Briefing Form

Theme: Social Space

Overview:

This briefing document demonstrates how the social space issue has gone on for 16 months. It summarises relevant feedback from University Committees and Working Groups 2014-15 and 2015-16. This is supported by a Students' Union Report on Space, Sustainability and Campus Management, the Students' Union Big 10 Survey 2015 Results, analysis of NSS 2015 free text responses and Hannah Lamb's report on social opportunities and spaces at ARU. Moreover, there's been consideration of the industry standard including the Quality Code for Higher Education and UK research on student retention & success. Overall, social space must be given more attention – it's important for social integration and student engagement, which are at the heart of improving student retention and success in Higher Education.

Feedback on Social Space from University Committees and Working Groups 2014-2015:

- **Space, Sustainability & Campus Management Group Feedback – 9th July 2014:**
  - GT asked where the **dance studio and radio station** would be relocated to – Sandy Lynam said they had identified space for the radio station but not the dance studio.
  - We have raised this steadily since information regarding the revamp of the Cambridge campus was released.
- **Campus Operations Issues Feedback – 15th September 2014:**
  - **Cambridge Studio** - MB and DS explained again how the studio is used and said that students would be very unhappy that this space has been taken away.
- **Campus Operations Issues Feedback – 15th September 2014:**
  - **Tindal Student Lounge** - this is much needed social space on campus and it should be available for students to use on a drop in basis.
- **Senate Feedback - 17th September 2014:**
  - **NSS -** Students have consistently identified social space and activity as concerns and HV said she was open to suggestions as to how these could be improved.
- **Space, Sustainability & Campus Management Group Feedback – 17th September 2014:**
  - **Cambridge Dance Studio** - GT reminded the group that a new site for the dance studio had yet to be found and this was still outstanding.
  - **Campus Developments** - It should be noted that Mellish Clarke and Bryant will be demolished next summer after teaching finishes. Compass House, Webb and Ruskin will be used for decanting. Pressure for space on the Cambridge campus will increase.
- **Campus Operations Issues Feedback – 20th October 2014:**
  - **Cambridge Studio** - SL gave an update on the two places she had been to visit and recommended that we contact Dave Morris to have a look round. She said it didn't look like footlights would be particularly suitable as it's not a square shape and there is still a bar there.
- **SSIG Feedback - 4th November 2014:**
  - **Social Space** - The University is having talks with the Tram Depot in Cambridge to see if they are willing to become the 'official' ARU pub.

Briefing Form

<div align="right">

Theme: Social Space

</div>

- ➢ **Student Experience Feedback – 5th November 2014:**
    - o **Social space** - SH pointed out that students are consistently saying to Officers and in the NSS that there is not enough social space
- ➢ **USU Feedback – 14th November 2014:**
    - o **Young Street** - We reported that SH and GS had visited Young Street and students are having to sit on the floor to have their lunch.
- ➢ **Campus Operations Issues Feedback – 26th November 2014:**
    - o **Student social space** - SL said that The Lounge in Cambridge will become a teaching space. MB asked if the Coslett café/common room could become the new student lounge with the pool table being installed there – SL said yes, if there is space.
- ➢ **USU Feedback – 18th December 2014:**
    - o **Tram Depot** - HV said that they have been in negotiation with the Tram Depot (via Martin Beaver) for them to become the ARU pub with branding/special deals etc
    - o **Young Street** - students are having to sit on the floor to eat their lunch.
- ➢ **Campus Operations Issues Feedback – 26th Jan 2015:**
    - o **Student Space on Campus** - SL confirmed that the Coslett Common Room will take the place of the Student Lounge when the latter becomes teaching space again. With regard to student space generally, we were advised to keep up the pressure with regard to the student hub.
- ➢ **Student Experience Feedback – 4th Feb 2015:**
    - o **Extra-curricular** - Clubs and societies have difficulties booking rooms
- ➢ **USU Feedback – 26th Feb 2015:**
    - o **Campus Operations / Space - Dance Studio** - An update was requested on the dance studio and when a replacement space is likely to be found. DS said that students haven't been informed that the Dance Studio will be demolished and it is important a suitable space is found quickly.
    - o **Mumford lounge** - The Mumford Lounge is closing as a student space.

