

## **Quality Teaching Spaces: The Refurbishment of the Ramphal Building 2012**

The purpose of this research was to analyse the impact of the refurbishment of eight teaching rooms in the Ramphal Building carried out in the summer of 2012, funded by CIF2 and lead by IATL and the Space Management and Timetabling team (see Appendix 1 for the project bid). The research was carried out between January and February 2013, assessing the impact on students and staff after the first full term of teaching in the refurbished spaces October to December 2012.

The specific objectives of the research were to answer the following questions:

- How successfully did the Ramphal project achieve its main objectives?
- How did the project match its projected outcomes?
- What impact has the project had on teaching and learning?

### **1. Summary**

- The response to the refurbishment is very positive.
- On the whole staff responses were more positive than students'.
- The tendency is to use the configuration of the rooms as they are found. The standard layout of the rooms is cabaret style and many teachers have used that rather than changing the furniture.
- The rooms were particularly successful for small group teaching to encourage discussion and group working

### **2. Methodology**

An online survey was advertised to students and staff using the Ramphal building using fliers distributed in the building and the plasma screen in the foyer. A prize was offered to encourage participation. 125 responses were received between 3 December and 4 January 2012, 39 from staff and 86 from students. Survey questions can be found in Appendix 1

Structured interviews were conducted with 6 academics who had taught classes in the Ramphal building. They were selected from recommendations made by IATL's team of classroom stewards who identified teachers who had particularly engaged with the refurbished classrooms spaces in their use of technology or layout. A shortlist was compiled to provide a spread of discipline and gender. Interview questions can be found in Appendix 2

### **3. Findings**

The project has successfully achieved its main objectives :

- a. To raise awareness of innovative teaching spaces within the University:  
85% of staff and 84% of students surveyed agreed that the refurbished rooms offered the quality and innovation they expected, with a greater proportion of staff than students

strongly agreeing. Several respondents remarked that there were not enough rooms like those in Ramphal elsewhere in the University.

*'not enough of them available'*

*'I can't believe that I'm in the same room as previously'*

- b. To provide training to staff to support the introduction of new teaching styles into seminar and small lecture teaching and to encourage more innovative use of technology for teaching

In interviews several academic staff commented that any barriers caused by changes in furnishings, layout and AV provision had been quickly dispelled by the classroom stewards. All found the standard layout of tables in small groups facilitated discussion, although the positioning of whiteboards in some of the rooms so that students could not see the teacher and the board at the same time was commented on by both staff and students.

None of the staff interviewed had attended the IATL training sessions before teaching in the refurbished rooms for the first time though the majority were aware of them and admitted that they would have been useful. The main reason given was pressure of time before the beginning of term.

The technology was found to be intuitive to use and was more consistent. 33% of staff respondents identified the AV provision as something they particularly liked about the new spaces.

The project has successfully achieved its main outcomes:

- a. The creation of flagship spaces

28% of staff respondents said they particularly liked the look of the refurbished rooms, with 6 students specifically commenting favourably on the style of the furniture.

*'The open feeling and calming nature of the green theme and how unlike the rest of the University the interiors are'*.

- b. Flexible, comfortable and attractive classrooms to help tutors and earners to create an atmosphere where collaborative research-oriented and interdisciplinary learning is possible

The most favourable responses from staff was the flexibility of the space and the furniture with over 50% of respondents mentioning this feature. 20% of students commented favourably on the flexibility of furniture and space.

*'They are light and bright and do seem to stimulate better discussion and a more relaxed atmosphere than my seminar held in the Social Sciences building. They do seem to work well for small group discussions.'*

The high quality of the spaces encouraged users to ask for more: for example a tablet/laptop bank to encourage research and learning in the classroom.

#### The project has had a positive impact on staff and students

- a. Do the spaces offer the quality and innovation expected by students?

The aspect of the refurbished spaces (highlighted by 37% of student respondents) was the look of the spaces with many mentioning that they looked modern and different from other areas of the University. The rooms were described by one respondent as 'flexible, fashionable, enjoyable', a series of adjectives not often applied to teaching spaces. The improved lighting was noted favourably by 15% of staff and 9% of students.

- b. Do the spaces encourage a more flexible open learning?

18% of staff noted that they liked the impact that the changes had made on the teaching and learning occurring in the spaces, several of the interviewees particularly commenting on how discussion and group work was made easier and more fluent. 10% of students said that they liked the impact the new spaces had on their learning. The encouragement of discussion was the most frequently mentioned outcome of teaching and learning in these spaces.

*Staff: 'They provide a flexible space in which you can deliver lecture presentations get people to work in small groups, get them to move around easily, all important aspects of livening up teaching!'*

*Student: 'They give the opportunity for lots of different types of class discussion'*

- c. Do the spaces encourage varying styles of teaching?

