

RIBA 

Small **budget**

BIG
IMPACT!

**RIBA Higher Education
Design Quality Forum 2011**

The RIBA's 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.

Judging panel members:

Ian Caldwell, Director of Estates at King's College, London

Rupert Cook, Director, ArchitecturePLB

Kate Goodwin, Royal Academy, Curator of the Architecture Programme

Ronald Lawrence, Post Graduate Architecture School, University of Cambridge and Editor of *Scroope*

Rod McAllister, Partner, Sheppard Robson Architects

Liz Pride, Director, MJP Architects Ltd

Julian Robinson, Director of Estates at LSE

Sarah Shalgosky, Curator of the Mead Gallery, University of Warwick



Celebrating 40 years of fine architecture

Introduction

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Universities in the UK have yet to realise the impact of the new environment in which they operate. Some commentators have compared the current changes in funding to a 'seismic shift'. Students and staff have real choices across the globe as the higher education landscape becomes more competitive locally, nationally and internationally. How will the UK higher education sector continue to maintain its world rankings in this new financial environment, at a time when other countries are snapping at our heels and, in contrast to the UK, making substantial capital investments? We need to be smart and focused on how we spend the limited amount of capital that will be available; we need to seek to spend our limited funds where it will achieve the greatest value for staff and students.

We need to focus on raising the quality of the existing estate, rather than expanding it, and on achieving our challenging carbon reduction targets. In many cases this will involve partnerships with external organisations and, of course,

with external donors – who themselves may favour institutions that can demonstrate that they achieve high quality with less resource. This is quite a challenge, and HEDQF is pleased to offer support by illustrating a few examples of the excellent work that is being carried out across the sector, not just in architecture, but also in technology and landscaping. Flexibility will be key. Technology and new ways of learning continue to develop at an ever-increasing pace. Who had heard of the 'cloud' a decade ago? We need to design university environments that can respond to change in a flexible and sustainable way. One of the great achievements of UK higher education estates, for example, is the reuse of historic buildings, many of which provide great flexible spaces into which contemporary facilities can be inserted. In this highly competitive world, the need for good quality remains paramount.

Ian Caldwell

Chairman

Higher Education Design Quality Forum

MEZZANINE

Student Activity Centre,
Imperial College Union

client **Imperial College London**

architect **Swanke Hayden Connell Architects**

net cost **£550,000** area **460 m²**

reclaimed space

flexible office space

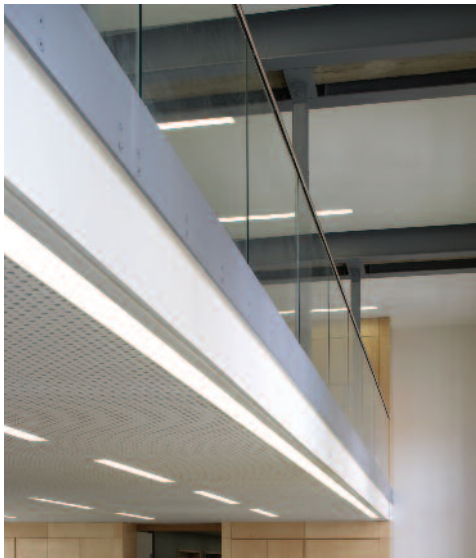
intervention in historic building

This second phase of a major refurbishment and restack to a 3,500m² Victorian building has provided high-quality facilities and services to the administration and conference departments of the Students' Union. The Union facilitates one of the largest student activities programmes in the UK, providing over 300 student clubs and societies and playing an important role in enhancing the student experience.

The key element of this project was to transform a double-height, redundant gym space into a suite of offices for administration staff and to insert a new suspended mezzanine floor to house an open access

Student Activities Centre. This combines space for IT facilities, a meeting room, Advice Centre, breakout meeting facilities and reception. The flexible administration space includes a mix of cellular offices, hot-desking space and open plan areas and was designed to allow for future growth.

The newly inserted hanging mezzanine bridge is supported by new steels, which wrap around the existing exposed concrete beams so as not to add any extra load within this period building. A considered palette of materials ensures the new spaces sit sensitively adjacent to the exposed and stripped back features of the old building.



Photos: Hudson + Cow