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# Post-Occupation Evaluation Study Report

## The Portland Building

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March 2020



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# INTRODUCTION

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This report aims to detail the strengths and the weaknesses of the Portland Building development. It puts forward recommendations, as well as highlighting best practice and excellence that can be applied to future projects at the University of Nottingham.



# OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

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## OBJECTIVES OF THIS POST-OCCUPATION EVALUATION

- To bring to light any key issues associated with the operation and management of the project during all phases of the development process
- To draw out stakeholder feedback concerning the design of the building
- To gather feedback from users and from stakeholders about how the building works in operation

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Building Understanding sought feedback on the following aspects of the Portland Building development:

- Overall satisfaction with the facility
- Design
- Construction
- Security
- Accessibility
- Lighting conditions: natural and artificial
- Data connectivity
- Operations and facilities issues

## STUDY PARTICIPANTS AND METHODOLOGIES

Building Understanding conducted face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews and a user satisfaction survey.

### Face-to-face depth interviews

The study included depth face-to-face interviews of approximately one hour's duration with the following stakeholder organisations:

- The capital projects manager
- The architect
- The project manager
- A key building stakeholder

### Telephone interviews

Telephone interviews were conducted with the following individuals:

#### Estates Office staff

- Senior Engineer
- Domestic Services General Manager

### **Contractors and consultants**

- One contractor and one member of the consultant team

### **Key stakeholders**

- Five key stakeholders involved in the development and ongoing use of the building

### **User satisfaction study**

Researchers spent one day in the Portland Building distributing questionnaires to building users. Questionnaires were completed by 385 building users. Respondents were drawn from the following groups: students (270 responses), academic staff (18 responses), non-academic staff (92 responses) and members of the public (5 responses).

### **The workshop**

On 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020, a workshop took place involving 9 attendees from the various stakeholder groups. The workshop objectives were to:

- Discuss and debate the findings of the primary research
- Generate recommendations to be applied to future projects commissioned by the University of Nottingham
- Highlight nuggets of best practice and excellence revealed in the project that can be adopted and applied elsewhere.

The workshop commenced with a presentation, by Building Understanding, of the findings of the primary research. Attendees were then divided into breakout groups, with each group charged with assigning recommendations to specific points of feedback.

## **SAMPLE SIZES**

It is important to emphasise that much of the quantitative statistics around the preconstruction, construction and post construction phases of the development of the building itself are based on very small samples with feedback gathered from a total of 12 respondents.

Feedback from the large-scale user satisfaction study focuses primarily on the building in operation from a user's perspective.

## **QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK**

Quantitative satisfaction ratings were collected during the face-to-face and telephone interviews and during the user satisfaction study. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with various aspects of the project on a scale of 'one' to 'ten', where 'one' represents 'very poor' and 'ten' represents 'excellent'.

Bar charts displaying the percentage split by rating are shown in the relevant areas of the report. It is very important to emphasise that for some elements of the project, such as those relating to the preconstruction, construction and post construction phases, these quantitative results are drawn from very small samples and are therefore not statistically significant. Some respondents were only involved with specific aspects of the work and so their

responses are limited to only that area. However, these results show at a glance the range of levels of satisfaction with the Portland Building, with scores ranging from 'two' to 'ten'.



# PROJECT DATA

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<b>Name of facility:</b>	<b>Portland Building</b>
<b>Location:</b>	University Park, University of Nottingham
<b>Gross area:</b>	14,463m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Number of storeys:</b>	Five
<b>Users of the facility:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students</li><li>• Staff</li><li>• Employees of tenant companies</li></ul>
<b>Room types:</b>	Meeting rooms, offices, social space, retail, reception, catering units.
<b>Start on site:</b>	June 2015
<b>Date completed:</b>	Dec 2018
<b>Period on site:</b>	3.5 years
<b>Gross construction cost:</b>	£14.4m
<b>Funding:</b>	University funding
<b>Contract type:</b>	JCT 2011 contract (with contractor's design)

# PROJECT BACKGROUND

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The Portland Building was originally constructed in the 1950s. It was remodelled and refurbished in the early 1990s and extended to the rear in 2003. The building had various functions, offering teaching space as well as retail outlets, Students' Union (SU) services, catering and other facilities.

Research conducted before the start of the redevelopment found that the Portland Building was largely seen as 'functional'. Students felt little emotional connection with the space and therefore chose to gravitate towards the city centre in order to socialise. The building seemed to have a lack of identity. It served a variety of purposes for many different stakeholders. The building was busy due to the number of timetabled activities and the warren of corridors made it difficult to navigate. There was a lack of bookable space for activity and services geared towards the needs of students. Some of these services were hard to find and inaccessible due to the outdated layout.

The vision behind this four-year redevelopment project was to create a new heart for the University Park campus: a venue with a clear identity, in which students could socialise, relax and access all of the services and facilities they need in one space. This project worked in tandem with the development of the Teaching and Learning Building, which freed up what was teaching space in the Portland Building for a range of flexible areas focused on the needs of students. The aim was to create a more modern space and improve accommodation for existing groups, as well as making services more prominent and accessible to those students who would not otherwise have used them.

Spanning four years, work was concluded on the Portland Building in December 2018.



# THE BIG PICTURE

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Commencing in 2014, the redevelopment of the Portland Building spanned four years. The development, undertaken in four distinct phases, saw the creation of a new performance venue, flexible areas for use by University societies, terrace space, the Portland Coffee Company, a Welcome Zone, large display screen to complement Djanogly Terrace, a bridge to connect the 2003 extension to the Portland Building with the Food Court and the opening up of corridors to create sociable space.

This was a long project, undertaken in a complex building with over four phases and with three different contractors. It was clear that the project journey had been challenging. The three different contractors employed for this project were operating in a live building environment, which brought challenges in managing the site and the proximity of the building's users. There was also significant disruption to the day-to-day working environment of some respondents interviewed, who had been located in the building while the works were underway. Delays to each phase of the programme created knock-on effects on the next.

The underlying fabric of the building posed unexpected obstacles to the build. Long-term issues, such as leaks and the atrium remaining out of use, impacted the overall satisfaction of the respondents. The level of flexibility in the Portland Building has also been somewhat hampered by a lack of clear ownership of the space.

While the project journey itself had been challenging, it was clear that there had been elements of the project that had been successful, such as the creation of the positively received Portland Coffee Company, the Welcome Zone and the Djanogly Steps. Overall, satisfaction with the Portland Building, as it stands at the end of phase four, reflects this, with 54% of the stakeholder respondents rating 'mostly satisfied' with the outcome of the project.

However, for the users of the building, overall satisfaction was higher, with 62% of respondents 'mostly' or 'totally' satisfied. It is interesting to note that, of the students, for whom the redeveloped building was designed, 70% were 'mostly' or 'totally' satisfied with the overall outcome, suggesting it was largely a success in their eyes. One respondent noted that, because the project journey was so long, it was at times difficult for those who had been involved from the beginning to assess the difference.

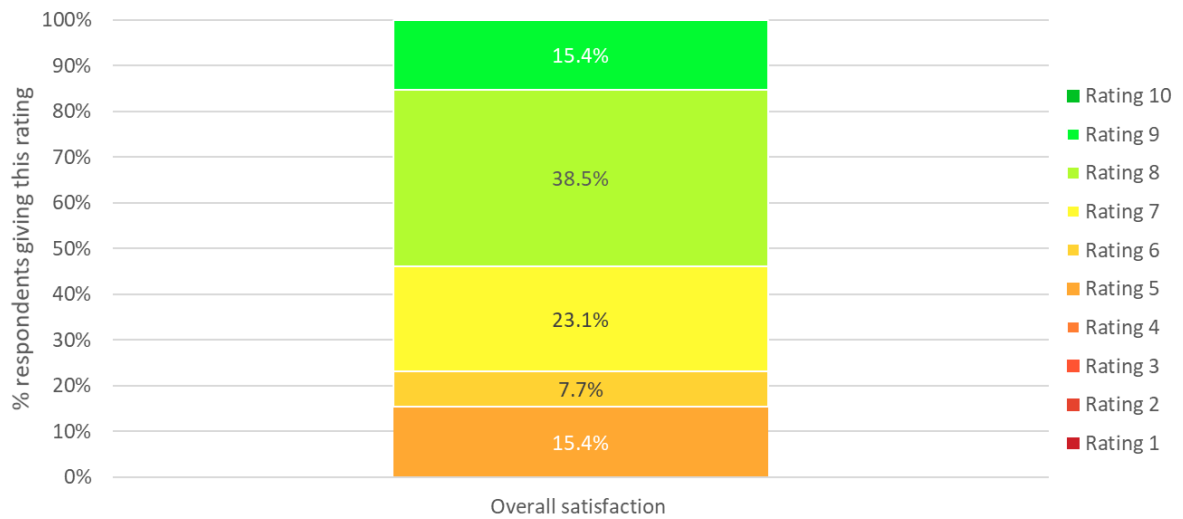


Fig 1: Overall satisfaction with the Portland Building among interviewed stakeholders

