

Saw Swee Hock Student Centre: Post Occupancy Evaluation



Summary report by
ZZA Responsive User Environments

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I. The building

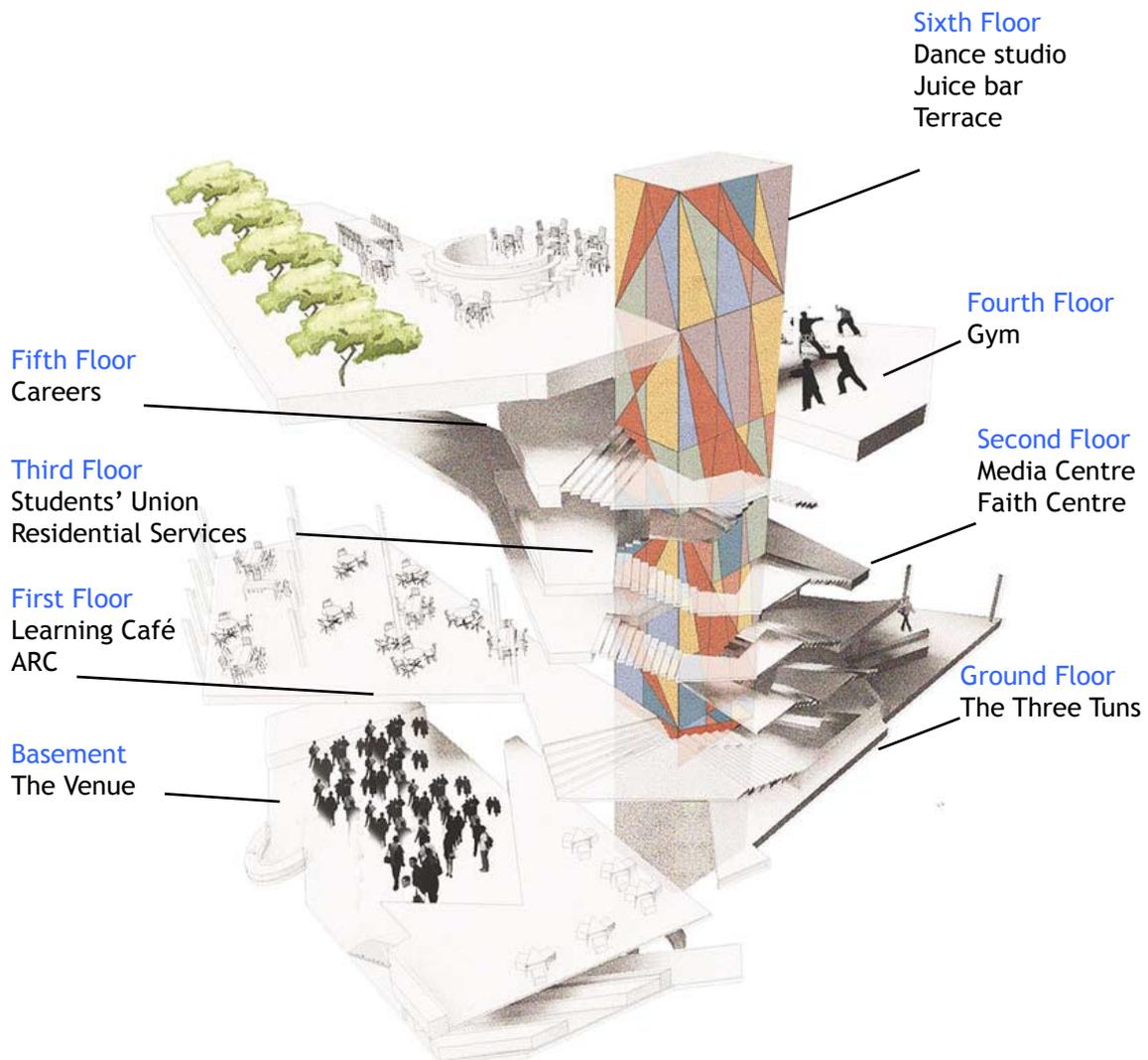
The Saw Swee Hock Building (SAW)

The new Saw Swee Hock Student Centre (SAW), designed by O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects, was officially opened on 6 January 2014. The building replaces the School's former students' union facilities in the East Building on Houghton Street.

SAW is located on a pedestrianised route off Sheffield Street, next to the Peacock Theatre, and between the LSE's traditional core on Houghton Street and its recent academic buildings on Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Built on a tight site, the building's design is visually distinct, involving a series of folds and angles in its elevation of handmade red brick. SAW was awarded the RIBA London Building of the Year Award on 6 May, 2014 and has also been short-listed for the prestigious Sterling Prize.

Internally, SAW provides two cafés with study, computer and printing facilities, a gym and dance studio, a faith centre, an events venue, a pub, and careers and counselling services for students. The building also accommodates the Media Centre, the Activities Resource Centre (ARC), and workspace for Careers, Residential Services and Students' Union staff.



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II. The Post Occupancy Evaluation: rationale and design

Why conduct Post Occupancy Evaluation?

Buildings perform different roles for different constituencies, and their impacts vary accordingly. The architectural community will judge a building's design through a set of lenses focused on physical design; for the project team delivering the building, completion on time and budget are key criteria. For those who run a building, the key is servicing, with life cycle performance a key concern. But for those who use the building, its effectiveness as accommodation that enables their activity in a productive and enjoyable way is what counts. Multiple elements impinge on the building, its fit-out, and its house services - influencing user experience, individually and collectively. And to everyone, what a building communicates about identity and standards - its expressive impact - matters too. This is especially so for buildings that are part of an organisation's wider estate.

All these vantage points are relevant in evaluating a building's success, but given its prime importance as accommodation to house and support the activities for which it is provided, structured evaluation from the perspective of building users is particularly instructive.

Commissioning independent Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE) after a move into new accommodation is now established practice by LSE Estates. The benefits are twofold. One is identifying additional value that can be obtained by minor tuning in the space, to enhance its performance for users and thereby increase productive use. Past POEs show that there is invariably scope to achieve additional wins in an existing building - including newly developed building - at nil or low cost, by tweaks to elements of the fit-out, to the building management, or to protocols for using the space.

The second benefit is to inform the conception, design and delivery of future projects. An evidence base on what has worked well before can help ensure that aspects which users endorse are incorporated in follow-up space, and conversely, that aspects that warrant improvement are addressed.

The Learning Café, First Floor



The POE at SAW

The objective of ZZA's POE at SAW was to capture systematic, relevant data, representing an evaluation of the accommodation from the users' perspective.

The output was to provide:

- Independent benchmarking of the accommodation's effectiveness for key user categories:
 - People with workspace in the building
 - Users of the building's diverse specialist settings.
- Assessment of the realized project relative to the original project aims
- Identification of aspects on which 'tuning' could add value to the SAW in use - through physical, management or usage measures.
- Identification of learning points for future schemes developed by the LSE.



How the study was done

The evaluation was tailored to capture experience both of the range of settings and range of users in a systematic and instructive way.

The research design was based on several series of structured interviews, undertaken face-to-face, with samples of individuals from key user constituencies.

The samples were constituted as follows:

- People who work in the SAW's office spaces, comprising both full-time staff and student staff who work occasional hours (22 individuals)
- Students using of the SAW's key specialist spaces (50 individuals):
 - Learning Café
 - Juice Bar
 - Gym
 - Faith centre
 - Three Tuns pub
 - Dance studio
 - The Venue
 - LSE Careers
 - Residential Services.

The research tested the effectiveness of the respective spaces, focussing on the 'index space' in relation to which interviewees were sampled. It also captured feedback on the interviewees' experience of the building overall, including the other SAW settings that they use.

Through this process, the research obtained coded data to generate quantified results on many aspects of the SAW. In parallel, all interviewees' qualitative comments were documented and analysed. This narrative data expands on their quantified evaluation, giving voice and reason to their ratings.

The interviews were undertaken 24 March-9 May (both during and after term break).

What the research covered

Sample using office space

The research with the office users covered 122 specific questions investigating user experience of SAW workspace as well as the building overall.

This covered the following headline topics:

- Comparison with previous workplace
- Appearance / 'look and feel'
- Circulation and navigation
- Space for individual work
- Space for collaborative work
- Drinks and refreshments
- Air
- Light
- Acoustics
- Security and safety
- Facilities management
- Meeting LSE aims
- Overall assessment.

Of these questions, 79 were evaluative, and 43 related to interviewees' patterns of use of the building, or provided for discursive elaboration.

Combined sample

The questions regarding SAW's perceived meeting of LSE aims pertain to both samples. The responses to these questions have been combined in the analysis and report.

Sample using specialist settings

A set of 75 questions was directed at the sample of interviewees selected for their use of the SAW's specialist spaces. The same research scope was addressed to all these users, across the range of 'index spaces' on which their enlistment in the POE was based.