Feedback on Social Space from University Committees and Working Groups 2015-2016:

- ➢ **SEC – 4th Nov 2015**
    - • **NSS** Some of the sections which were flagged in the open text comments were: Ability to contact staff, **the library, social space, facilities.**
    - • **Space for Student Societies** Greg Powell raised an issue with the space allocated for societies & students to use. It was reported that the Societies regularly end up being given rooms which aren't accessible. **This was recognised by the University as it was raised in the Board of Governors Student Matters committee and is regarded as a priority.** Proposals are due to come back with Medium-Long term students solutions. The university reported that if the society have a regular booking it can be scheduled in the timetable as a regular booking. It was suggested that the SU and Sandy Lyon meet to discuss.

- ➢ **QESC – 9th Nov 2015**

Briefing Form

Theme: Social Space

- **Student issues** - Shona told the meeting that study space on campus is thin and lots of students are complaining about this. Plus, as there's a lack of social space on campus the library is being used as a social space, which makes it difficult for students to study in there. The committee noted that there's an issue of communication about the available social space and agreed that social space is a problem but there are a number of considerations such as where will the social space go? It was also noted that the library needs to be focussed on study, moving genuine social activity elsewhere. Greg noted the use of 002 Web Building Ground Floor as a social space.

Further Evidence

➢ **Students' Union Report for Space, Sustainability and Campus Management - 9th September 2015**

Space on Campus

- The demolition of the Bryant building this year has caused issues with space for students' activities on the Cambridge campus. We have had a 50% decrease in taster sessions hosted in the Welcome/Freshers period from our student led clubs and societies due to the lack of appropriate space on campus. Last year over a third of these were held in the Dance Studio. Base: ARU students who commented = 975

- Chelmsford is also in much need of space for social activities. Student societies in Chelmsford are struggling to make recurring bookings and are limited in appropriate space for their activities, such as singing. Clubs in Chelmsford such as Cheerleading are also being pushed off campus to accommodate their activities.

- Student satisfaction with the range of clubs and societies currently available is in decline, as is measured by the NSS score on that particular question.

➢ **Students' Union Big 10 Survey 2015 Results**

Q15: Our mission is to make your Anglia Ruskin experience the best it can be, in your opinion what should we keep doing, stop doing and start doing to achieve this?

Top 3 'Start' suggestions 2015 (Base: ARU students who commented: 975):

1. **Keep the bar open for longer** (day time/night time and at weekends)
2. **More events through-out the year** (particularly on campus and during the day/at night)
3. **Students' Union bar for Cambridge**

➢ **NSS 2015 – Analysis of Free Text Responses (Hannah Lamb)**

Section B – Improving the Students' Overall Experience

- Students were asked **"What is the one thing we could have done to improve your overall experience?"** Social was a key theme that was identified when analysing the free text responses to this question. There were 138 comments relating to the theme 'Social'.

Briefing Form Theme: Social Space

- The Students' Union was a common theme relating to social activities, particularly for students in Cambridge; students commented that on the **lack of a central hub, where they can all meet and socialise on campus**. Comments about the Students' Union included having a bar on the Cambridge campus.

- **Students want help to feel more integrated into the university**, particularly with students who are placement based. This is also important at faculty/course level to make sure that students, even in different years, are aware of each other and feel able to socialise with one another.

Key NSS 2015 Free text comments that highlight the 'Social' theme:

"Need a proper bar and more socials".

*"No student bar. Cambridge is expensive so why not have a subsidised **social** area?"*

*"Better student bar needed, my friends at other universities have a large one or two and we miss this **social** space".*

➢ **This is supported by a report on Student Expectations and Perceptions of Higher Education (by the QAA & King's College London, 2014)**
Students want opportunities to meet and interact with other students, engage with their course and participate in extra-curricular activities to enhance their overall learning experience. Being part of a community and having a sense of belonging are important for the enhancement of the student's overall learning experience.

➢ **Student Charter** promises that in terms of listening to student feedback, ARU tells students to "tell them about small problems so they can deal with these before they become big problems".

➢ **Quality Code, Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality**

The Quality Code for Higher Education, which is a definitive reference point for all UK higher education providers, includes a series of indicators that reflect sound practice. Indicators are intended to help providers reflect on and develop their regulations, procedures and practices to demonstrate that the Expectations in the Quality Code are being met.

