



LSE New Academic Building

Post Occupancy Evaluation



You said: "It's so much better, it's a completely different kind of building."

Spotlight on the NAB in use

The NAB is a very significant extension to the School's estate, offering a new standard of accommodation. It also plays a key role in advancing sustainable practice, an important aspect on both national and London agendas, as it is in the design and operation of buildings across all sectors. Now that the NAB is in operation, we have undertaken a professional Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE) to test its performance. In line with the guidance by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and Association of University Directors of Estates on good procurement, this is being done in two stages. This newsletter reports on the initial study and the resultant feedback which is being used to inform the NAB's optimal use, and to guide future projects in the School.

Evaluation approach

Undertaken in January, the POE was based on interviews with individuals from the NAB's key user constituencies: academics, administrative staff and graduate students with workspace in the building, as well as with students using the teaching and informal spaces. The scope covered teaching space (the Thai and Main Lecture Theatres, and Room 2.14), informal space, the working environment and the building overall. Data was captured via qualitative comments and coded responses, with the latter classified in terms of:

- Major Successes: evaluated as 'Positive' by at least 80% of respondents
- Other Successes: evaluated as 'Positive' or 'OK' by at least 80% of respondents
- Issues: evaluated as 'Negative' by more than 20% of respondents.

These high thresholds of user satisfaction reflect the School's strong ambitions for the NAB's performance and the quality of accommodation it provides.



Teaching space: A striking success

The NAB's teaching spaces are a valuable addition to the LSE's resources and students endorse them very positively. With scarce exception, the 21 aspects of the building's teaching space covered by the study emerge as Major Successes or Successes overall. These include cleanliness and maintenance, effective multimedia equipment for audiences and delivery, ease of concentration in the space, effective desk surfaces for laptop use, lighting and aspects of thermal management. Not surprisingly, students compare the NAB's teaching spaces favourably with teaching venues in other LSE buildings.

Feedback has also been positive from those who teach in the spaces, in terms of the rooms' facilitation of engagement between teachers and students, and the multimedia equipment for teaching delivery.

The feedback points to some aspects for Estates to check: temperature in the Thai and Main Lecture Theatres; sightlines from a few seat positions and the optimal number of tables in seminar rooms.

Informal spaces

One of the aims for the NAB was for the building's different uses to co-exist without people on the upper floors being disturbed by the large numbers of students circulating in the teaching and informal spaces below. This has been achieved. The use of the NAB's informal space reflects the differential usage by 'residents' and other users, with far higher use by students who are taught there (43%) than building residents (13%). An exception is Café 54 - used by over half the residents as well as by students who are taught in the building. The top floor terrace is not yet widely known and consequently less used. In terms of performance, students rate every aspect of the NAB's informal spaces as a Major Success or Success.



You said: "The architects did a fantastic job: it's light, airy and attractive, and it feels good."



Workspace

Workspace also forms a major part of the NAB, and the project focused strongly on the scope to advance the School's sustainable practices. This involves numerous key aspects: space allocation that enables provision of workspace for graduate students, glass vertical partitions so that all desk positions have access to natural light, sensors that switch off the lights when no activity is discerned after a length of time, and the introduction of a comprehensive strategy for recycling.

Most people with workspace in the NAB are pleased with their work environment, and the overall response demonstrates its strong performance across most topic areas covered by the evaluation.
80% of residents like working in this building

A notable success relative to typical Post Occupancy findings is a more positive view of the building's thermal conditions. This is key to user comfort, as is the NAB's new furniture which has also been endorsed. Overall, 78% consider their NAB workspace better than their previous accommodation. Residents rate the overall image of the building as better – inside (90%) and out (85%), as they do the WCs (90%).

You said: *"I see academic staff more frequently, eg. in the kitchen. People just pop by, partly because we are now all located in one building. The atmosphere is more friendly, and generally people have been very pleasantly surprised by the building."*

and: *"This building is probably the biggest selling point for the department."*

Original project aims

Given the School's position in the international context of higher education, the original project brief set an objective for the NAB to offer a teaching environment that attracts world class students. Both the student and NAB resident views of the result identify it as a Major Success. The NAB has also been positively judged against other project aims, including the effect of the circulation and informal spaces in promoting interaction in times between lectures, classes, seminars and tutorials – a goal that is central to the School's activity, and the building's sympathetic contribution to the urban landscape – intrinsic to the LSE's civic relationships.

Whilst a sizeable minority still see the building as disconnected from the rest of the LSE, the continued use of the NAB's fine lecture theatres for key events will promote its place as central to the School's activities. And given that the Initial POE was undertaken shortly after building occupancy, it is not surprising that the full scope of the NAB's facilities was not entirely known. The moot court (shown right) is a valuable asset to law students. And as more people begin to use the students' workspace in the Friends and Family room (shown top of page), as well as the NAB's cycle parking and showers, and increasingly enjoy the fine views from the top floor terrace, the building will become further embedded as part of the LSE's realm. In addition, this Spring and Summer will bring activity to the NAB's outdoor 'pavement café' facing Lincoln's Inn Fields – a street level signifier of a new vital place within the LSE campus, as well as a valuable resource in its own right.



You said: *"The sounding board is the perfect place when you're showing potential students, faculty and donors round."*

and: *"It's very different from the rest of the school – maybe they'll make the rest of the school like this!"*

Next steps

The School will now be considering the interviewees' instructive feedback, to align other aspects with the high levels of satisfaction that have been described. This includes some aspects of signage, access and circulation, look and feel – (through display surfaces for communiqués and notices), lighting, and possible refinements to the recycling scheme. Estates will communicate any specific actions that are agreed, before following up with the second POE when the NAB will have been occupied through a full cycle of seasons, and correspondingly further established as an integral part of the LSE.