The questions to these users focused on the given index space, as well as on the building overall.

This component of the evaluation involved 75 questions under the following headline topics:

- Evaluation of the space
- General facilities in the student centre
- Meeting LSE aims.

Of the detailed questions, 40 were evaluative, and 35 related to patterns of use or provided for open-ended interviewee comments.



Whom we interviewed

Office user sample

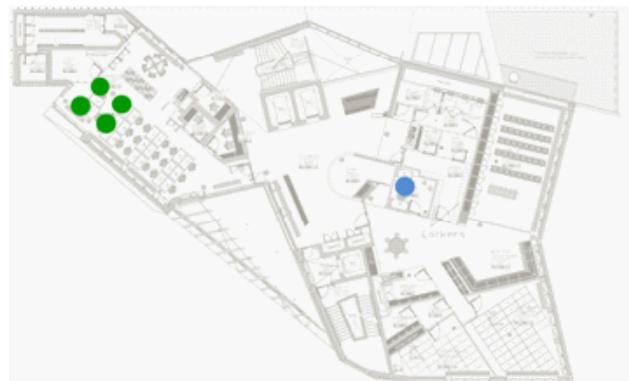
The 22 interviewees in the office user sample included the following distribution across the SAW's office zones:



The sample also involved the following spread of desk positions within the respective areas.

First Floor: ARC (left); the Learning Café (right) is a non-office zone

Second Floor: Media Centre (left); Faith Centre (right)



The Media Centre offices are used by student staff. Those who were available during the research period were located in only one seating area, as shown in green.

Third Floor: Residential Services (left); Students' Union (right)

Fifth Floor: Careers



- Full-time staff
- Occasional student staff

Careers staff have allocated desks. Those with desks along the southern window zone were not present during the research period.

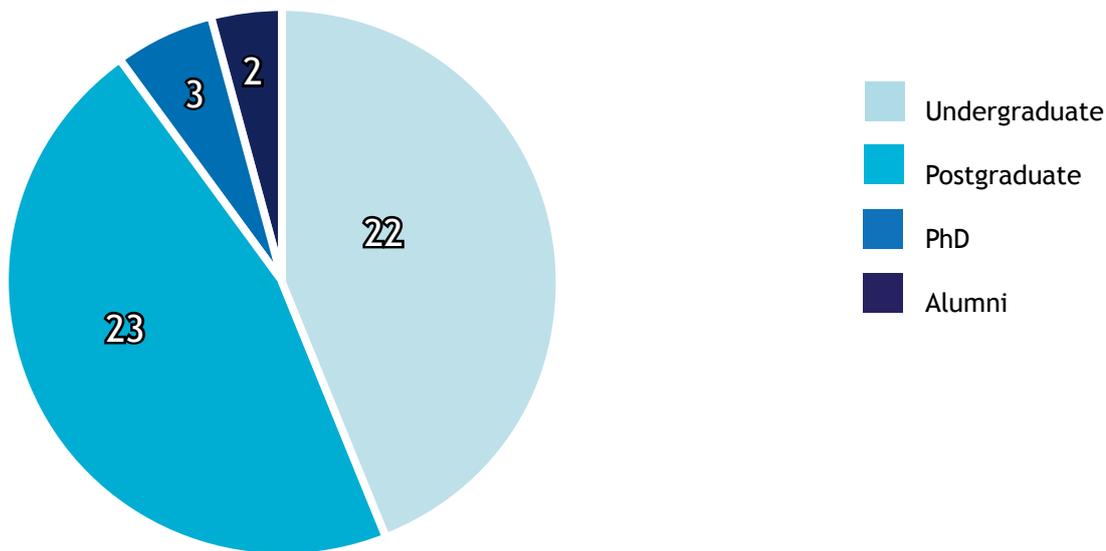
Specialist settings sample

The 50 interviewees in the index settings were distributed as follows:

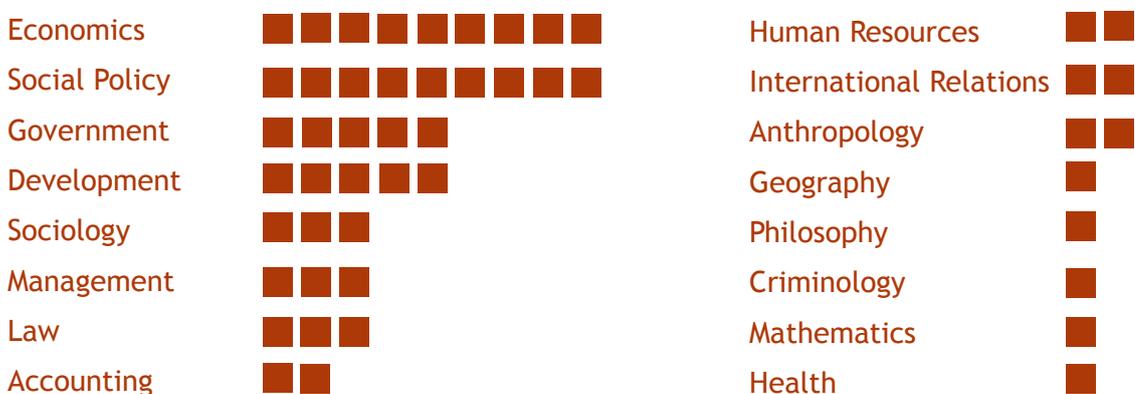


* Students using the Careers and Residential Services as clients, therefore experiencing the facilities concerned from the perspective of those seeking advice.

Sample composition: degree level



Sample composition: subject spread



Capturing and presenting the data

Fidelity to users' meaning

ZZA's research is essentially ethnographic, capturing data that gives an authentic and valid representation of users' experience. The primary inputs are twofold:

- A set of coded ratings
- Accompanying narrative data describing users' views.

To inform programmatic action, the data is coded to generate quantitative results that distinguish:

- What users rate as working well
- What they find acceptable
- What they experience or consider as being below par.

Accordingly, for most evaluative questions, interviewees are asked for a response aligned with the following three-way structure:

Positive
OK
Negative.

The aggregated responses provide quantitative profiles of response for all questions, and for the respective topic headings that the related sets of questions inform.

In representing which aspects are perceived to work well, which work acceptably, and which could work better, this structure provides a user steer on where future delivery effort and resource should be applied.

Classifying the outputs: action-focus

To facilitate an action focus, the aggregated results for each question are also classified in three bands, presented via the following colour notation:

Major Success: evaluated as 'Positive' by at least 80% of interviewees

Success: evaluated as 'Positive' or 'OK' by at least 80% of interviewees

Issue: evaluated as 'Negative' by more than 20% of interviewees.

Setting a high bar

The thresholds that define these bands reflect a high standard of user satisfaction as the index of performance. The 80% : >20% threshold is adopted in ZZA's POE outputs for all experienced property teams. These bandings are a filter through which to assist clients in considering the quantitative data; the parameters can easily be re-defined to assess the data according to alternative thresholds of user satisfaction if preferred.

III. Overview of results

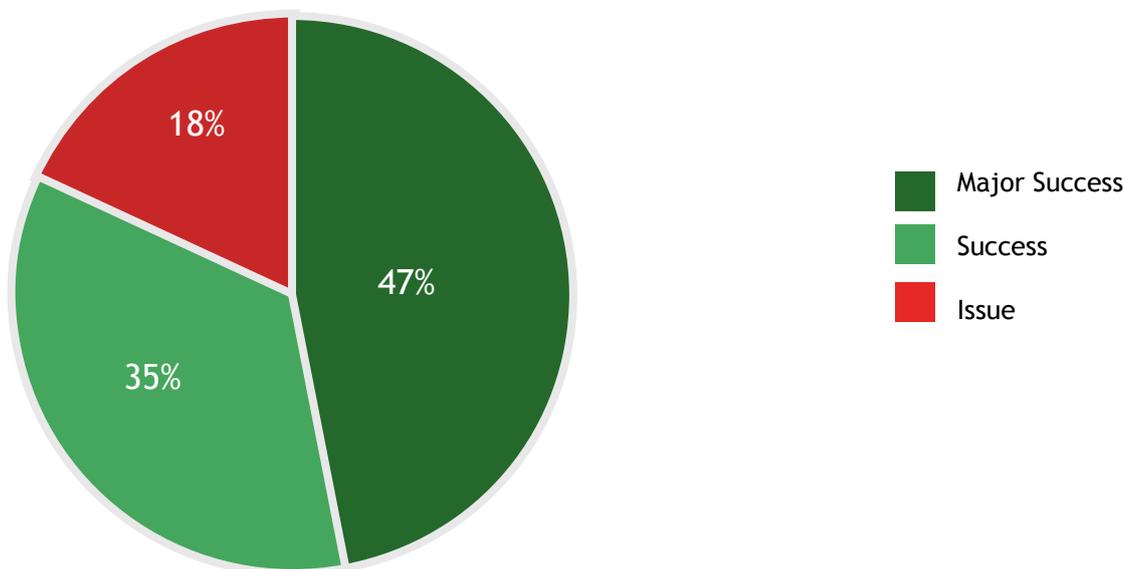
Extensive endorsement

The evaluation findings of the SAW reflect extensive user endorsement of the project and its outcome.