There were very few negative responses with only five students and one staff member disagreeing. More staff (87%) than students (74%) agreed that the rooms encouraged more flexible open learning and agreed more strongly but both groups were broadly positive.

However there was a small but vocal minority who argued that the rooms were not conducive to presentations or lectures. One change that several members of staff requested was the provision of a screen which could be placed on the pull-out desks to serve as 'a kind of lectern'. Others used their own laptops for this purpose.

The furniture was not flexible enough for some

*'It always feels like too much hassle to rearrange all the furniture and then back again.'*

And some staff and students commented that there was a lack of space in the rooms because of the amount of furniture, one staff member noting difficulty in navigating a motorised wheelchair in the rooms.

#### **4. Conclusions**

*'I think all classrooms throughout the University should be like these!'*

*'It's been a wonderful experience.'*

Susan Brock, Nicholas Monk, Paul Taylor

IATL

March 2013

## Appendix 1: The Project Bid

### Expression of Interest Form for CIF2 Funding 2011-2015

This form must be returned to Becs Lambert (Academic Office) by 29<sup>th</sup> July 2011 at the latest.

All relevant questions/fields must be completed in order that the proposed project can be accurately costed if your expression of interest is successful.

Please note that late forms will not be accepted.

## PROJECT INFORMATION

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| a) What is your project title?   | Quality Teaching Spaces   |
| b) Are you bidding for the refurbishment of space, the replacement of space and/or the replacement of equipment?   | Refurbishment of space  |
| c) Does your project benefit research, teaching & learning, or both?   | Teaching and learning   |
| d) Approximately how much CIF2 funding are you bidding for? ( <i>It is understood that any estimates for refurbishment/replacement of space will be very rough at this stage</i> ) | £2m<br>(NB this is based on costs of previous, similar refurbishment projects)  |
| e) Who is/are the project leader(s)?<br>(Please include contact phone numbers)   | Paul Taylor, Director of IATL (x. 50531)<br>Gareth Bennett, Senior Assistant Registrar (Space Management) (x.22634)   |
| g) Which department(s) are submitting the bid?   | Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning (supported by the Space Management and Timetabling section of the Academic Office)   |
| h) What is your project proposal?<br>Please provide a brief summary and include the key project outcomes.  | The project aims to transform a number of teaching spaces in the Ramphal and Social Sciences buildings to create a truly distinctive learning environment. The project will create stylish, functional and innovative learning spaces that will not only provide usable teaching space, |

but will facilitate innovative (alongside traditional) teaching and learning styles to foster an environment that is engaging for students and supports collaboration to develop students to their full learning potential. IATL research and experience at Warwick shows that using simple principles from education and design can deliver radically better spaces without prohibitive costs.

The proposal builds on the work and experience of the IATL which has enhanced and facilitated innovative teaching and learning spaces at the University. These spaces share key features, providing a space not constrained by traditional fixed furniture and technology in order to encourage and enable the room to be adapted to a range of educational situations, not only from one class to the next but within a single teaching session.

Key project outcomes include:

- 1.** Creation of 'flagship' teaching spaces through provision of high quality refurbished teaching spaces in the Ramphal and Social Sciences building.

The project intends to refurbish all central seminar spaces in the Ramphal building; in doing so the project will create a flagship building for teaching spaces at Warwick. A significant proportion of central seminar spaces in the Social Sciences building will also be developed to the same standard, with the intention of creating flagship wings of the building.

- 2.** Teaching spaces that underline the University's commitment to providing a teaching and learning environment commensurate with higher student fees.
- 3.** Flexible, comfortable and aesthetic classrooms to empower tutors and learners to create an atmosphere where collaborative, research-oriented and interdisciplinary learning is possible.

Providing carefully designed spaces, alongside support and training, to allow tutors to differentiate teaching styles will improve the student experience of teaching and learning at Warwick.