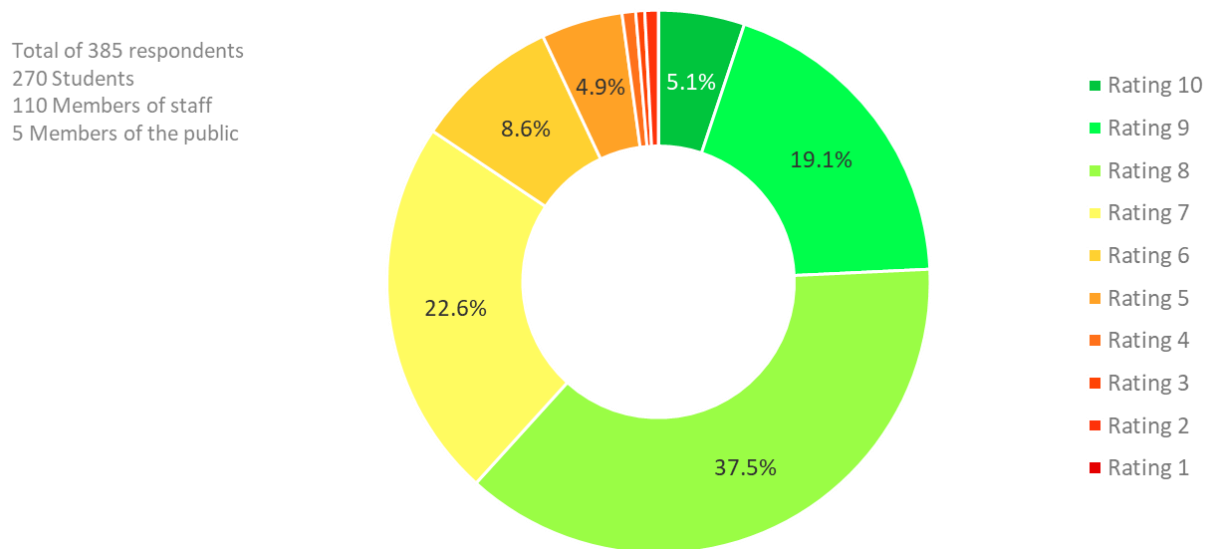


Fig 2: Overall satisfaction with the Portland Building among building users

# THE DESIGN AND THE CONSTRUCTION PHASE

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## FEEDBACK RELATING TO THE BUDGET, OPERATIONAL AND CAPITAL COST

### Capital outlay

The overall budget for this project was over £14m, however, given the challenging nature of this project and the unexpected obstacles contractors discovered, the budget was not sufficient to complete all elements of the planned refurbishment. According to one respondent, “It didn’t quite get us what we wanted to do.” An absence of plans or drawings for the building, prior to 1991, meant that there were a number of unforeseen issues with the building that contractors had to deal with, which all impacted on an already tight budget. Given that the building was occupied, other than asbestos and structural surveys, there was little investigatory work that could be done to mitigate this and so the architects “only had the best guess”. The pump for the district heating system located in the building required refurbishment and had not originally been part of the budget. As a result, some of the planned M&E works had to be reviewed, as was the refurbishment of level E, which was seen as a ‘disappointment’ by another respondent.

Looking to future projects, one respondent mentioned that a more in-depth survey of the building would have prevented some of the delays and associated costs. However, since concluding this project, there has been an acknowledgement that budgets need to be more closely aligned with all of the requirements: *“That is historically the Nottingham way, that is changing now. When we do projects, we look at making sure we include all of the things.”*

## FEEDBACK RELATED TO THE DESIGN AND LAYOUT

### How closely the finished building meets the original vision

There was a mixed response from interview respondents concerning how closely the finished project meets the original vision for the building, with ratings ranging from ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ through to ‘mostly satisfied’.

For some respondents, the Portland Building closely meets the University’s original vision to create a desirable space for students to socialise, relax and meet. They also felt that the finished result reflected some of the early designs. However, no respondents were completely satisfied that the finished building has met the University’s vision.

In line with the vision, the building now has more bookable and flexible spaces, the project has preserved the heritage of the building, and has helped resolve some of the wayfinding issues. The building ‘flows’ better now, and according to the architect it, *“certainly has created a more modern environment that’s more commensurate with student aspirations”*.

However, a lack of clear ‘ownership’ for the building made it less successful for one respondent, combined with the dilution of some of the design ideas that would have aided

some of the wayfinding issues yet further: *“Because of the ownership, because of the dilution. Because it’s not a building that has ultimately been adopted by the Students’ Union. It’s still got pockets of inaccessible space, or spaces occupied by other users and that kind of thing.”* The fact that E floor remains unfinished, and the atrium remains out of use also impacts on its fulfilment of the vision of a space dedicated to students.

There was a sense, from a number of respondents, however, that there was a lack of a clear shared vision among all stakeholders and a feeling that the vision may not have been strong enough to start with or it would have held more strongly through challenges, and changes in SU leaders, as the project progressed. In their eyes, this meant the project was “semi-successful” and that, *“As a university community, we need to provide what students don’t know that they want and what they might need, but that’s nowhere near as attractive as fulfilling a wish list.”* One respondent commented that, if they could turn the clock back, they would want the University to sign off, at the start, an agreement for the overall concept of the building. In their eyes the lack of understanding of the overall concept was a key issue for the project.

Another respondent referred to plans ‘drifting’: *“I would set out a finalised brief, early days of exactly what we want. It drifted too long. We spent the first three years deciding what we were going to do. It meant we were never able to enable things.”* Workshop attendees noted that a change in senior management within the Estates team posed an additional challenge as key drivers for the project somewhat shifted during later stages. There was a sense from one attendee that there was a lack of clarity from within the University itself as to what student services should remain in the building.

### Recommendations:

- It would be valuable to have improved, more thorough, formal steering group/stakeholder meetings feeding back to the Project Management Group (PMG) in some way.
- There is scope for improved emailed communication from steering group meetings.
- Interconnecting PMGs, working on connected projects such as the Portland Building and the Teaching and Learning Building should discuss with each other the impact of any decisions made.

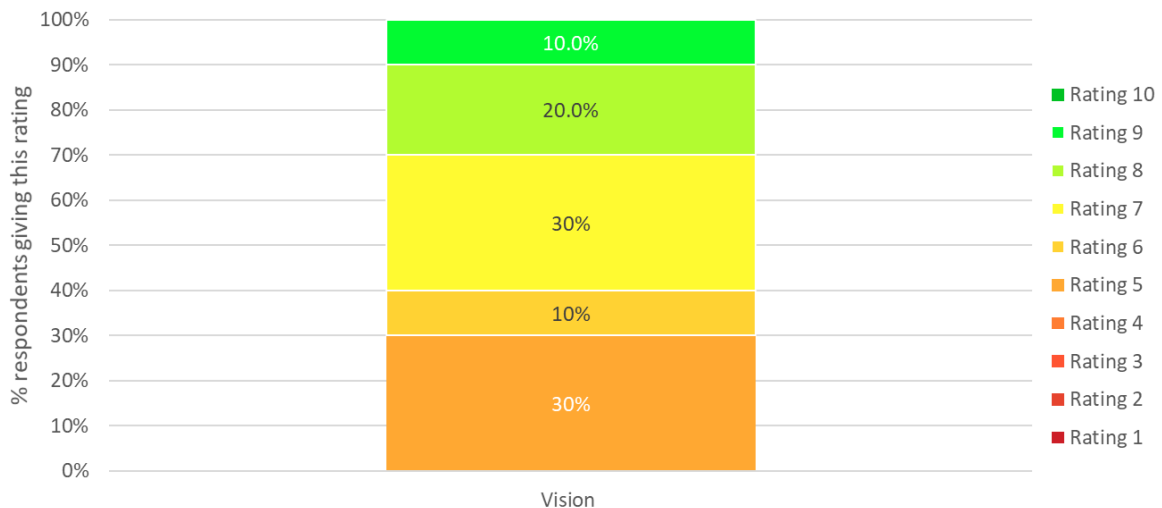


Fig 3: Overall satisfaction with how closely the Portland Building meets the original vision among interviewed stakeholders

## The overall design

Understandably with such a complex and significant development, there was a broad array of feedback from respondents as to what elements of the design had worked well, and what had been less successful.