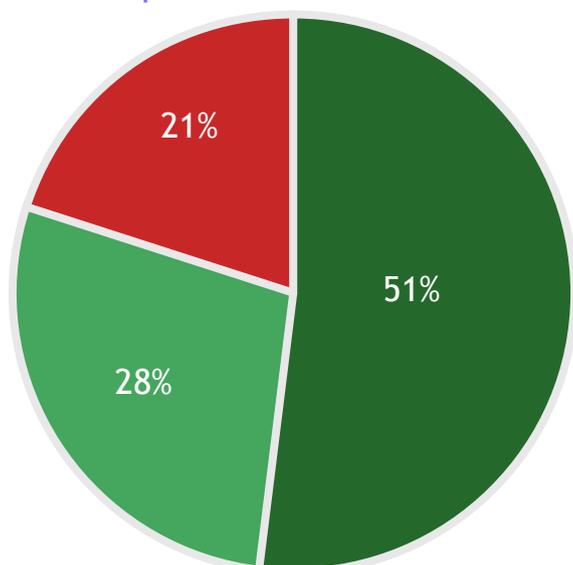
Across the question sets

The positive profile of results is clearly demonstrated in the high ratio of **Major Successes** amongst the aspects evaluated, followed by **Successes**. The extent of this achievement is seen in the following graphs for the respective samples.

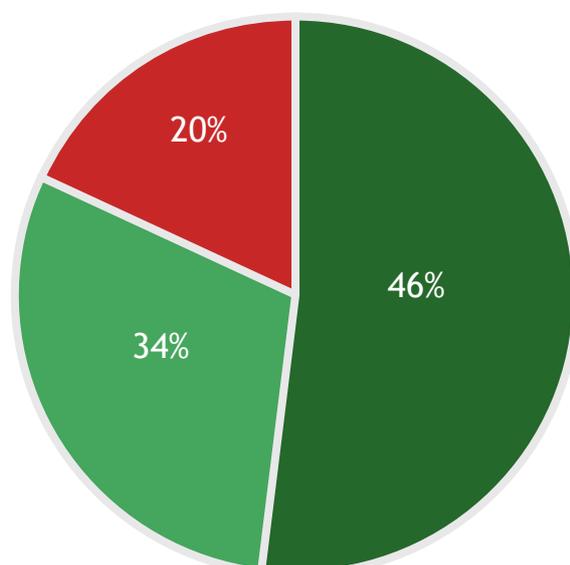
Aspects evaluated by combined sample



Aspects for specific evaluation by office user sample



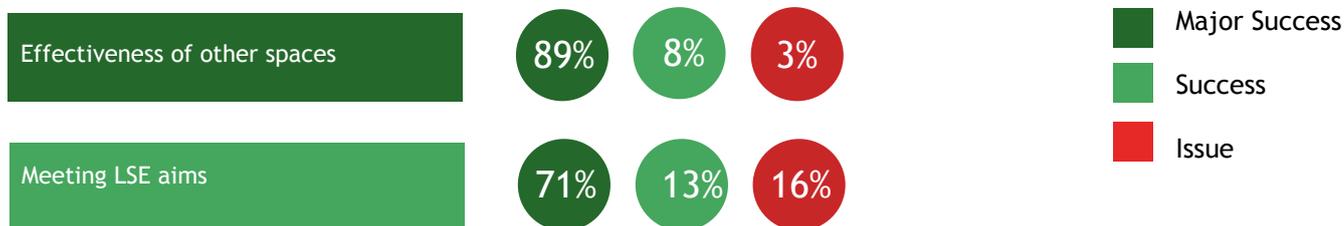
Aspects for specific evaluation by specialist settings sample



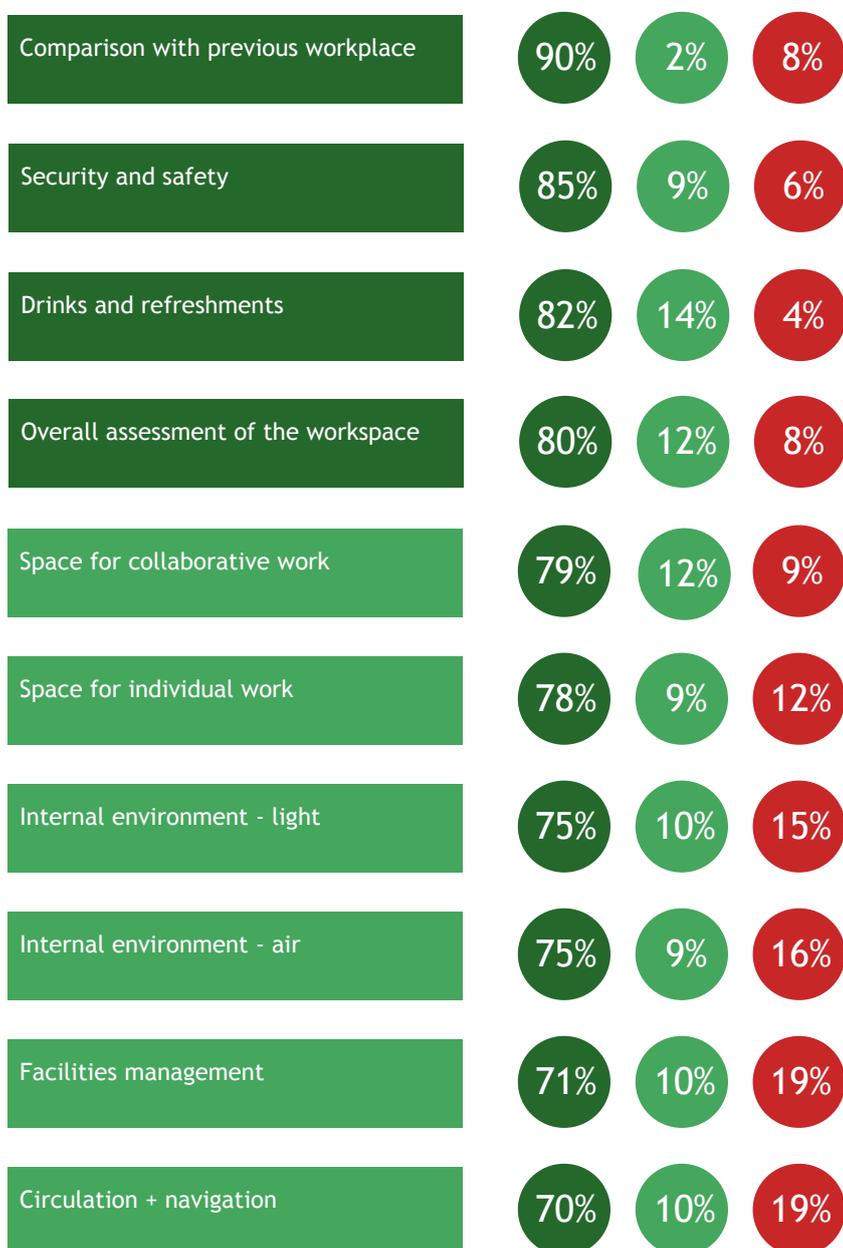
Key systems: across the topic headings

The topic headings for the questions below are listed in descending order from the most highly endorsed, within each sample group.

