

Report on the Task Force 'Learning Spaces' 2008-2009 GU8 Education Committee

According to the GU8 Hull EC resolution 2008, which was approved at the COP meeting in Melbourne 2008, a task force on Learning Spaces was suggested and Peter R Lutzeier (Hull) coordinated matters with Eveline Fallshaw (RMIT) and Oren Weinberg (Haifa).

In October 2008, a first email was sent out to members from all GU8 institutions with the request to nominate interested colleagues for the task force. This included a reminder that we wanted to include GU8 librarians and basically share plans and thoughts on learning spaces at our institutions.

In order to start the process of potential discussion, PRL offered a standard assumption, an initial set of questions around learning spaces and a model in the UK:

Assumption: There is no clear demarcation between formal and informal learning; in the extreme, learning can take place at any place and at any time.

Set of questions:

- How best to accommodate the needs for quiet space as well as social space?
- How best to accommodate the need for flexible space, in particular, space which can be configured by the students themselves?
- How best to accommodate the need for access to reading material?
- What kind and how much of IT does one have to provide?
- What is the physical and conceptual orientation of a traditional library in future?
- What are the needs of students who are not on campus; i.e. mature/part-time and distance-taught students?
- How best to involve the students in the planning process?

The much discussed model in the UK is the Information Commons at the University of Sheffield (<http://www.shef.ac.uk/infocommons/news/gallery/index.html>).

After a second call in November, we could constitute a group of 15-20 interested colleagues from RMIT, URI, Haifa, Le Havre, Inha, Xiamen and Hull. As one kind of response to the initial set of questions, several design plans of formal and informal learning and teaching spaces were received from RMIT and URI and its partner colleges and shared amongst the members of the task force. It was encouraging to see that, for instance, in the case of RMIT, the plans were meant to be set out in line with new pedagogic approaches towards learning and teaching. All this informed the discussion at the University of Hull.

In return, PRL gave an update on Hull's situation at the beginning of April 2009. It was also reported that there was a recent report on 'Learning Spaces for the 21st

Century' by the Higher Education Academy in the UK
(http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/detail/lr_2007_temple).

It has to be said that very few responses over the year were received and that in the end the exchanges were mostly confined to RMIT and Hull. This will continue for the time being.

At the same time, at the GU8 EC meeting at Xiamen University, it became clear that several GU8 institutions have been involved in establishing master plans for their campuses. This is the case, in particular, for the University of Hull, Xiamen University and Inha University and it was agreed that there was a general interest to share these plans. This will be done and it has to be seen whether this will spark off a wider discussion than the more specific topic of learning spaces.

However, there is at least one encouraging positive feature as an outcome of the original task force: whether it is for the narrower topic of learning spaces or the wider topic of master plans for the campuses, there seems to be a keen interest in sharing good practice amongst GU8 institutions.

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