Key successes included the opening up of the circulation spaces, and enabling students and staff alike to meet, eat or study. *“The overall project and the design is really good. The end result was certainly worth waiting for. It’s a much nicer space to be a part of and I can definitely see the benefits for students in terms of the space allocation now.”*

Another key objective was to create a more ‘legible’ design for the building, providing a more user-friendly space where students and staff alike can easily find the services. One respondent noted: *“It’s making it more user-friendly and making it more legible, so you know where you’re going. If you want to get wellbeing help, you know where to go. If you need help with setting up a new activity group, you know exactly where to go. If I need to do something about finance, I know exactly where to go. That’s really important for a student.”*

The remodelled entrance to the building next to the Welcome Zone has been a significant change and in the eyes of respondents has created a better welcome to the building, without the bottlenecks that were experienced previously. This space has also created a showcasing area for fairs or activity with volunteering, where building users can show what this building is about.

There was a positive feedback as to how the retail units blend successfully into the corridor and this was seen to be an innovative development for the University. One example is how well Blackwells bookshop flows into the outside circulation space and corridor.

There was less satisfaction with the Get Involved Zone on C floor which, rather than looking like a place where students could go and get assistance, looks more like an office. Open-plan office space combined with student-facing services is also felt not to work well, by one respondent, citing that it had created levels of stress for some users.

A key element of the brief for the building was to create bookable, flexible spaces which students could reconfigure in order to create environments to suit the activity they were undertaking. This was delivered. However, in practice, without a clear owner for the space, costly furniture has remained largely in storage, and in the case of Studio One, students are faced with a large, somewhat empty space.

## FEEDBACK RELATING TO RELATIONSHIPS, COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

### Consultation

It was clear from the feedback that this was a complex project in terms of the consultation that needed to be undertaken and the distilling of all the differing opinions. The many, varied stakeholders who needed to be consulted on a building of this nature, as well as the changing of student union sabbatical officers each year, combined with time pressures from this phased project, made it a challenging environment in which to consult.

It was clear for some, however, that the areas where things have worked the best are those where everyone has been clearly involved in and on 'the same page'. *"Where those developments have been successful is that all of the partners have been around the table, discussing what their needs are. It's getting to that point where people know that they can't get all of those things and a point of resolution of where focus should be."*

One respondent summed up the unique challenges this building presented: "It wasn't the building itself; it was the stakeholders. There were so many people involved with a live building. There were so many university businesses, it was not like a typical university project where you might be dealing with a couple of departments, it was spread. Also, the student body changed every year, with different student representatives."

### Relationships

Despite a long and protracted, phased, and at times, challenging project, relationships among the core project team were largely viewed positively.

There was a significant amount of churn in the team during the project with several different project managers, three different contractors and changing student union representatives. Only three original members of the project team remained throughout the entire programme. To help mitigate some of this, a student union end user representative was appointed some way through the project, which was welcomed.

### Collaboration within the wider team

Collaboration was rated positively by the project team, with all respondents rating this as 'seven', 'just satisfied', or above.

For the Domestic Services team, collaboration between contractors and Portland Building attendants has been a 'ten': *"Generally the contractors worked well with our building attendants. If you look at the end product, how it's built and the progression and so very many subcontractors, I will give it a 'ten'."* Given the fact that contractors were working in a live student environment, it was vital that this relationship was as collaborative as reported.

One contractor interviewed agreed with this, noting that in order to meet tight deadlines it was vital that they worked closely with the University and the wider team, and the regular meetings that were organised by the University aided this. They continued: *"If we came up with anything, the advantage of working closely as a team was that everyone met up, had a look at what we had to do, came up with options and solutions and agreed what we were doing there and then."* However, one respondent noted that one of the key challenges, in the early phases, occurred when the team encountered something different to what was expected and the ability of the Architect and the Structural Engineer to respond quickly enough in order not to impact on what was already a very tight programme.

While much of the feedback to this question related to the core project team itself, one respondent did note that there was a difference between phases as to how collaborative the approach had been. Phase three was considered to be the least collaborative and phase four the most successful in this regard. *"It was down to the type of work and the contractor. Also, we were conscious of how phase 3 had gone and wanted to make sure that that didn't happen again."*

## Communication

When asked to rate their satisfaction with communication, most respondents were 'just satisfied'.

For the contractor involved in phase four, in particular, communication was crucial and required a larger team than they would normally use for this scale of project, in order to liaise with the University and key building users. The University's engineers felt involved and received the information they needed relating to loss of services and shutdowns and Domestic Services were kept notified, alongside key building stakeholders.

Regular meetings held between the project team aided active communication and the University's capital projects manager noted that, given the speed of pace of the project, *"A lot of it was about quick thinking and you had to direct as you walked around as much as anything"* and that communication, *'could have been better'*. One respondent noted that, on occasions, conversations were happening directly between members of the project team, such as value engineering matters, the implications of which weren't always being fed back to them.

There was a sense from project managers that they were relying on accurate information from contractors around what would be achieved by a certain date, because this information needed to be passed on to building users. If the information received was inaccurate, then this could cause problems for users, particularly those with disabilities whose movement around the building was made even more difficult.

For those occupiers of the building, there was a sense communication during construction could have been improved and that lapses in communication had impacted on the service that they were trying to deliver to students. More transparent communication about the true impact of works on those still resident in the building during the development would have helped staff to plan and anticipate any disruption they might face. Armed with knowledge about the possible disruption some occupiers may have been able to make alternative arrangements during flashpoints in the build.

## Recommendations:

- Ensure all relevant stakeholders are kept properly informed at all stages.
- Make sure that information concerning timings and progress against programme is transparent and complete.

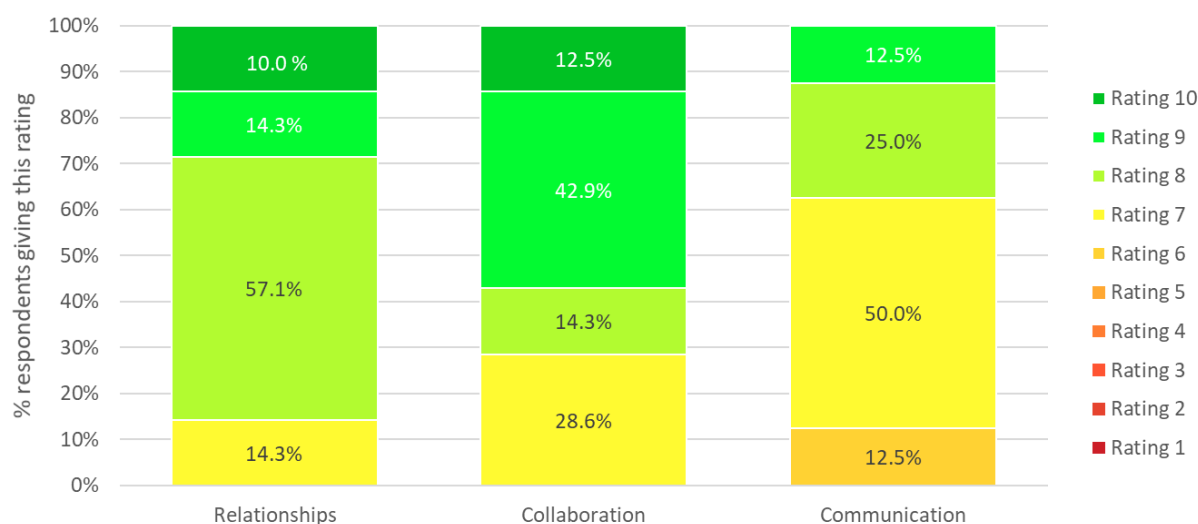


Fig 4: Satisfaction with the relationships between members of the project team.

## FEEDBACK RELATING TO MAIN CONTRACTORS AND SUPPLY CHAIN

### The main contractors

Given the complex and phased approach to this development, three separate main contractors were employed to complete the work. In the interviews that form the basis of this evaluation, the performance of contractors was the one area respondents felt able to evaluate separately for each phase.