Topic headings evaluated by combined sample

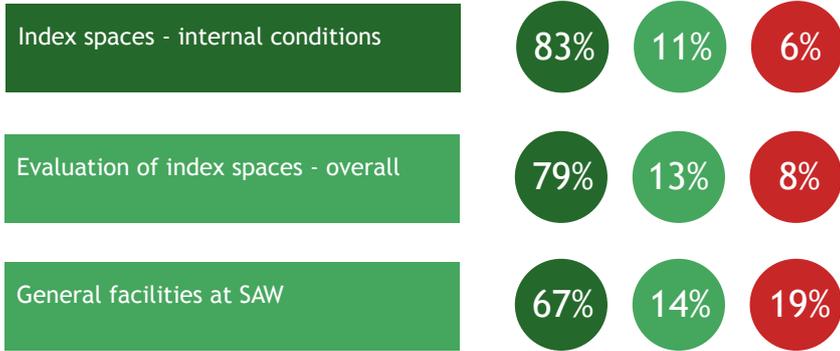


Topic headings evaluated by office user sample





Topic headings evaluated by specialist settings sample



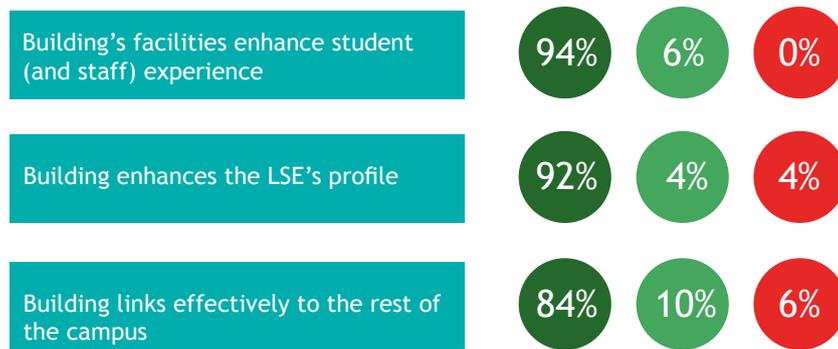
IV. Drilling down: achievements in the SAW's component aspects

Meeting high level LSE aims

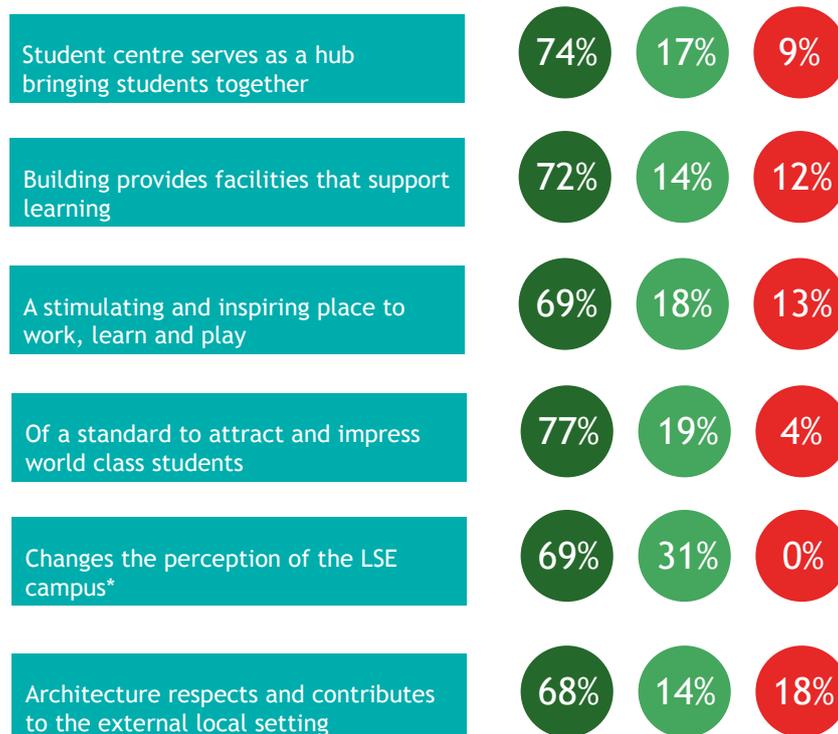
The questions relating to the School's higher level aims for the SAW were addressed to both samples - the office users and those sampled for their use of the building's specialist settings alike, and the results are presented for the combined sample.

The evaluation identifies important **Major Successes** in the SAW's contribution to LSE aims.

Note: Whilst the rating codes for most aspects in the POE are 'Positive', 'OK' or 'Negative', the codes for the following are: 'Yes', 'Somewhat' or 'No', with the exception indicated at the bottom of the page.



There are further **Successes**:

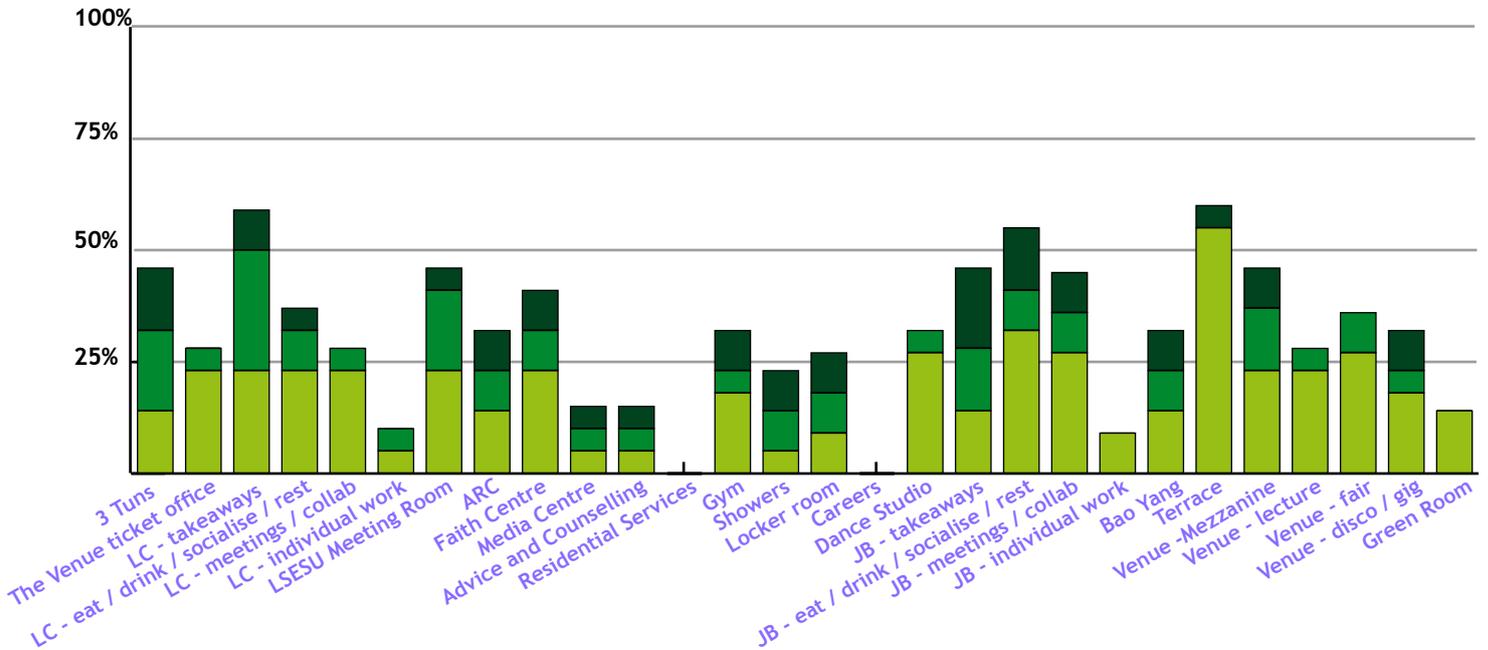


* The evaluative responses to this question reflect the direction of perceived change: 'For better', 'No difference' or 'For worse'.