- 4.** Technology/AV provision that *supports* the tutor's

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|  | <p>pedagogic style rather than constraining or dictating it.</p> <p>5. Reduced carbon consumption across the refurbished spaces by using natural lighting more effectively and installing more stylish yet economical lights.</p>  |
| <p>i) How is your bid linked to the University strategy and how do the project outcomes contribute to achieving the key priorities detailed in the strategy? (Please note the Council resolution that capital projects must be transformational in terms of their impact on the University strategy.)</p> <p>What impact will your project have on strategically important research and/or the student experience (in the context of the forthcoming increase in undergraduate fees)?</p> <p>Please also reference any links between your project and improvements to research and/or learning &amp; teaching capability in areas of national strategic priority.</p> <p>What impact would this project have on your staff and their experience of working at Warwick?</p> | <p>This proposal speaks directly to the University's core value of excellence in teaching and learning. It will contribute to the University's ambition make the Warwick campus into a representation of the University's ambitions and quality of its imagination, distinguished by environmental quality and the highest standards of design in order to increase Warwick's reputation for providing the best teaching and to attract student demand.</p> <p>The proposal will underpin the University's goal to ensure a high quality and distinctive student experience by providing excellent facilities and innovative spaces to support the development of the student teaching and learning experience. It will create high quality, comfortable and appropriate spaces that will 'excite and stimulate' and facilitate creative relationships between academic and student.</p> <p>The new style of classroom will be designed to support students and tutors to make more flexible use of the space available to them, more so than more traditionally designed spaces. For example, students will be able to more easily undertake:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>interdisciplinary</i> study (through flexible furniture and AV provision allowing multiple room set-ups and designs to permit a range of pedagogies relevant to the subject areas studied;</li> <li>• <i>undergraduate research</i> (furniture readily adaptable to group-work and optimally connected to the virtual environment);</li> <li>• <i>international</i> study (technological support and advice to enable tutors and students to link to classrooms in partner institutions).</li> </ul> <p>This project showcases research from the CAPITAL and Reinvention Centres, the Open Space Learning project and the Learning and Teaching Grids. The refurbished spaces can be used for community-facing events and to demonstrate impact for our learning spaces research.</p> |

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|  | <p>The project responds to the views of staff (as well as students) from across the University regarding the features that create optimal teaching spaces. Feedback from participants at a recent Window on Teaching Event (Developing Learning Spaces) outlined as a high priority that teaching spaces be flexible: equipped with easily movable furnishings, a natural and comfortable ambience, and technology that supports flexible teaching. Improving the quality of teaching and learning spaces will enable staff to work at the highest level by providing accommodation that is valued.</p>   |
| <p>j) What would be the risks associated with carrying out this project?</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ramphal seminar rooms would be unavailable for use by Conferences over some or all of the summer 2012 vacation, and a number of Social Sciences would be unavailable over some of the summer 2013 vacation, resulting in a need for conferences to utilise alternative locations as a means to mitigate potential loss of revenue over the summer months;</li> <li>• Refurbishment works overrun leading to teaching rooms unavailable for use at the start of the academic year 12/13;</li> </ul>   |
| <p>k) What would be the impact/risks of not carrying out this project?</p> <p>Why can't the project be completed in a different time frame?</p> <p>Can the need be met in any other way?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the impact of the increased student fees being felt for the first time in Autumn 2012, there is a serious risk that the University's teaching spaces do not offer the quality and innovation expected by a student body increasingly focussed on student experience and value-for-money;</li> <li>• The project aims to deliver flagship teaching spaces of which the University can be proud. Whilst teaching spaces at Warwick are fit for purpose, current levels of internal funding for teaching spaces does not enable any works to rooms beyond a 'maintenance' brief (i.e. replacing worn/broken furniture, fittings and equipment). The resultant impact is that the quality and provision of teaching spaces remain static and unable to respond to dynamic student expectations;</li> <li>• Lack of investment in teaching spaces runs the risk of creating an environment where teaching spaces are de-prioritised against research spaces and consequently are perceived as not highly valued by the institution;</li> <li>• Pedagogic methods are constantly developing, with a move toward more flexible, open learning becoming a mainstay of modern teaching practice, in place of more traditional 'chalk and talk' classroom set-ups. The University currently has a number of high quality teaching spaces (Reinvention Centre, Teaching Grid,</li> </ul> |



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|   | <p>Writer's Room etc) however access to appropriate flexible teaching spaces is limited and therefore restrictive to the teaching experience available to students.</p> <p>Alternative funding sources to undertake a teaching space project of this scale are not available, therefore the project cannot go ahead without CIF2 funding. The timescales for the project (summer 2012 for Ramphal works and summer 2013 for Social Sciences works) dovetail with the introduction of higher student fees, and will offer a visible demonstration to new and existing staff and students of Warwick's commitment to investing in facilities. As such the project will deliver maximum impact given this timeframe.</p>  |
| <p>l) How will the project contribute to delivering your departmental/Faculty strategic aims?</p> | <p>A key element of the IATL strategy is to facilitate the creation of a distinctive student experience and to raise the prestige of teaching and learning at Warwick. With the project's focus on central teaching space innovation, the project will not only support this aim, but will contribute to the broader Vision 2015 Goal 2.</p> <p>The project will allow IATL to work with Departments to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• raise awareness of innovative spaces within the institution and the various pedagogies those spaces can support;</li> <li>• encourage more innovative use of existing, more traditional spaces;</li> <li>• provide training to staff to support the introduction of new teaching styles into seminar/small lecture teaching. Similarly the IATL will work with AV Services to provide training session in more innovative use of technology for teaching to ensure staff are confident in using and exploiting the facilities offered;</li> <li>• identify 'teaching champions' to support colleagues in trailing alternative pedagogies;</li> <li>• elicit feedback and input into future redesign of further teaching and learning spaces across the University;</li> <li>• use the new designs to encourage further research into Open-space Learning and Social Learning Spaces, particularly within disciplines where these ideas remain underdeveloped. The IATL would support departments to submit external grant proposals to support such further work.</li> </ul> |
| <p>m) For refurbishment or replacement</p>  | <p>Central teaching space on the main campus is already</p>  |