#### Phase 1

A general builder was employed to complete the first phase of the works to create the new performance venue for the building.

Respondents were not, in the main, satisfied with the work of this contractor, with 33% of respondents 'mostly dissatisfied'. While 'on paper' this was considered to be one of the straightforward phases of the redevelopment, because of not being in a heavily used area, the contractor had faced challenges during the project because of unexpected issues that arose in the fabric of the building. There is disagreement among respondents as to whether the contractor was aware of these challenges at the outset. Coupled with this, relationships between the contractor and the architect became fractured during this stage of the development.

#### Phase 2

Satisfaction amongst respondents for the contractor responsible for phase 2 of the project was marginally higher than for phase 1, with 60% of respondents 'just satisfied' and the



remainder, less so. Largely comprising of external works, scheduling the works and managing the space to ensure that the building could operate was a major challenge for the contractor during this phase. This phase was late handing over, and for one respondent, *“They did not finish on time and did not seem to have the right level of urgency.”*

### Phase 3

Phase 3 was completed by the same contractor used for phase 2. This was one of the largest fit-out phases, and one of the most complicated sets of works. It was considered to be the poorest performance from a contractor over the four phases. There were some significant changes of personnel within the programme, with the site manager changing two or three times which meant that, *“They lost momentum and never recovered.”* One respondent noted their frustration at the contractor’s lack of ability to ‘get to grips’ with the design.

### Phase 4

The main contractor for the final stage was selected because of their ‘wealth of knowledge’ of working in a live environment and in a phased manner.

This contractor received far more favourable feedback than those handling the previous phases, with most respondents describing their satisfaction as ‘mostly satisfied’. There was a sense from respondents that as fit-out contractors, they understood the needs of the University and the impact of any possible delays better than other contractors had. While there were delays and at times one respondent felt they struggled getting the right staffing, as well as drilling and dust being an issue for building users, they were seen as being ‘fairly proactive’ in trying to resolve issues. There was a limited number of defects following this phase.

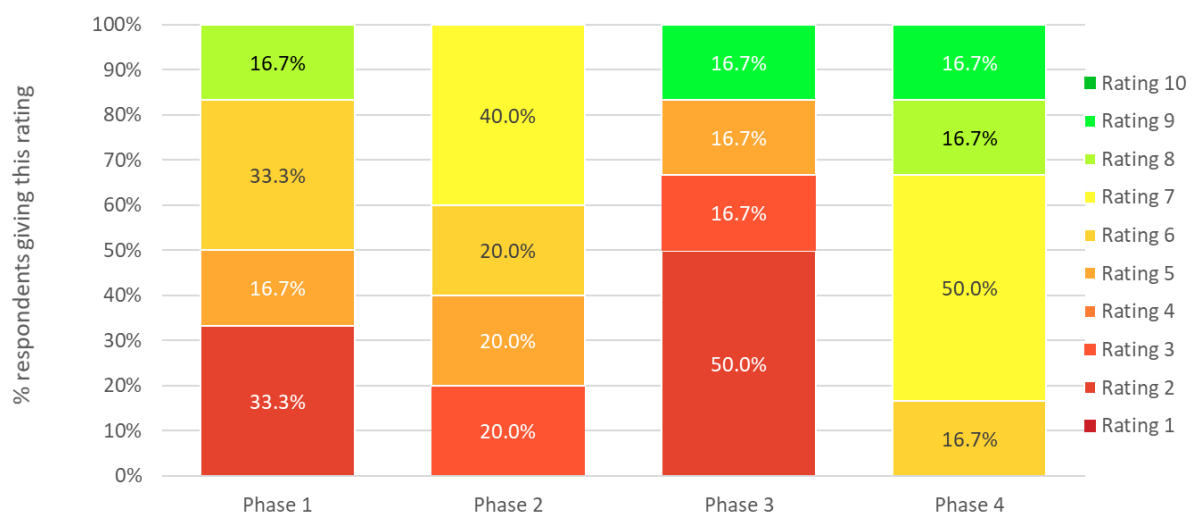


Fig 5: Satisfaction with the main contractors involved with the Portland Building project among interviewed stakeholders

## M&E Services

Respondents were 'mostly satisfied' with M&E services on the Portland Building. There was greater consistency here, with the same consultant operating across the four phases. The M&E consultants were seen as open and willing to discuss issues and demonstrated a flexible and proactive approach.

The M&E subcontractors that completed phases two and four were rated positively by a number of respondents. The M&E consultant, along with the contractor and other key members of the project team, worked together closely to complete thorough planning of the M&E side of the works.

However, according to one respondent, they were constrained by the budget and what they could do within the building. As with other contractors working on Portland, there were challenges to working with the existing 'archaic' systems.

During the build, there had been issues because some of the existing wiring and controls were cut through. This was not detected until the end of the works, resulting in issues in terms of controls and basic heating systems. This accident was presumably a result of a lack of detailed plans available for the building.

The University's team of engineers would have welcomed having a bit more time to go through what was planned from a controls perspective, and this would presumably have saved time in the long run. However, they accepted that they have their own ongoing maintenance work to complete and so it is, "*at the moment just not practical to have that luxury.*"

## Supply chain and subcontractors

The small number of respondents that answered this question were split in their level of satisfaction with subcontractors, with two rating them as 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and two as 'mostly satisfied'. Unsurprisingly, this was purely related to their own experiences with specific subcontractors and suppliers.

Furniture was a significant component of the project and the supplier, an existing furniture supplier for the University, was seen as proactive and helpful.

For the M&E consultant, a key learning was to not engage with AV companies until they have had a full appointment. Problems were experienced with the project when the AV companies changed their requirements from their original brief.

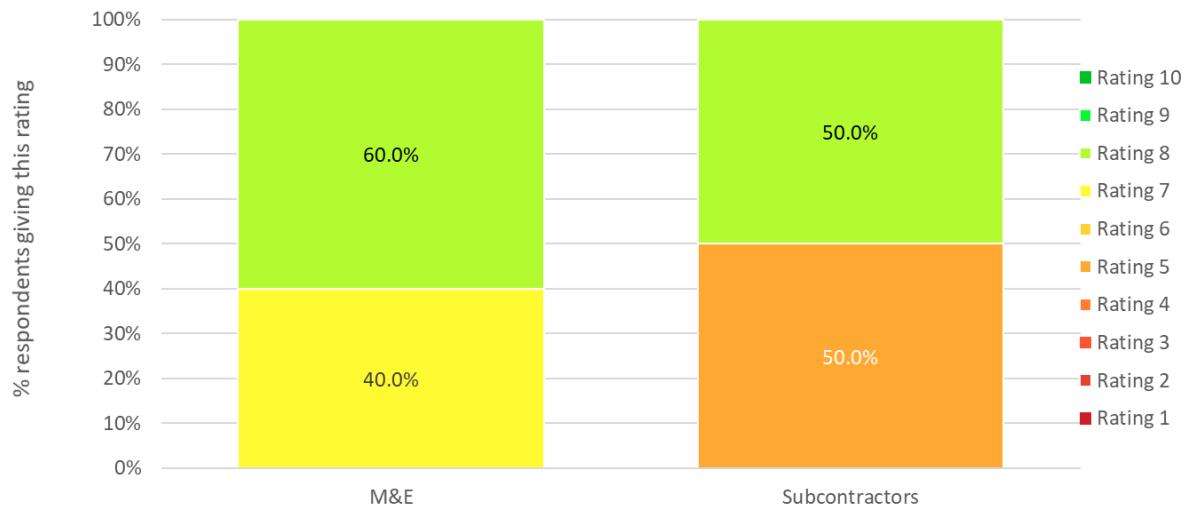


Fig 6: Satisfaction with the performance of M&E services and subcontractors among interviewed stakeholders on the Portland Building project

## FEEDBACK RELATING TO PROGRAMME

Completed over four years and with three main contractors, numerous subcontractors and suppliers, and many changes within the University team itself, all while the building was in full use, the programme was a challenging one. This was reflected in the feedback from respondents. The phases involved the following;

Phase 1: Creation of a new performance venue and flexible space.

Phase 2: Installation of the screen next to the Welcome Zone, altering the entrance area next to the Welcome Zone and installation of the revolving door. Upgrade of Mooch Terrace.

Phase 3: Work undertaken over five storeys to transform academic space into a student focussed social and support hub. The main entrance re-orientated to create the multi-height 'welcome hub'.

Phase 4: Completed retail mall and flexible spaces and rooms.