Indicator 8 (in Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement) notes that higher education providers should make available appropriate learning resources and enable students to develop the skills to use them. This includes the provision and maintenance of adequate computing and library facilities, physical and digital information resources, the range of necessary specialist facilities such as laboratories, workshops, practice rooms, sports facilities, and **social learning spaces**.

Briefing Form

<div align="right">

Theme: Social Space

</div>

As noted at QESC – 9th Nov 2015, due to the lack of social space on campus the library is being used as a social space, which makes it difficult for students to study in the library. Moreover, in the NSS 2015 free text comments there were 16 comments about Library resources suggesting the Library should be quieter, where possible.

"Little to no 'regulation of noise/behaviour' in the library, which is often used as a location for social gatherings, resulting in large groups, loud noise and in some instances, intimidation of others. I believe that the university's management have not yet grasped that as students now paying approximately £9,000 per year in tuition fees, that we are entitled value for money; we care a great deal when things are impacting upon our education".

➢ **Student Charter** promises that ARU will "provide clearly designated areas for quiet, silent and group study" in the University Library.

How student engagement links with social space…

➢ **What Works? Student Retention & Success programme 2008-2011 (a synthesis of the key messages, findings, implications and recommendations emanating from the projects funded through phf, hefce, The Higher Education Academy, Action on Access)**

The What Works? model puts student engagement and belonging at the heart of improving student retention and success. **This model identified the importance of social spaces for students to meet and spend time with each other**; these were particularly valued by students who live at home.

UK research in HEIs shows that friendship and peer support are critical to many students' decisions to stay in higher education (Thomas, 2002; Wilcox et al., 2005)

➢ **This is further supported by Hannah Lamb's Report on Social Opportunities and Spaces at ARU…**

Social Opportunities
Creating opportunities for students to interact socially with one another is important for student retention and success. According to Tinto (1975), persistence occurs when a student successfully integrates into the institution academically *and* socially.[1] Similarly, Nicpon et al. (2007) found that higher levels of social support relate to greater persistence and fewer feelings of loneliness. [2]

---

[1] Tinto, V. (1975) 'Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research.' in *Review of Educational Research*, 45(1): 89-125.

[2] Nicpon, M., Huser, L., Blanks, E., Sollenberger, S., Befort, C., and S. Kurpius (2007) 'The relationship of loneliness and social support with college freshmen's academic performance and persistence' in *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 8(3): 345-358.

Theme

Briefing Form Theme: Social Space

Interactions with peers and faculty outside of the classroom gives students a "mattering" to the university environment and a sense of connectedness.[3]

Students identify social opportunities as being an important aspect of their student experience
Following a coding exercise of the free text responses left in the Pre-arrival Survey, 'meeting new people and making friends' was the second most common answer (61 respondents) to the question 'What are you most looking forward to?' after starting the course (77 respondents).

Creating opportunities to meet other students on the course
Students based in Cambridge and Chelmsford reported that their classmates will often go straight home or will disperse across the campus immediately after classes; there are no common room spaces on the campuses, where students can go to continue their discussions about the course, developing these relationships. Students based in Guild House, Peterborough tend to go to the Student Café (because there is nowhere else to go) as a cohort during their lunch breaks, strengthening their relationships with their peers.

Social Spaces
Students place a lot of emphasis on friendships in feeling part of the University and it is important to create spaces for students to use to get to know one another.[4] Social spaces promote interactive learning and the feeling of belonging to an academic community through increased contact time with their peers. Social spaces provide opportunities for students to network with one another and to develop peer relationships with classmates, which can also be linked to good future employability skills.

> **Social space must be given more attention – it's important for social integration, student engagement and belonging, which are at the heart of improving student retention and success at University.**

A piece of research on Student Retention and Success by Robert Jones, which was commissioned by the Higher Education Academy 2009, notes social integration (the extent to which students feel that they 'fit in', particularly in a social sense) as an area of importance. However, Harvey and Drew (2006) found that **although social integration is thought to be crucial to student retention and success, it is given comparatively little attention within institutions** - for example the forming of friendships and the impact of the locality and **its social (non-university) facilities are not considered.**

---

[3] Dixon Rayle, A., and K. Chung. 2008. Revisiting first-year college students' mattering: Social support, academic stress, and the mattering experience. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 9(1): 21-37.
[4] Student Experience Research 2012, Part 4: First Year Student Experience
http://www.nus.org.uk/PageFiles/12238/2012_NUS_QAA_First_Year.pdf
ARU Students' Union December 2015