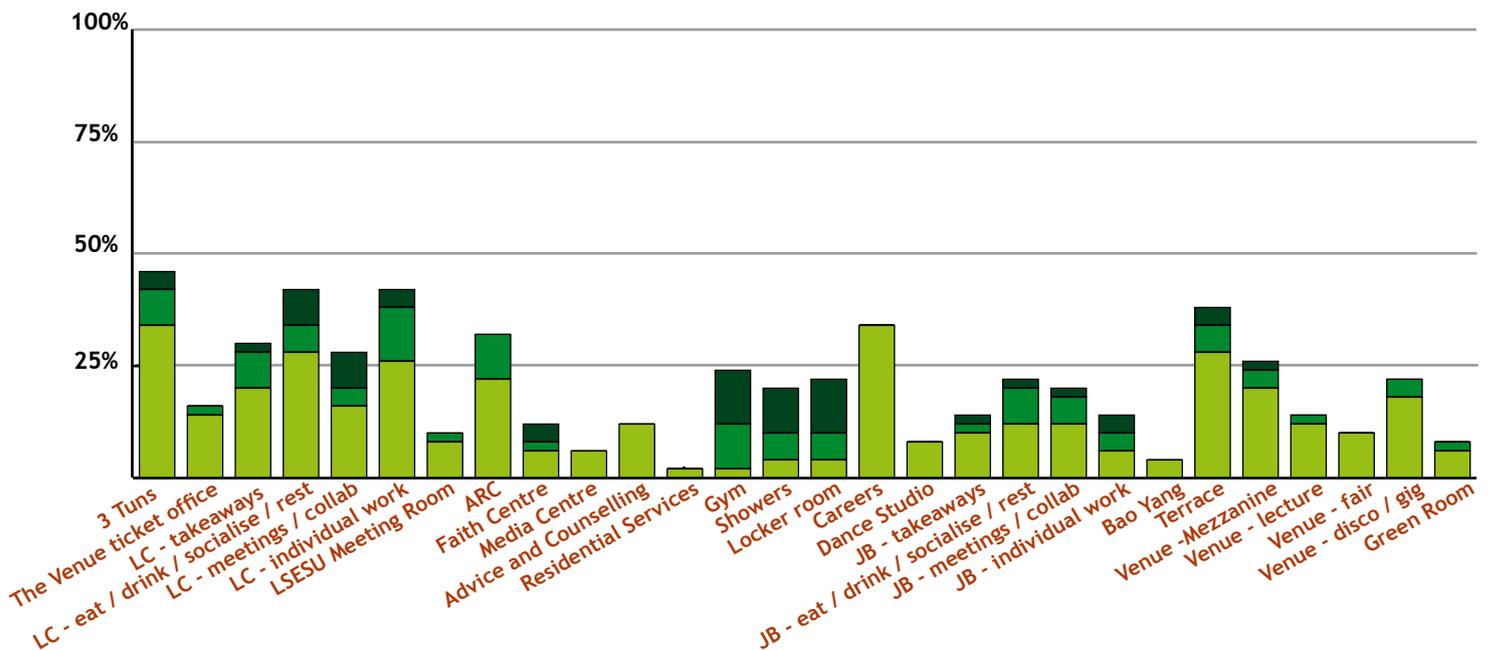
Use of other spaces in the building

A distinct potential benefit of both working in and using the student centre relates to its range of facilities and amenities, with the associated potential for users to engage in multiple activities. The evaluation identifies considerable achievement in this regard. Both the office users and those using the SAW's specialist spaces use the building for multiple purposes, including facilities other than the index spaces in relation to which they were sampled.

Office user sample



Specialist settings sample



Reports of frequency of use:

■ < 1 - 2 x per week

■ < 1 - 2 x per week

■ < 1 - 2 x per week

Based on their experience of using these additional spaces, the combined sample identifies them as **Major Success**:



This endorsement is further demonstrated by the fact that no office user rated the effectiveness of other spaces in the building negatively, whilst only two of 50 specialist space users gave a negative rating to the SAW's other spaces.

Focus on office users

The quantitative measurements of **Major Successes** and **Successes** below represent the average aggregated response to the sets of questions evaluating the respective headline topics. The **Major Successes** and **Successes** for the component questions are listed below.

Comparison with previous workplace

90%

2%

8%

Major Successes

- Building appearance - on the outside
- Building appearance - inside
- Your immediate working environment
- Other facilities and spaces in the SAW
- All aspects taken together

In the main, the new student centre is evaluated as being better than interviewees' previous LSE workplace, with five of the six specific aspects of comparison identified as **Major Successes**. The office user sample previously worked in the LSE's East Building, 20 Kingsway, and Towers 1, 2 and 3.

I'd definitely say it's a lot better. People know what we're for and that this building is the Student Centre, whereas before we were tucked away in the East Building. (Office user, Students' Union)

Image: look + feel

68%

24%

8%

Successes

- Look and feel - from the outside
- Look and feel - the building entrance
- Look and feel - circulation spaces and shared facilities
- Look and feel - on your floor

All four aspects of Image / look and feel are identified as **Successes**.

It's a different kind of building. It's quite unique and has its own style. (Office user, Residential Services)

It's a lot bigger and more open. It feels very connected to the facilities. (Office user, Media Centre)

Circulation + navigation

70%

10%

19%

Major Successes

- Easy to find your way - to the building
- Easy to find your way - into the building
- Easy to find your way - to the place you want to go inside
- Stairs - conveniently located
- Stairs - entrance clear

Successes

- Stairs - 'Look and feel'
- Effective signage

Overall, all aspects of circulation and navigation are identified as **Major Successes** and **Successes** but the lifts.

The stairs are beautiful. One of the best features of the building. (Office user, Careers)

The endorsement for clarity of entry to the stairs is a notable result relative to other ZZA POEs, where users' ratings reflect the frequent outcome of staircases being 'hidden'. The endorsement of wayfinding into the building is particularly notable, given the external groundworks that were still in progress immediately outside the building almost continuously through the interviewing period.

The points concerning the lifts are discussed on pages 33-34.

Space for individual work

78%

9%

12%

Major Successes

- Enough space at / around your desk area
- Desk suitable for work
- Chair comfortable
- Effective storage provision for personal items
- Effective wifi in your workspace
- Effective wifi elsewhere in the building

Successes

- Lack of awkward space
- Effective storage for filing
- Facilities for copying and printing

For the building's office users, the SAW is their workplace, whether they work there full-time or on a part-time or rotational basis. Of the 11 component aspects evaluated under this topic heading, six are identified as **Major Successes**, and three as **Successes**.



Space for collaborative work

79%

12%

9%

Major Successes

- Sufficient and well-positioned power sockets
- Effective wifi

Successes

- Availability of space for collaborative work
- Allocation and booking system
- Effectiveness of space for collaborative work for purpose
- Comfortable space for collaborative work

Collaborative activity represents an increasing component of work across all sectors of knowledge work. For the office based users of the student centre, most aspects of space for collaborative work are identified as **Successes**, with two **Major Successes**. No **Issues** are identified regarding space for collaborative work.

With previous accommodation pressures at the LSE tending to prioritise space for individual work, the SAW POE result reflects a notable achievement in addressing the requirements for collaborative space.

Drinks and refreshments

82%

14%

4%

Major Success

- Tea-points and food preparation and storage facilities

We LOVE the tea points. The zip taps for hot water are our favourite. (Office user, Careers)

Internal environment - air

75%

9%

16%

Major Successes

- Air - feels fresh
- Air - draughts
- Air - humidity
- Temperature elsewhere in the building

Successes

- Air temperature at right level now
- Temperature in the meeting booths

Internal environment - light

75%

10%

15%

Major Successes

- General ambience
- Effective light level for work
- Level of natural light
- Level of artificial light
- Lighting elsewhere in the building

For a building system prone to expressed user dissatisfaction in POEs, the results for 'Air' at the SAW represent a notable outcome. Of the seven component aspects evaluated, four are identified as **Major Successes**, with two **Successes**.

Against this positive profile, the **Issue** relates to user control of thermal conditions. This is discussed on page 36.

It is noted that the POE reported here was undertaken prior to the building's full seasonal cycle. The results on thermal experience should therefore be taken as partial and provisional.

Of the seven aspects of light evaluated, five are identified as **Major Successes**. Except where specified, this concerns user experience of lighting in their primary workspace area.

In part the satisfaction with ambience relates to external aspect. Indeed, their view out of the building is cited as joint first of office users' 'Favourite thing' about the student centre.

I love the lighting here. (Office user, Residential Services)

The outside view is lovely. Fantastic. That's what makes this office so welcoming. (Office user, Residential Services)

Against this positive profile, lighting conditions, and the lighting in the meeting booths are identified as **Issues**. These are discussed on pages 36.

'Favourite things' about the SAW	Number of respondents
View out	4
Proximity of colleagues / other teams	4
Workspace / space	3
Newness	3
Interaction with students	2
Access to building facilities	1
Cafés	1
Roof terrace	1
Light	1
Kitchen facilities	1
Stairs / circulation space	1
Gym	1
Design / aesthetics	1

Internal environment - acoustics

53%

14%

33%

Success

- Noise conditions elsewhere in the building

Security and safety

85%

9%

6%

Major Successes

- Feel you and your property are secure in the building
- Feel confident of evacuation in an emergency
- Access and exit arrangements - inside office hours

Success

- Access and exit arrangements - outside office hours

Facilities Management

71%

10%

19%

Major Successes

- Space for notices / information in other parts of the building [ie. Not the work area]
- Recycling scheme easy to use
- Building fulfils your expectations of environmental performance
- Occupants' guide useful on move in
- Welcome mug effective
- Felt adequately supported during the move to the building

Success

- Space for notices / information in the work area
- Effectiveness of showers
- Building cleaning and maintenance

Compared to the results for 'Air' and 'Light', the results on 'Acoustics' are more mixed. This involves one **Success**.

Issues are identified for disruptive noise, in both workspace and meeting booths. The factors are discussed on page 37.

'Security and safety' are positively evaluated, with most component aspects identified as **Major Successes**. There are no **Issues**.

Given the policy adopted to operate the SAW as an open access building, this is an important user endorsement.

The results for Facilities Management are positively profiled, with most component aspects identified as **Major Successes**.

Yes, they said they wanted to make it environmentally friendly. Like the windows open themselves when it's too warm. (Office user, Students' Union)

The occupant's guide was really useful when we moved in, and I still use it. (Office user, Careers)

We were well-assisted during the move. Someone moved our packed boxes for us. (Office user, Media Centre)

The building is very clean. (Office user, Students' Union)

The only **Issue** identified for 'Facilities Management' concerns cycle storage. This is discussed on page 38.

Overall assessment of the workspace

80%

12%

8%

Major Success

- Building influence on enjoyment of work day
- Pleased with current work environment

Success

- Building influence on work effectiveness

Overall the SAW as a workspace is strongly endorsed, with all three questions evaluated as Major Successes or a Success.