One respondent summed up their frustration with how challenging the programme was, when asked what they would do if they could turn back the clock: *"I would shut the building down and do the whole thing in a year."*

Initial plans were to complete the work over three phases. However, because the main works needed to be completed while students were away there wasn't enough time, so the final phase was added. This resulted in a 'small window of opportunity' to carry out quite extensive works and one respondent felt that the programme was *"unrealistic and undeliverable"*. However, in Phase four, the planning was more realistic, and the remaining areas were more isolated, so impacted less on users. The programme was seen as very tight, in terms of mobilising contractors for each phase, and the architect explained that there was a sense of, *"we're going to have to roll up our sleeves and get on with this"*.

Another respondent agreed with this. *"The fact that this was a phased development was necessary but less than ideal. There was no way because of all the services running out of this building, that you could take it out of commission for a two-year period, which it is what it would have taken to have done the whole thing."* However, despite being necessary, the change of contractors was unhelpful because there was little continuity between phases. The differing phases also, at some points, allowed themes and designs to change mid-project.

There were challenges to the already tight programme when contractors had to reschedule works, having encountered issues within the fabric of the building. In addition, there were issues encountered through the contractors' supply chains, particularly during phase three. For subcontractors who were on a set daily rate, any challenges with accessibility to the site made the job unattractive for them and the fact that they could be working in an occupied building compounded this. The work being completed during the summer period, an extremely busy time in construction, meant that there was plenty of alternative work for subcontractors, which meant main contractors could struggle to maintain a reliable workforce.

There was some discussion in the workshop around managing University teams who remained in the building during construction to ensure that they were not moved too many times and their working environments remained viable.

Delays in the programme had a long-term impact on footfall within the building. A number of respondents explained that students, new to the University, established habits during those first few weeks. With the building not being fully operational, students found alternative places to go, and many did not return for the rest of the year. For example, the programme running behind resulted in a year-long impact on catering outlets, affecting business and trade quite significantly. One respondent noted: *“When students came back in September there were certain corridors that were closed which impacted on our business because students weren’t able to access them. As a result, it did suffer for the rest of the year because people hadn’t really acclimatised to using that part of the building so didn’t frequent some of our cafes.”* Better marketing of the facilities available in the refurbished areas of the Portland Building could have ameliorated this, according to workshop attendees.

Similarly, the opening of the sky bridge was delayed and so students arriving at the University for the first time were not able to access that improved wayfinding through the building. Another respondent explained that with elements being delivered late, users could not get a full sense of what they were supposed to look like. Workshop attendees felt that the building is beginning to work more as envisaged, now it has been in operation for some time.

In retrospect, one workshop attendee explained that, if they were to turn back the clock, they would have had a much bigger closure, and used the first year to have completed a full design, any necessary enabling and cleared half of the building, relocating those affected. This would have prevented staff from being displaced several times.

### Recommendations:

- In order to mitigate the impact of delays, ensure effective contractor communication, making sure this is as transparent and accurate as possible.
- Look at ways of ensuring a more robust approach from the University’s contractor teams, so that contractors’ minds are focused on timely delivery.
- Ensure the programme is realistic at the outset.
- Look at working beyond only the duration of the summer months, where possible.
- Explore whether specific subcontractors can be nominated. While this may come at a price, but it may be worth it to get the right teams of subcontractors.
- Look at ways of mitigating the impact of delays on footfall, such as advertising and promotional campaigns to draw people into the building.

## Health and safety

With the building in heavy use at the time of a lot of the refurbishment, there were a small number of health and safety incidents over the four year period, the most serious of which involved the collapse of a roof above a set of stairs, thankfully without any serious injuries occurring. One respondent noted that, at times, there were some unsafe practices with fire exits taped off without warning. Stairwells without handrails posed a particular risk to users with visual impairments.

In the eyes of one workshop attendee, the experience, particularly of disabled users, during the development process was ‘pretty horrendous’. They felt there had been a lack of responsibility taken by the project team for giving out information specifically relating to those with disabilities and how the changes would affect them. One respondent noted how the

build had undermined their wellbeing and health during the course of the development, with headaches caused by noise, and asthma being aggravated. The sensitive work undertaken in the Chaplaincy area was affected by the build and the “impact was horrific”.

## FEEDBACK RELATING TO HANDOVERS, COMMISSIONING AND DEFECTS

### Handovers

Most respondents rated the handovers as either ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ or ‘just satisfied’, so there was a definite room for improvement here. All phases were handed over late, and according to one respondent, there were significant levels of snagging.

There was an acknowledgement from within the University, that some decisions taken around opening areas to students before work was completed made a significant impact on the ability of contractors to handover effectively. This was particularly notable at the end of phase three when one respondent noted: *“It was a building site and we never should have opened it.”* In all phases, but particularly in phase three, contractors were also ‘desperate’ to handover spaces, even though they were not complete. One example was the bookstore, which needed to be open in order to sell books to the newly arriving students, and yet had not been completed.

Two end user respondents noted that they were told at late notice that spaces due to be handed over would be delayed. This made it challenging to plan events around Fresher’s Week and affected planning. *“It’s far better for people to give people honest, realistic deadlines, than fob them off with deadlines that aren’t going to be reached.”*

Phase four was seen to be the best of the phases with regards to handover.

In terms of M&E services, however, for the maintenance team, documentation was received and handover in this regard was handled satisfactorily.

### Commissioning

Given that many of the systems in the Portland Building were existing systems, commissioning was a relatively simple process, according to the small number of respondents who answered this question. The two respondents rating this question were both ‘just satisfied’. The AV systems worked well at the point of commissioning.

### Snags

Respondents to this question took a pragmatic view, overall, on the level of snags and how responsive contractors were to resolving them, acknowledging that while some of the defects were of their own making, the University’s urgency to get spaces reopened when they were not completed had contributed to this: *“Overall, I would say a ‘six’. A lot were reasonable and understandable, given the challenges in terms of short timescales and us dictating when they should be open. Some were of their own making”.*

According to one respondent, no snags had impacted the end users and there was nothing that meant that the space could not be used. There had been very few defects during the defect period. Contractors had, on the whole, been responsive in dealing with any snags that

needed resolution. While there had been leaks in Phase one and the atrium remained out of use as this report was being written, blame here could not be wholly placed with the contractor. With regards to the leaking atrium, the contractor had been proactive and gone 'above and beyond' with resolving issues with the atrium at the early stages.

The University's engineer noted that from a services perspective, one issue that they had experienced with wiring for the building management system having been cut through accidentally, meant that their satisfaction with the levels of snags 'had not been great'.

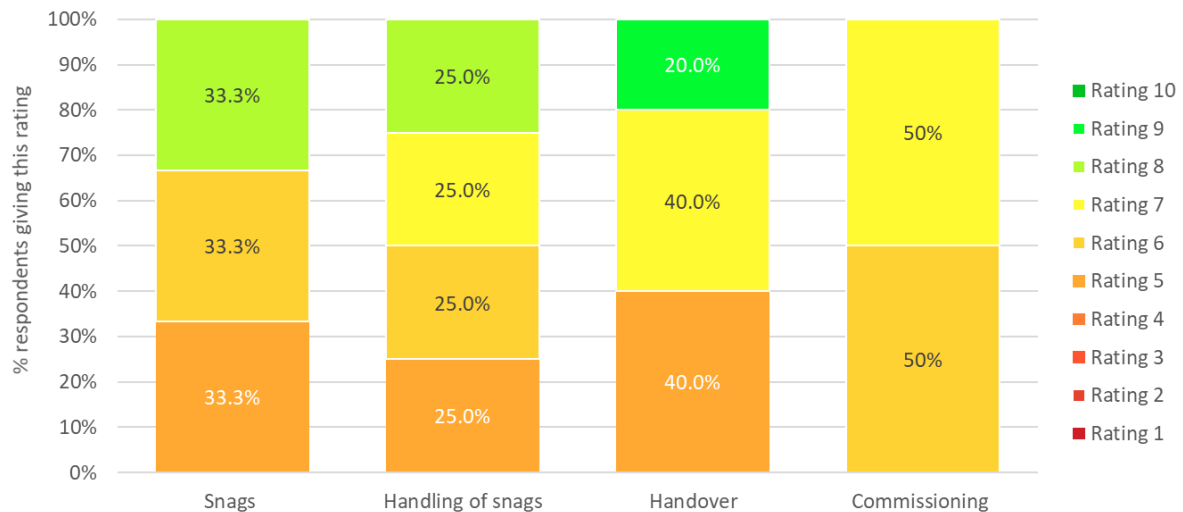


Fig 7: Satisfaction with handover, commissioning, the level of snags and how they were handled among key stakeholders

# POST-OCCUPATION – END USER FEEDBACK

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## Methodology

Researchers from Building Understanding spent one day, in November 2019, approaching Portland Building users and asking them to complete a brief questionnaire. Feedback was sought on what users most and least liked about the refurbished building, how they rated a variety of aspects of the building, such as cleanliness, temperature and lighting, and the various spaces within it. Respondents were also invited to suggest any changes that they thought would improve it.

