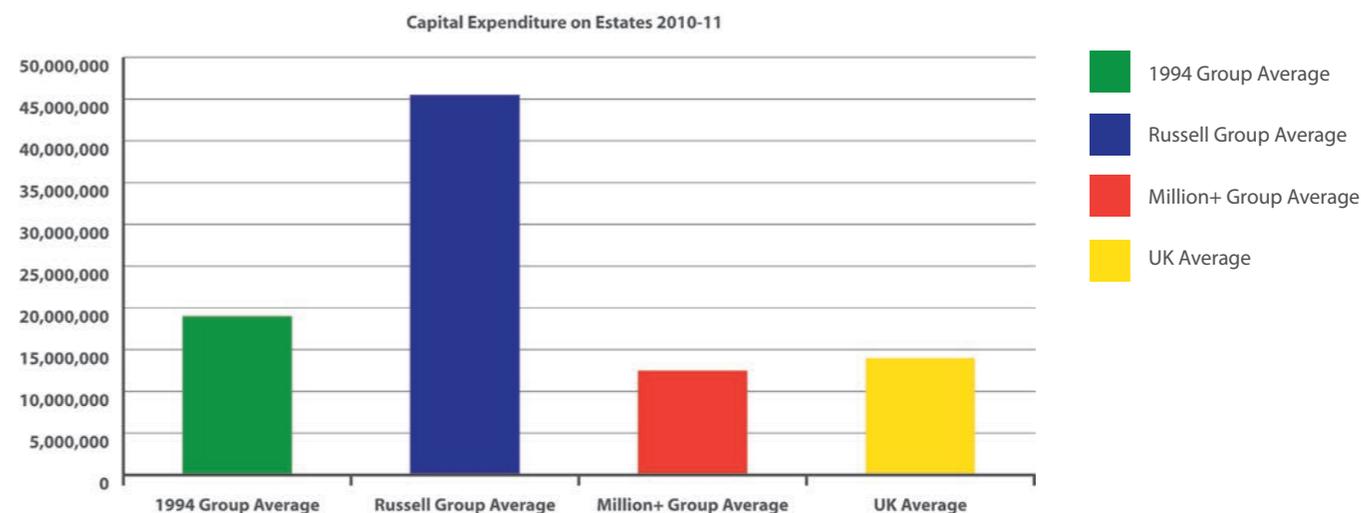
Additional Research and Case Studies

Capital Expenditure on Estates has been highest amongst the Russell Group Universities – the 16 Universities that spent the greatest amount on their Estate over the period 2001 – 2011 are all in the (2012) Russell Group. Of the top 16, only the University of York was established after 1910.

	Total Capital Expenditure on Estates over ten year period 2001 - 2011	Year of Establishment
The University of Oxford	851,474,000	Before 1167
The University of Cambridge	734,200,000	1209
Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine	730,198,000	1907
University College London	543,304,000	1826
The University of Manchester	508,764,000	Originally 1824 - 1851
The University of Birmingham	425,818,000	1900
The University of Edinburgh	409,402,000	1583
The University of York	350,902,000	1963
The University of Sheffield	350,278,000	1905
The University of Bristol	347,973,000	1909
UK Average	144,069,000	

Additional Research and Case Studies

The average level of Capital Expenditure on Estates in the 2010/11 financial year was £13.95 million. The Russell Group average for the same period was £45.8 million; whereas the 1994 Group Average was £19.6 million. The average for members of the Million+ Group was £12.5 million.



Case Studies

Case study data obtained from EMS, HESA student return, HESA finance return and the websites and strategic plans of the respective universities. Data accessed: August 2012

1

Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication relocated its campus from Chislehurst to a newly constructed site in the Greenwich Peninsula which opened in September 2010. EMS data indicates that Ravensbourne’s Capital Expenditure on its Estate was above the national average in 2008/9 and substantially higher than the average in 2009/10 (in all other years, it has been well below the national average).

It appears that the relocation process greatly enhanced the Institution’s ability to attract and accommodate students. On average, the number of UCAS applicants to UK universities was 21% higher in 2011/12 than in 2007/8. However, in the case of Ravensbourne, the increase was 123%.

	Ravensbourne	UK Average
2008/9 Capital Expenditure on Estate	15,864,000	13,918,411
2009/10 Capital Expenditure on Estate	35,901,000	16,725,011
Change in the number of UCAS applicants (2011/12 compared to 2007/08)	+123.4%	+20.8%
Change in Student Headcount (2010/11 compared to 2007/8)	+43.3%	+3.4%

2

Edinburgh Napier University opened a new campus in January 2011 in Sighthill, housing the University’s Faculty of Health, Life and Social Sciences. Again, the university’s annual level of capital expenditure on its estate is normally below the UK average but was substantially higher in both 2008/9 and 2009/10. The number of UCAS applicants to the university in 2011/12 was 97% higher than it had been in 2007/8. One of the factors contributing to this dramatic increase was the improved quality of the estate.

	Edinburgh Napier University	UK Average
2008/9 Capital Expenditure on Estate	20,960,000	13,918,411
2009/10 Capital Expenditure on Estate	37,218,000	16,725,011
Change in the number of UCAS applicants (2011/12 compared to 2007/08)	+97.3%	+20.8%
Change in Student Headcount (2010/11 compared to 2007/8)	-0.3%	+3.4%

3

In 2004, Queen Mary, University of London opened its new Westfield student village on its Mile End Campus at a cost of around £36 million; this was in addition to the construction of a new building for the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences. It also undertook a £44 million redevelopment project of its Whitechapel campus which was completed in 2005. Although Queen Mary spends more than the UK average on its Estate in most years, the size of the increase between 2002/3 and 2003/4 was particularly large. In the three year period from 2002/3 to 2005/6, the University experienced an above average increase in the number of UCAS applications that it received.