This space is a lot more collaborative and accessible, so people feel free to come in and talk to us. (Office user, Media Centre)

It makes me more effective. It's a nice place. (Office user, Careers)

It's not the key factor, but it's a nice place. (Office user, Careers)

Focus on users of specialist settings

The specialist settings sample was drawn from the following index spaces: Learning Café, The Venue, Gym, Juice bar / terrace, Faith centre, Pub, Dance studio, Careers and Residential Services' student client spaces.

Focus on the index spaces

Evaluation of index spaces - overall

79%

13%

8%

Major Successes

- Effectiveness for purpose
- Layout and design facilitates effective activity and engagement with instructor / counsellor / leader / equipment / other students, etc
- Tables are effective
- Seats are comfortable

Successes

- Attractive
- More suitable than previous LSE facility
- Space easy to get to
- Space is always available
- Inspiring design

With the same questions asked of specialist users across all the index settings, the quantitative results for this sample testify to overall effectiveness across the range of spaces.

All nine aspects of the specialist settings overall were endorsed, and no aspect was identified as an **Issue**.

In parallel, the qualitative data from these interviewees provides detailed feedback tailored to the respective settings covered in the evaluation.

It's exactly what I needed. Now I don't have any excuse not to workout. It's right on campus and it's modern. (Specialist space user, Gym)

It's really good communal space where you can work and socialize. It's welcoming, and it's better than the library. (Specialist space user, Learning Café)

Its multi-functionality is inspiring. It's easy to see it as a club, or anything. I like that. They did a good job coming up with a multi-purpose space. (Specialist space user, The Venue)

There are less people, there's food, and you have a small printer that not many people use. And there's a gym upstairs which is good. (Specialist space user, Learning Café)

Index spaces - internal conditions



Major Successes

- Air temperature
- Absence of draughts
- Humidity
- Air feels fresh
- Lighting ambience
- Lighting effective for activity
- Acoustics - can hear clearly in the space
- Wifi effective in the space
- Cleanliness and maintenance

Successes

- Absence of noise disturbance
- Sufficient power sockets and effectively distributed where needed

The user evaluation of the SAW's internal environmental conditions is entirely endorsing, with a majority of **Major Successes** and no aspect identified as an **Issue**.

Beyond the index spaces

General facilities in SAW



Major Success

- WCs

Successes

- Informal spaces relative to others available at the LSE
- Décor

The interviewees sampled for their use of specialist spaces also evaluated the SAW beyond these index zones. Their endorsement of WCs, building décor, and the SAW's informal spaces endorse the fabric of SAW's design overall.

Notably, the **Major Success** relates to the WCs. This contrasts with the evaluation of WCs by office users, for whom this aspect of the SAW is identified as an **Issue**.

I rate the WCs extremely positively. They are the nicest communal bathrooms I've seen in any facilities. They are really modern and new and you get your own cubicle. (Specialist space user, Learning Café)

There's clearly been a lot of thought put into the spacing in the building. You can tell by the layout that they've tried to efficiently spread out space to sustain larger numbers of people. (Specialist space user, Gym)

SAW overall

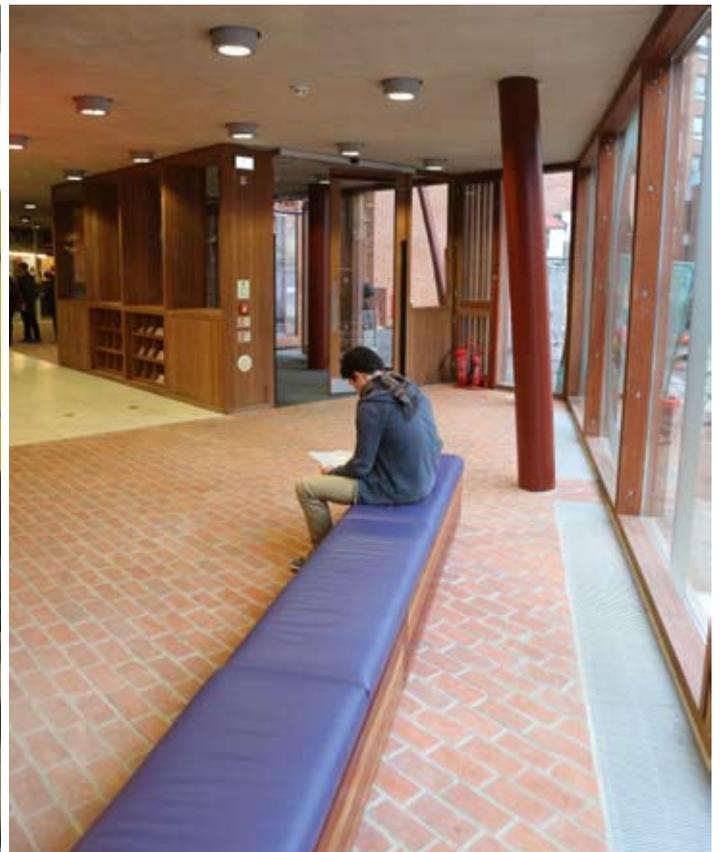
Asked to reflect on the effectiveness of SAW overall, the student users of the specialist spaces are complimentary of both the building and its facilities:

I really like it. All the spaces have been well thought out. It's the building I come to at the start of the day. It's also easy to access. (Specialist space user, Juice Bar)

"In general the building is a massive positive asset. The old SU facilities weren't even half as good. I can pray, revise, and do SU activities all in one building. For me, it's hugely beneficial and highly functional. I have nothing but praise for it." (Specialist space user, The Venue)

The design is very inspiring. The fact that they could fit such a building into such a small space makes you feel like anything is possible. When it was new I did think there would be more space inside, but it's not bad. (Specialist space user, Learning Café)

"The location is just as suitable, but this building is better because here you can sit and have lunch and it's not out of the way. In the other building, it was just offices and classrooms, so you couldn't do both." (Specialist space user, Faith Centre)



IV. Raising the bar

Pointers for further alignment

The previous sections report significant user endorsement of the SAW by users of both its office and specialist spaces interviewees.

However, an objective of POE is identifying scope for improvements, both to inform future projects, and add further value to the accommodation under evaluation.

This section addresses those aspects identified as **Issues**, based on more than 20% of interviewees in the respective samples evaluating aspects in question negatively. The ratings are illustrated by selective user comments.

Combined sample: meeting LSE aims

The questions concerning the SAW's perceived effect in meeting high level LSE aims were asked of all the interviewees. Against the background of existing effectiveness on this topic identified by the results, two aspects emerge as **Issues**.

Building's design and spaces promote spontaneous interaction

Issue
30%

Design gives a sense of the activities on offer

Issue
37%

The relevance of both these aspects relates to the School's aims for the SAW, as expressed in the Design Competition Brief:

"... to achieve cross promotion of Union services, and create a hub for student activities, a sense of ownership and identity, that reduces mobility problems and facilitates an efficient and enjoyable service for students."

I interact more spontaneously with other students anywhere else but in this building. The way this building's structured, you're always headed somewhere. You don't have a hangout space or a waiting space to relax in. If I was to design that space it would be on the First Floor by the entrance. (Specialist space user, Dance studio)

For the centre to be:

"Participatory"

And to employ:

"... Innovative design schemes which allow multi use of space and maximise the site's full potential."

The tables at the Learning Café are too big. You don't want to share with one person you don't know if they're already sitting there and you come with some friends. So it's just one person using the table alone. (Specialist space user, Careers Services)

It also relates to the DQI facilitator's report of July 2009:

"... it needs to really contribute towards encouraging students to use it."

From the outside you don't see people hanging out. It looks like an office or an apartment building, not like a student building. There could be seats, cafés, or food points outside. It's not until you get inside that you realize it's a student building. (Specialist space user, Learning Café)

The building's scope for spontaneous interaction was to relate to the above aims for functional integration and participation, and the aim of the Design Competition Brief aim for:

"a student hub."

Physical scope for casual encounter typically inheres in, or en route to, a given setting, with the influence of spatial contiguity a key factor. The SAW's vertical stacking of internal facilities on its small footprint inevitably limits this scope for casual encounter to the height a user goes in the building, and to the means of vertical circulation employed.

Focus on office users

Comparison with previous LSE workplace

WCs

Issue
33%

The factors of concern with the WCs are:

- Unisex designation
- Smells
- Small size
- No cold water
- Cleanliness
- Lack of external air
- Lack of natural light.