## Results

Questionnaires were completed by 385 building users during the day. Respondents were drawn from the following groups: students (270 responses), academic staff (18 responses), non-academic staff (92 responses) and members of the public (5 responses).

## What users liked best about the changes to the Portland Building or additions to the services it offers

When asked what they liked most about the changes to the Portland Building, by far the most commented upon element was catering and refreshments.

Building users, both students and staff alike, appreciated the range of eateries available. The Portland Café was particularly popular, being seen as well styled and a good place to work. Hendersan's was also popular, and the availability of vegan, vegetarian and healthy food was welcomed by a number of respondents. One student noted: *"I really appreciate the presence of different café options and the improvement to the building since last year."*

Other than agreeing that catering facilities were the most successful changes to the Portland Building, students and staff had differing views on which changes they deemed to be successful. For students, the most frequently commented upon successes, other than catering, were the retail provision, specific spaces, and seating and study space. One student commented: *"Portland Coffee is a good place to work and meet people, and the Welcome Zone is also good."*

For staff, it was the general ambience which they felt was successful. There was a sense from them that the building was nicer, brighter, modern, friendlier and more welcoming, with a less enclosed feel. One staff member commented: *"The décor is much more welcoming."*

## Issues or problems with the Portland Building

Respondents were just as forthcoming with what they didn't like about the Portland Building as with the positives.

Interestingly, the most frequently raised issue among students and staff alike was, again, catering and refreshments. While many users thought this was the best element of the changes to the building, nearly as many felt that the catering provision could be improved.



For students, the main issue was that they would like access to cheaper food options, as existing options were considered to be expensive. When asked which elements of the refurbished building work less well for them, one student commented, *“Prices in Spar, prices in Mooch.”*

However, for all respondents, the catering outlets were also proving to be victims of their own success, with queues being an irritant for staff and students alike.

The next most frequently raised issue for students was navigation, followed by specific spaces and retail provision, with concern from students around the range of shops available on site, how busy they were and their prices.

After feedback on catering, staff focused on what elements of the specific spaces themselves were less successful for them. The atrium being out of operation was mentioned by a number of respondents and four users commented that the Welcome Zone should be signposted as the SU reception.

#### Recommendation:

- Take steps to keep up with ongoing trends with regard to food and retail outlets

### Satisfaction with key spaces within the Portland Building

Overall satisfaction with the spaces within the Portland Building amongst all respondents was between 7.5 and 8.1 for all but one of the spaces. Study spaces received a far lower overall rating of 6.6, suggesting that the spaces dedicated to study were less successful for users, although users did remain ‘just satisfied’ overall. Looking through the feedback from students about what additional services they would like, it was study spaces. One could surmise from this that satisfaction is more connected to availability of the right kind of study space rather than the space itself.

Students and staff were both satisfied with the Faith Zone, together providing an average rating of 8.1. Other than that, staff and students differed on what they judged to be their most successful areas of the building. Students were ‘mostly satisfied’ with an average rating of 8.1 for the Djanogly Terrace and the Welcome Zone. One student commented, *“The Djanogly Terrace is a really nice space, especially in summer.”* Staff rated the SU Advice Centre highly, at 8.6, as well as the Future Zone at 8.2.

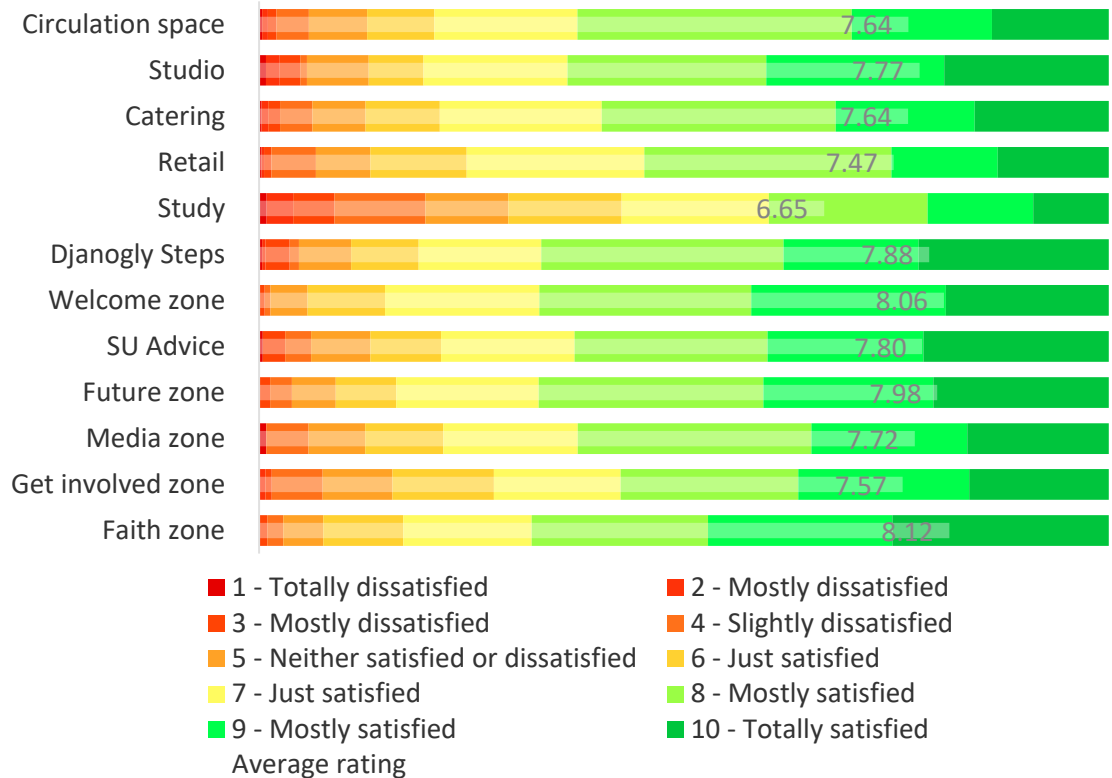


Fig 8: Satisfaction of all users with various spaces within the Portland Building