	Queen Mary, University of London	UK Average
2002/03 Capital Expenditure on Estate	34,073,000	9,409,128
2003/04 Capital Expenditure on Estate	48,438,000	9,610,433
Change in the number of UCAS applicants (2005/06 compared to 2002/03)	+41.6%	+16.8%
Change in Student Headcount (2005/06 compared to 2002/03)	+17.4%	+7.1%



Where Next?

Apart from disseminating the results of this survey to University Vice Chancellors, Students' Union Presidents, Finance Directors and Estates Directors, discussions within the sector suggest that this base research should be built on with further quantitative and qualitative surveys.

The research in this booklet was presented in an HEDQF seminar at last year's AUDE Conference (April 2012). Feedback indicated AUDE members were particularly interested in what estates related aspects of a particular university turned off prospective students from either applying or accepting an offer from that university, as well as what students feel about the estate once there. Further research could therefore focus on these main themes and follow-up surveys could explore these questions:

1. How important in your choice of university are: location, the course itself, Campus facilities Reputation, social life (Rank in order)?
2. During your university application process, did you reject a particular university due to the quality of its estate (buildings, facilities and external spaces)?
3. Was this as a result of - a visit, looking at the website, the prospectus, word of mouth?
4. What aspects of the estate most influenced your decision to reject a particular university? – tick all that apply (or 3 top)
 - Building design and aesthetics
 - Reception and information facilities
 - Wifi coverage
 - Many buildings seem out of date/old fashioned/unsuitable for modern learning and teaching
 - Many buildings seem poorly maintained
 - General cleanliness

Where Next?

- Quality /cleanliness of WCs
 - Library facilities
 - Social learning spaces
 - Availability of student accommodation
 - Quality of student accommodation
 - Quality of social facility buildings
 - Affordability of campus catering
 - Quality of campus catering
 - Quality of sports spaces and buildings
 - Security and sense of safety
 - Outdoor/landscaped areas
 - How well the campus relates to local facilities
 - Split campus
 - Other
5. Considering your own university does the quality of the buildings and environment have a positive impact on your perception of your university? 5 point scale – a lot to not at all

6. How do you rate the following at your university SAME LIST as above - 5 point scale – excellent to unacceptable
7. If there was one thing you could do to improve the quality of your university's estate (buildings, facilities and external spaces) what would it be?
8. For third year students (and remembering that alumni become future donors). Has the quality of your university's estate positively contributed to your perception and lasting impression of your university?

In addition a further on-line survey of the views of sixth form students could be gathered particularly in relation to their expectation of the university estate and where this features in their priorities.

The increasing expenditure on capital projects has continued to increase and since 2010 the average spend across UK HE, has risen to about £2bn a year.

In a recent article in the Building Magazine (6th Sept 2013) AUDE Chair – Mark Swindlehurst noted that the increasingly globalised nature of higher education, in terms of attracting both students and leading staff, is also driving the push towards higher quality estates.

“There is a trend that there will be more investment to come, either as universities compete for position in the global rankings or as they just try to keep up.”

Therefore an empirical basis for this investment is ever more timely and hopefully the contents of this booklet will contribute to this process.



This booklet and the research it contains would not have been possible without the sponsorship of AUDE, Osborne and the LSE Estates Division.

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Questions

- When you were deciding which university to study at, how important were each of these factors in your decision?
 - Location
 - The course itself
 - Campus facilities e.g. buildings, spaces & environment
 - University reputation
 - Social life, including sports & recreation
 - Very important
 - Quite important
 - Neutral
 - Not very important
 - Not at all important
 - Don't know / N/A
- When you were deciding which university to study at, did you reject any institutions because of the quality

of their buildings, facilities or physical environment?

- Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
- Now that you are at university, how important is each of these factors to your quality of life as a student?
 - Location
 - The course itself
 - Campus facilities e.g. buildings, spaces & environment
 - University reputation
 - Social life, including sports & recreation
 - Very important
 - Quite important
 - Neutral
 - Not very important
 - Not at all important
 - Don't know N/A

- Overall, how would describe your university's buildings and campus? Please select the ONE description that applies best.
 - Inspirational
 - Innovative
 - Functional
 - Uninspiring
 - Dated
 - Other (please specify)
- Taken together, how would you rate the design and quality of your university's estate? By estate we mean the buildings and outdoor spaces.
 - Excellent
 - Good
 - Average
 - Poor
 - Very poor
 - Don't know

- What three things related to campus facilities would improve your university experience in the most? Please select your TOP THREE improvements.
 - Improved library facilities
 - Improved dining/ catering facilities
 - Improved sports facilities
 - Improved student accommodation
 - Improved social areas on campus
 - Improved outdoor environment on campus
 - Improved classroom/teaching facilities
 - Improved security/ safety on campus
 - More and/or better group study areas
 - Other (please specify)

7. Do you feel your university invest enough in the upkeep of its existing buildings and facilities?
- Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
8. If you were in charge of your university's finances, which of these things would be your top three priorities? Please select your TOP THREE priorities.
- New buildings and facilities
 - Subsidised accommodation
 - More social and/ or sports facilities
 - Bursaries for poor students
 - Smaller class sizes / more contact time with lecturers
 - Other (please specify)
9. If you had ring-fenced funding that you can only spend on university buildings and facilities, which of these things would be your top three priorities? Please select your TOP THREE priorities.
- Replacing old buildings with new ones
 - Increasing the environmental sustainability of existing buildings
 - Enhancing outdoor spaces, e.g. landscaped areas
 - Spending more on the repair and maintenance of existing buildings
 - Spending more on cleaning
 - Spending more of security
 - Other (Please specify)



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