There aren't enough, and they smell horrible. The fact that they're shared with men leads them to be less clean, and I find it uncomfortable that we share with students. Because of my job, I interview people and I like to clean my teeth, but there's only hot water; you can't get cold water to drink. You also might have to get changed for events at the end of the day and they're not adequate for that. And there are no bins inside, which is annoying. (Office user, Careers)

They're unisex, so more people use them but they don't get cleaned as often. The overall quality is worse in this building. They were a lot nicer in Tower 3. (Office user, Careers)

There's no air. They always smell and it just doesn't feel nice in there. They're not very big inside; you struggle to wash your hands and open the door. (Office user, Residential Services)

'Unfavourite' things about the SAW	Number of respondents
WCs - general / noise / smell	5
Lifts	3
Lack of temperature control	3
Not enough seating at The Three Tuns / The Venue	3
Design / aesthetics	2
Leaking roof	2
Workspace - people walking in	1
Doors - difficult to open	1
Noise from the gym	1
Kitchen facilities	1
Circulation space - dead space	1
Noise from students	1

Circulation and navigation

Against the positive endorsement of the SAW's systems of 'Circulation and navigation', all aspects relating to the lifts are evaluated as **Issues**. The selection of comments summarises the linked set of factors at play.

Lifts - reliability

Issue
61%

The **Issues** with the lifts are inter-related:

- Breakdown reduces service and capacity
- Reduced capacity increases waiting time
- Long waits prompt people to give up and walk instead, but the lift stops in any event because the call button is pressed.

In addition:

- Lifts are also reported as by-passing the floor requested.

Often they're out of order. (Office user, Media Centre)

Often one seems to be broken. They're really slow. There's only two, and they are often busy because they are frequently busy bringing people to the gym. (Office user, Residential Services)

The one in the back is out of order and of the other two, one tends to be out of order, and they often miss your floor. (Office user, Careers)

I think there should be one more lift because of how long it takes for it to come back. (Office user, Media Centre)

No, because often they're not both working. (Office user, Careers)

Lifts - capacity

Issue
22%

Lifts - travel time

Issue
29%

They're very slow. They take a long time to come and to get to where you're going. (Office user, Careers)

They seem to take a long time. (Office user, Residential Services)

Lifts - waiting time

Issue
67%

You get that annoying thing when people press the button and walk off because it took too long, and then it has to stop at every floor. (Media Centre)

No it's awful, because they randomly go past your floor or don't stop. (Media Centre)

Often one seems to be broken. They're really slow. There's only two, and they are often busy because they are frequently busy bringing people to the gym. (Residential Services)

Space for individual work

Again, in the context of general endorsement for most aspects of 'Space for individual work', the office users identify two **Issues**.

Storage provision for books

Issue
22%

The response on book storage emerges as the lesser limitation - and only just an **Issue**. However, storing books in filing cabinets is not optimal either as use of storage capacity, or for access to books.

There's nothing for books - I have them laid flat within the drawers. It limits the amount of books I have here. (Office user, Careers)

We had loads of books in our old office, but here there is nowhere to put them. (Office user, Students' Union)

Sufficient and well-distributed power sockets

Issue
29%

The point regarding power sockets is more pervasive. The factors underlying the users' evaluation of sockets concern:

- Reliability
- Access
- Number
- Impact on layout flexibility.

Despite the increase in battery life and the scope to charge devices through USB ports, people continue to have multiple appliances that need electrical charging.

They're very inconvenient to get to. You have to delve down underneath the floorboards. But it's only when I need to plug in my laptop. (Office user, Residential Services)

At my desk it's alright but around the office it's limiting. They are only in the floor, so you can't move desks around." (Office user, Residential Services)

There are sufficient sockets, but they're not positioned as required, because you have to move your computer and flip them open to use them. (Office user, Media Centre)

I don't think there's enough. Say if you want to have two fans on the desks, there's not enough sockets. Or if you need to charge an extra laptop or something." (Office user, Residential Services)

Internal environment - air

In the context of the notable achievement for air, the one aspect of air identified as an **Issue** is:

User control of thermal conditions

Issue
50%

Internal environment - light

As for air, a similar scenario applies to light, with all aspects of light in the workspace positively endorsed, except for:

Control over lighting levels

Issue
47%

Lighting level in meeting booths

Issue
25%

The factors reported as underlying the problems with the lighting level in the meeting booths are:

- Inconsistent functioning
- Excessive brightness.

Internal environment - acoustics

Noise disturbance in workspace

Issue
47%

Noise disturbance in meeting booths

Issue
47%

In respect of both the above, the predominant source of noise cited is the gym, coupled with vibrations, notably when people drop weights.

Additional sources of noise disturbance in the workspace - albeit with lower numbers of citation - include:

- Students gathering in the circulation space outside the Careers office
- The WCs
- The student radio
- Noise from the First Floor café in the ARC

The source of noise disturbance cited for the meeting booths / collaborative spaces are:

- Different user groups passing through the faith centre during prayer times
- Inadequate insulation between meeting rooms

From the gym, when people drop weights the whole building shakes. It's a bit weird actually, it's like Jurassic Park. (Office user, Residential Services)

From the gym when they do the weights. It's only thing that really disturbs us. It's incredible it's like the whole ceiling is going to come down. (Office user, Residential Services)

We are directly below the free weights in the gym. In the afternoon people always start lifting and you get a lot of noise and vibration - it's really annoying. I don't know why it's on the Fourth Floor, it should be in the basement." (Office user, Residential Services)

The gym is really bad. It's really loud; when they drop the weights it shakes the whole building which is really distracting when you've got a one to one meeting. And there's a lot of passing noise outside the office going to the café. We had the idea to get Secret Santa slippers for everyone but it never happened! (Office user, Careers)



Facilities Management

Effectiveness of cycle storage

Issue
100%

Few of the office users were in a position to evaluate cycle storage, as most do not use bicycles and some of those who do park them elsewhere on campus, eg. the NAB and Tower 3, to avail themselves of more protected conditions that they also assess as being more secure. Identification of this aspect as an **Issue** should be viewed in the light of the low level of evaluative response. Nevertheless, the underlying points regarding unfavourable exposure to weather and security stand.

I still use Tower 3 storage. It's secure and this one isn't. (Office user, Careers)

I use the storage in the NAB because this building only has outdoor storage. I won't use the outdoor one because there are bike thefts around here and my bike's reasonably expensive. Security actually told us not to use it if we could find indoor storage because it's a high theft area. (Office user, Residential Services)

Occupant's guide useful ongoing

Issue
53%

I don't need it anymore. (Office user, Media Centre)

Focus on specialist settings

Index spaces

With the extensive positive assessment of the SAW's specialist settings, no of the 20 aspects evaluated for the index spaces is identified as an **Issue**.

General facilities in the SAW

Beyond the index spaces, four aspects of 'General facilities in the student centre' are identified as **Issues**. Notably, none of these aspects concern the building per se, and all can be addressed via Facilities Management and IT.

Catering provision and food setup

Issue
22%

The factors users raise concern:

- Variety
- Pricing
- Non-acceptance of loyalty cards
- Restrictions on eating one's own food in the café spaces.

What they provide is nice, but the food setup would be improved by being able to bring food in. (Specialist user, Learning Café)

I don't have complaints but for me it's more convenient to get something from Sainsbury and eat it somewhere else. It's more overpriced here - other places have the same thing for less money. (Specialist user, Faith Centre)

I think it's nice that they have a variety of food, but I don't understand why we can't use our loyalty or credit cards. But it's good that they allow us to bring our own food in. (Specialist user, Faith Centre)

Effective display of information for events

Issue
27%

The factors users raise in association with this **Issue** are:

- Location
- Too much content
- Too spread
- Some content only at an upper level in the building.

To an extent, the points associated with this critique derive from the School's generous policy for liberal use of the central stair core as a poster pole. The active uptake by students results in a multiplicity of visual material that is necessarily spread over a large surface area.

It could be more obvious. Many students don't look while they're walking. They could use the walls and pillars in the Learning Café. (Specialist user, Learning Café)

It's more just like posters people stick up, you don't really look up at them. TV screens would be more useful for promotion, like the ones they have in the library. More people would look at them. During elections there were so many posters up that people tuned out. (Specialist user, The Venue)

I've never been to The Venue but I'd love to go. I never hear about the events. Even the last grad night was only advertised a few days before and it was embedded in a long email. They could do a lot more. (Specialist user, Learning Café)

Sufficient storage for laptops

Issue
27%*

I've tried several times to get a locker and it was communicated very poorly as to when they will become available. I would have liked to have used it. (Specialist user, Careers Services)

I can't get a locker in the building [outside the locker room], and that's annoying. They said they had some but couldn't give them away. I can get one at the library but I come to the gym 3-4 times a week and it would be useful to leave things overnight. (Specialist user, Gym)

Copying and printing facilities

Issue
30%*

There's a printer on the First Floor which hardly works, and on the Third Floor there are computers but no printer, so the printing situation in this building is not that good. (Specialist user, Faith Centre)

I've tried to use the printer but didn't know where it was being sent to, so I don't really know how it works. (Specialist user, Faith Centre)

There's one printer in the building. All printers across the LSE have problems. They either don't work, or they'll charge you and won't print, or they won't recognize that you sent it something. And people disconnect the Learning Café printer to charge their phones or laptops. (Specialist user, Media Centre)

* Note: The proportion of the sample responding on both the above is low relative to the full sample of specialist setting users:

- 11 interviewees for laptop storage
- 20 for copying and printing facilities.