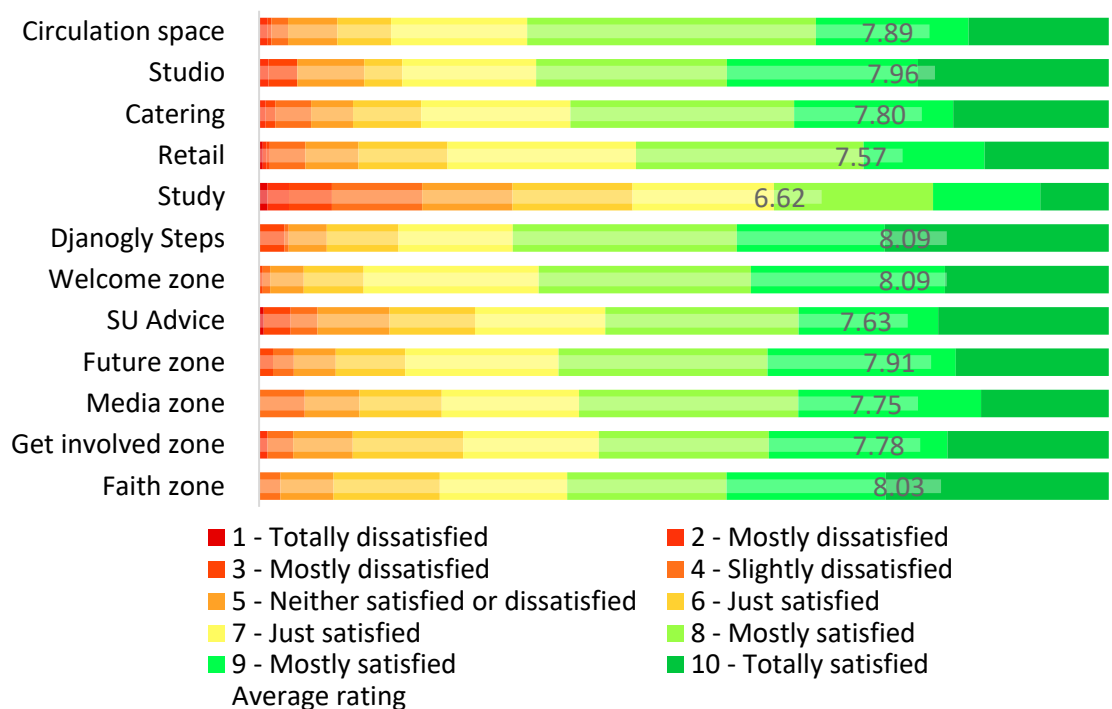


Fig 9: Satisfaction of students with each of the spaces in the Portland Building

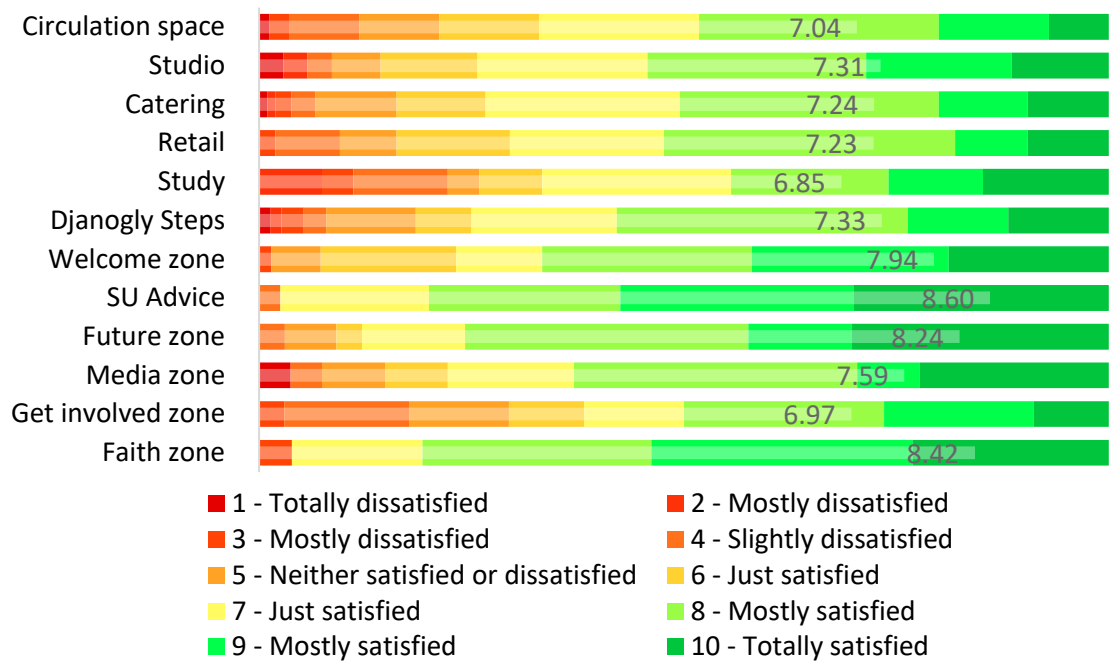


Fig 10: Satisfaction of non-students with each of the spaces in the Portland Building

## Users' experience of using the Portland Building

Users were asked to rate their satisfaction across a variety of aspects of the Portland Building, such as accessibility, light and cleanliness.

Overall satisfaction among all respondents fell between 6.0 and 8.0 across all aspects of the building. The highest levels of satisfaction among all respondents was for WC facilities (7.9) and accessibility (7.9). The lowest satisfaction ratings were given for temperature (6.9) and availability of power and print hubs (6.9).

Students, however, rated all aspects of using the Portland Building more positively than staff. The highest ratings were for WC facilities (8.5), lighting, both natural and artificial (8.4) and accessibility (8.3). Satisfaction was lower with availability of places to study or meet (7.1) and availability of power sources and print hubs (7.0). While these ratings are lower, however, students remain somewhat satisfied with all aspects of using the Portland Building.

Staff ratings for using the building pull average ratings down overall. Temperature was, by far, the area where staff, presumably mostly working in the building, felt most dissatisfied. This suggests that students passing through the building, accessing the services and facilities they need, were not so affected by it. Staff gave an overall rating of 5.3 for temperature, the lowest rating by far. Ease of navigation around the building (6.3) and light (6.5) were other areas where staff felt less satisfied. Lighting is interesting, given it is an area where students are mostly satisfied. Again, it suggests that issues experienced by those permanently working in the building are not shared with those passing through.

A full breakdown of feedback received on aspects of using the Portland Building is detailed in the chart below.

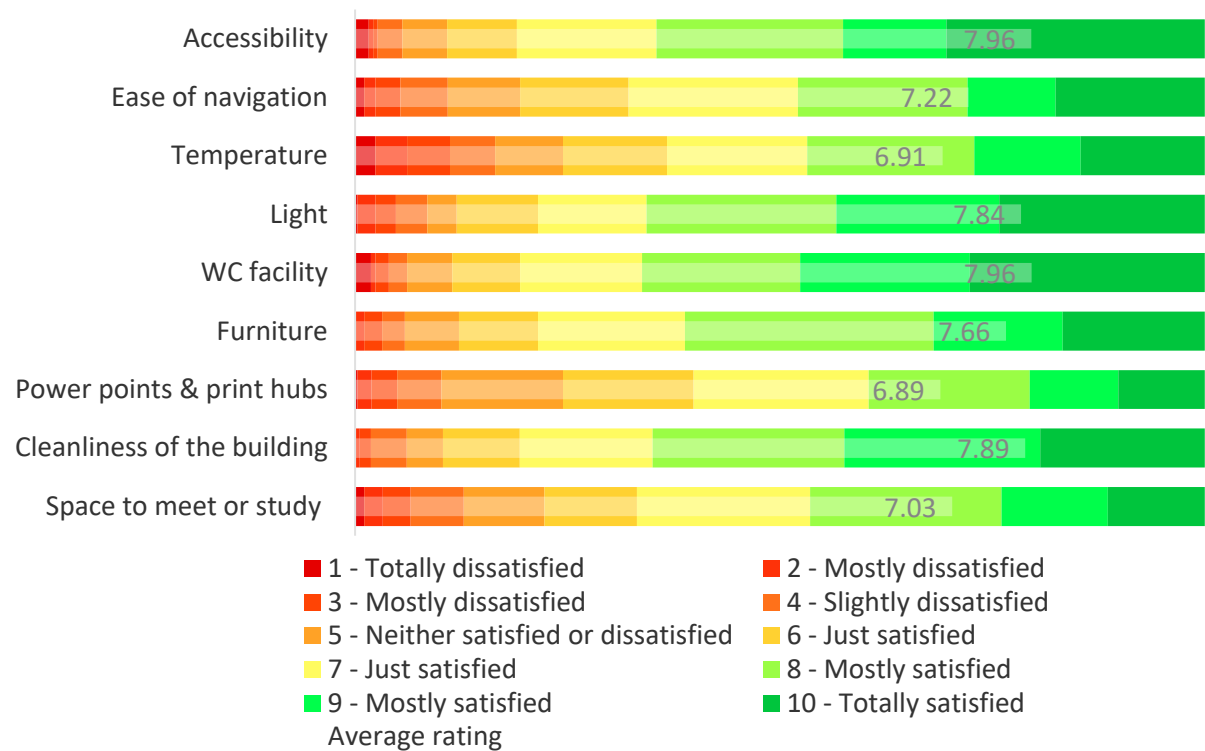


Fig 11: How all users rated their satisfaction with aspects the Portland Building environment