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| <p>projects, how will space utilisation/efficiency be improved?</p>   | <p>highly utilised during term time, as such the scope to improve utilisation is limited. The project will however enable the space to be used in ways which are less easily achievable in standard teaching spaces. In terms of conference use of the space, there is a high demand for flexible, quality conference accommodation, and it's therefore likely that Warwick Conferences be able to further capitalise on the space during vacations.</p>   |
| <p>n) For refurbishment or replacement projects, how will the project contribute to the sustainability agenda?</p> <p>In what ways will energy costs and carbon emissions be reduced?</p> <p>(You may wish to carry out a cost/benefit analysis and/or comment on 'whole life' costs associated with the project)</p> | <p>The project focuses on improving the quality, functionality and usability of existing spaces.</p> <p>The project is expected to yield energy savings through improved use of natural light in teaching spaces, reducing the need constant use of electric lights. The rooms will also be installed with energy saving lighting. The AV in the room can be monitored for use and will be switched off remotely when not in use.</p>  |
| <p>o) Has a bid(s) for funding for any aspect of this project been made to alternative funding sources? (If so, please outline this here)</p>   | <p>No</p>  |
| <p>p) What leverage is possible? Have you been able to find matched income e.g. from Research Councils?</p> <p>Will the project potentially increase the University's future income levels?</p>   | <p>No</p> <p>The project will allow the University to sustain an environment that is commensurate with the level of student fee charged by the institution. As such the project help to protect future income levels. Reputational enhancements through provision of high-quality teaching spaces are expected to impact positively on student experience feedback, which in turn can effect University performance in league tables, with potential increased application interest resulting from this.</p> <p>Improved teaching facilities will make Warwick a stronger competitor in the commercial market, not only for conference trade, but for vacation teaching activities and Summer Schools.</p> |
| <p>q) Will the project enable collaborative</p>   |  |

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| partnerships between HEIs and industry, charities, government, NHS trusts or other funding partners to be developed? (If so, please provide details)  | N/A |
| <p>r) For equipment replacement projects:</p> <p>What is the equipment's asset code on the asset register?</p> <p>When and how will the current equipment be disposed of?</p> <p>What evidence can you provide that the replacement equipment will be intensively used e.g. will it be made available on a cross-departmental 'pooled resource' basis?</p> <p>Is the same (or related) equipment available elsewhere in the University?</p> | N/A |

Supporting Statement from Head of Department/Research Centre

I confirm that:

- I am fully supportive of the above proposal.
- I am willing for the Project Leader(s) {and departmental administrative staff where applicable} to devote the necessary time to this project.
- All on-going or annual costs (i.e costs that are not funded under CIF2) have been considered and approved/noted by the Departmental Financial Administrator.  
*(Explanatory Note: such costs may include but not be limited to: any staffing implications of the project (e.g. where a new member of staff needs to be appointed to run a facility), the annual running costs (power, consumables etc), the need to update equipment in future (e.g. where a project is dependent on IT equipment with a relatively short life-span) and/or the cost of extended warranties not covered by the approved budget.)*

Signature

Name

Department

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For bids involving more than 1 department, please ensure you have signatures from all relevant Heads of Departments/Research Centres.

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Supporting Statement from Faculty Chair (or Registrar in the case of non-academic departments)

Please write a brief statement that describes the relative priority of this project from the Faculty perspective.

Signature

Name

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## **Appendix 2: Staff Interview Questions**

Has the refurbishment created any barriers to your teaching?

Has the refurbishment created any opportunities for your teaching?

How have you used the space?

Have you moved the furniture?

If yes:

How did you arrange it?

What was the impact?

Have you used the equipment in the new rooms?

How have you found it?

What was its impact on the way you taught?

Adding to the teaching impact question:

Have you noticed any difference in the coursework / exams / results your students have gained through your module?

Were you aware of the carbon neutral nature of the rooms?

Was that / is that important to you?

Did you know about the support / training sessions scheduled before the rooms were opened?

Did you attend one of the sessions?

If yes was it useful? How?

If no why not?

What is your understanding of the pedagogic reasons for the changes to the rooms?