IV. Forward pointers

Potential action at SAW

The learning and action points from POE are instructive in helping to optimise any organisation's estate. Typically they encompass hard and soft issues of building design, fit-out, and Facilities Management. To building users, their interface with accommodation is a seamless amalgam of elements, irrespective of their origin as base build, fit-out or servicing elements. Acting on the aspects that users flag up as under par offers leverage to create better alignment with their needs and preferences.

The following section offers points for strategic action to address the aspects of the SAW that were rated as **Issues**.

Providing a sense of the activities on offer

Interviewee comments suggest the relevance of announcing the building's activities more visibly - both externally and on the lower reaches of the SAW. Action could entail:

- Outdoor activities on the building's external apron
- Dynamic digital displays to serve as promotional canvases - on the external elevation and / or in the Ground Floor reception / the First Floor Learning Café.

Scope for improvement: office users perspective

WCs

The main action points indicated are:

- Checking and resolving outstanding reported problems with sewage and smells
- Then reporting to the building population on the action taken and the resolution.

Lifts and stairs

The action involves commissioning and communication. Specifically:

- Check that the lifts are fully commissioned and properly working
- Communicate that this has been done in order to 'reposition' the lifts as effective
- Promote stair use as an easy and sustainable means of vertical circulation in a low rise building like the SAW, and with the added advantage of a fine staircase.

Further, given the feedback that much of the current lift use is by people using the gym:

- Campaign in the gym that stair use aligns with a commitment to fitness.

Book storage

Given the relatively small number of users expressing a requirement for book storage, establish where local provision in SAW would benefit users, and provide this as feasible.

Power sockets

The evidence that users are introducing devices like fan and heaters points to a briefing with occupants, to clarify the optimum functioning of the fully commissioned building and promote more sustainable modes of usage.

Air

The feedback also indicates a briefing also on the SAW's scope for user control by opening and closing windows, to promote awareness that the windows in the open plan office areas are shared facilities for use by all occupants, rather than 'owned' by those seated directly adjacent, and to raise awareness that short interventions of opening and closing can help make the difference sought.

Light

Given user concern with both excessive brightness and inconsistent functioning of lighting, the SAW's office areas and meeting spaces should be audited for both these factors, with faulty mechanisms replaced and filters / baffles introduced - if and as appropriate. This should be followed up with a briefing to cover the available scope in each area, on how users can moderate lighting levels.

Noise

With inadequate noise insulation between office areas and other spaces like WCs, noise transfer across partitioning should be checked, and addressed as a snagging issue as relevant.

Occupants' guide

In the newsletter to report on the POE, advise that any updates to the occupants' guide will be incorporated in a digital version to be made available online. This can include any additional information required, eg. telephone numbers of other occupants.

Scope for improvement: specialist settings

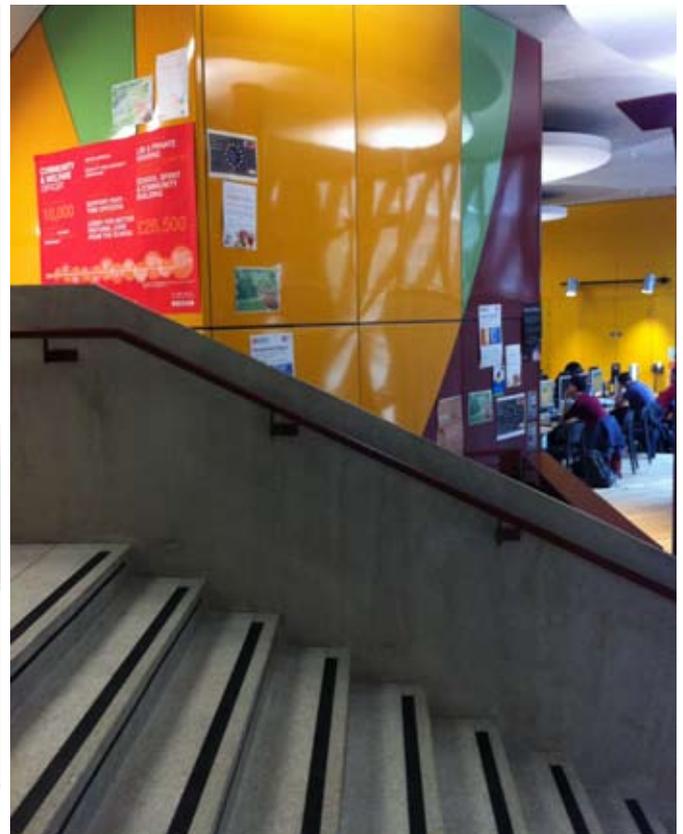
Catering provision and food set-up

The balance between a viable, quality catering offer and self-catering is clearly in tension, as the former relates to volume of sales. In the circumstances, the current set-up that some students report - that food can be eaten in the cafés if prepared at home - could be more widely communicated. Beyond this, the scope for alignment will involve periodic survey regarding menu selection and pricing.

Display of information for events

Given the LSE's facilitative stance that this is a student building for student use, the liberal approach adopted to information display is appropriate. Indeed, a more restrictive approach may well have elicited a more negative user response. The scope for improvement hinges on bringing notices to students' attention at a low level of penetration to the SAW, promoting visibility to users who do not go beyond the Ground or First Floors.

This could be addressed by dynamic digital display to advertise available and prospective activities - in the entrance area, the Learning Café on the First Floor, and potentially also outside the building.



Visual spread of notices on central stairwell, with those at higher levels only seen by users passing on the stairs.
© ZZA Responsive User Environments

Laptop storage

In the context of ubiquitous laptop use, students' requirements for secure storage in a building like SAW that is used on short-term and intermittent basis, warrants provision.

Copying and printing facilities

Given the SAW's provision of learning space, effective copying and printing facilities, with visible signage about availability and maintenance, are relevant.

Learning for future projects

Promoting interaction and sustainable circulation

The feedback from the combined sample points to the need to balance the LSE's recognised requirements for study space - individual and collaborative - with social space to 'hang out'. The SAW's First Floor Café can accommodate both, but given its designation as the Learning Café, the emphasis is on study.

Furniture influences behaviours - facilitating some, inhibiting or impeding others. Active experimentation in the SAW, followed by cross-comparison of utilisation and user satisfaction, could provide a useful steer for follow-up projects (as well as guiding potential flexing in the SAW).

The evaluation endorses the SAW stairs as highly visible, a result that reinforces the relevance of obvious stair access on future projects. With conducive design, stairs can also contribute to spontaneous interaction, users' health and fitness, and sustainable energy use. This points to:

- Deprioritising the ready visibility of lifts relative to stairs on future projects
- Designing stairs to accommodate intensive usage and casual encounter.

Future consideration for office users

WCs

The main learning point relates to an ongoing user preference for single-gender WCs. However, this is susceptible to changes in cultural preference. A strategy to hedge the diversity of preferences in a multi-generation and diverse community like the LSE's can involve both gender-specific and gender-neutral provision.

Space for individual work

The relatively low level of dissatisfaction with book storage that (just) defines the current lack of provision as an **Issue** at SAW indicates that user expectations and requirements for provision are reducing with the increasing availability and reliance on online resources. This does not imply an exact parallel for academic staff, but does indicate a trajectory that is relevant for scoping future projects, and to factor in on academic offices where users have traditionally driven up space standards through their expressed requirements for vertical surface area to store books.

Power sockets

Technology continues to evolve and related specification is not a science. Despite shorter battery life, and scope to charge via USB, users look for continued simultaneous connection of multiple devices. The steer is to provide for flexible use, through accessible power connections, and with layouts that do not prescribe furniture configuration.

Air

Ubiquitous technology has promoted individual choice, access and control in all spheres of living and working, including scope to influence thermal experience. This points to scope for a level of individual user control, ideally via means like operable windows that achieve immediate effect.

Light

The focus on individual choice also applies to lighting. Incorporating scope for user control via switches, dimmers and blinds is relevant for future projects. Local fixtures like table / desk lamps expand both the scope for, and perception of, individual control, helping to optimise user experience in shared zones when these are subject to low occupancy.

Noise

The noise disruption reported from the gym aligns with findings from other ZZA POEs. Whilst there was competition for the lowest part of the SAW from The Venue, the steer on future buildings is to site similar facilities on the lowest floors.

Cycle storage

Wherever feasible, cycle storage to be located and designed to provide for weather protection and property security.