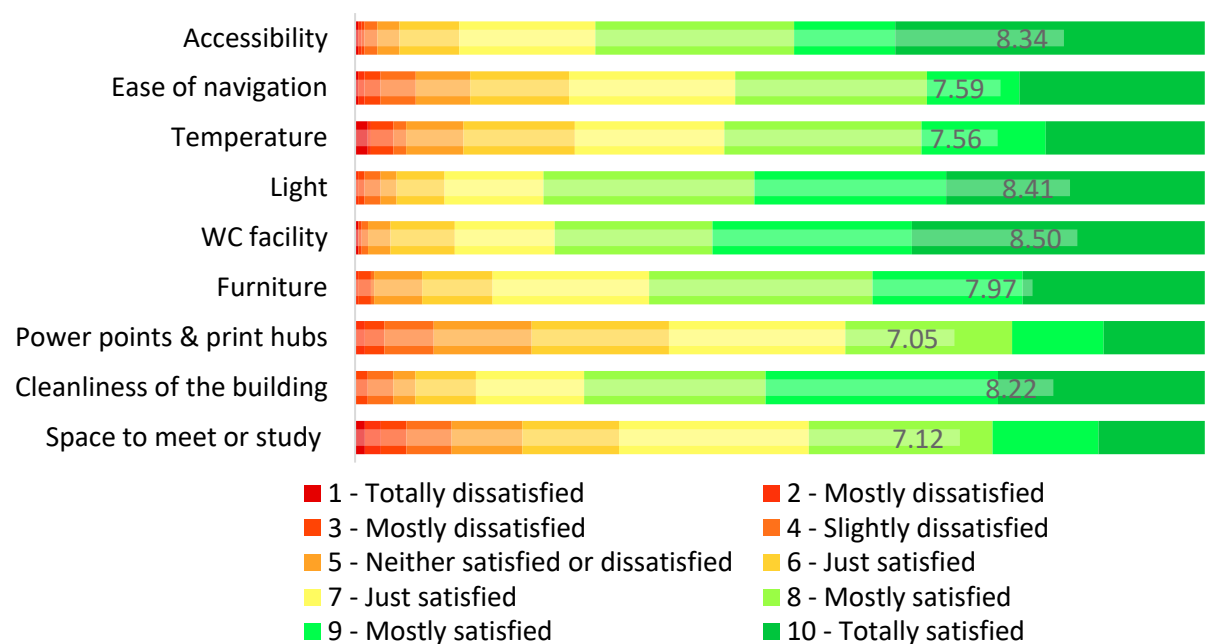


Fig 12: How students rated their satisfaction with aspects the Portland Building environment

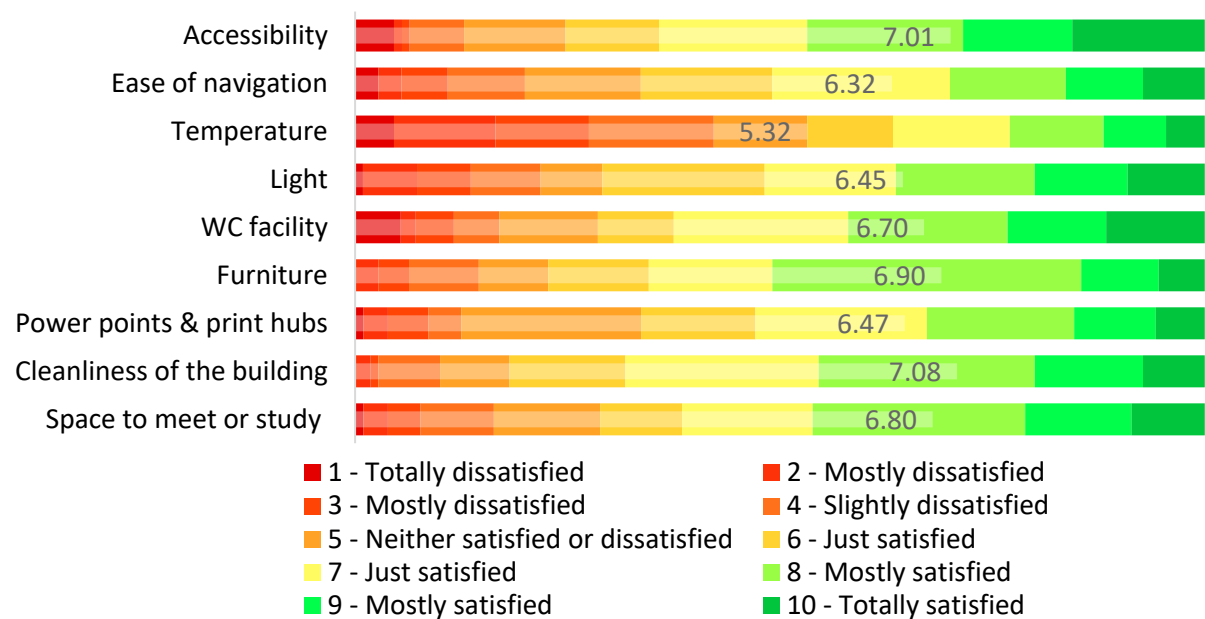


Fig 13: How non-students rated their satisfaction with aspects the Portland Building environment

## How the Portland Building is used

Given how feedback in this survey has focused on catering and food, it's unsurprising to note that respondents most regularly use the Portland Building for eating, and this was the case across student and staff respondents. Overall, 94% of respondents used the Portland Building for eating, with 53% doing so regularly.

Shopping was the next most significant use of the building for both students and staff, with 76% respondents shopping there, although only 21% regularly.

Students use the Portland Building for socialising during the day, with 53% saying they socialised there occasionally, and with 16% doing so regularly. In terms of accessing University services, 77% of students had used the Portland Building to do so.

Students are much less likely to access the Portland Building to socialise in the evenings, with only 4% doing so regularly, and 62% never having done so. Only 8% of students regularly use the Portland Building to study and 58% had never done so.

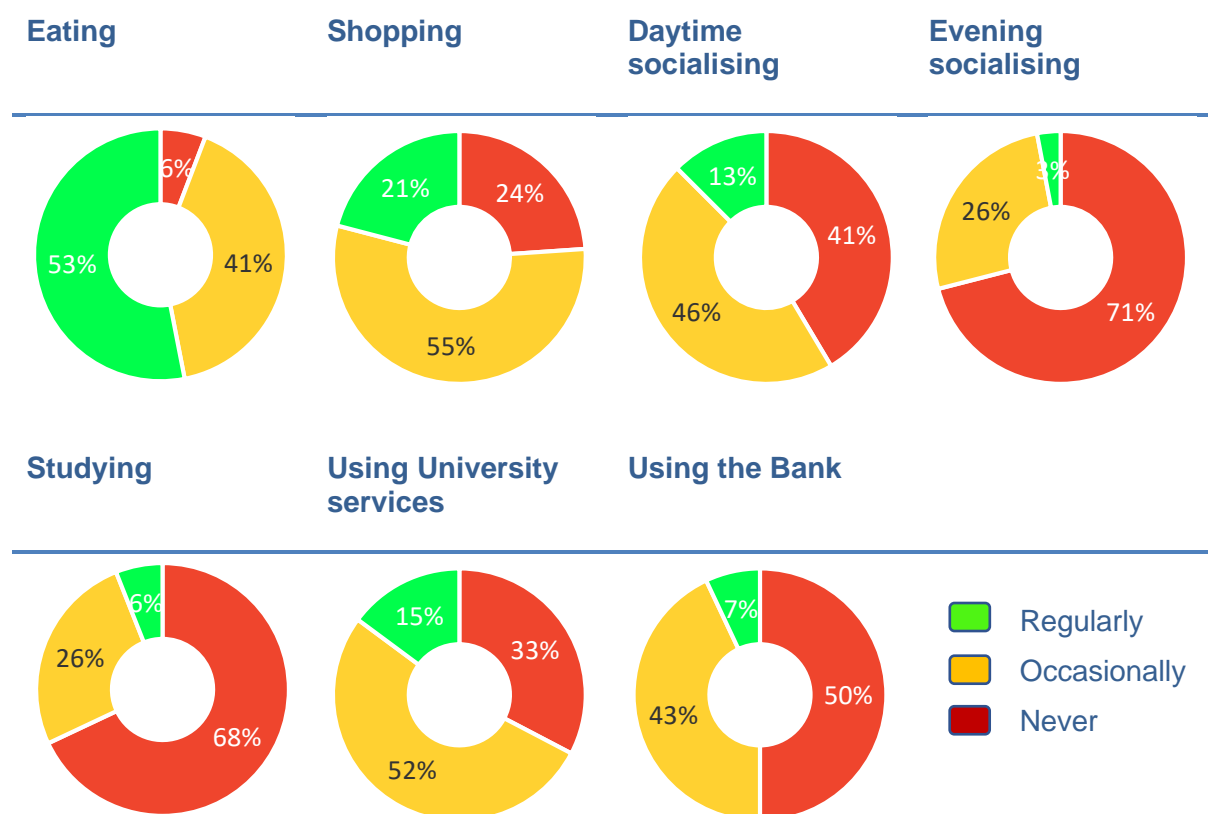


Fig 14: How all users use the Portland Building

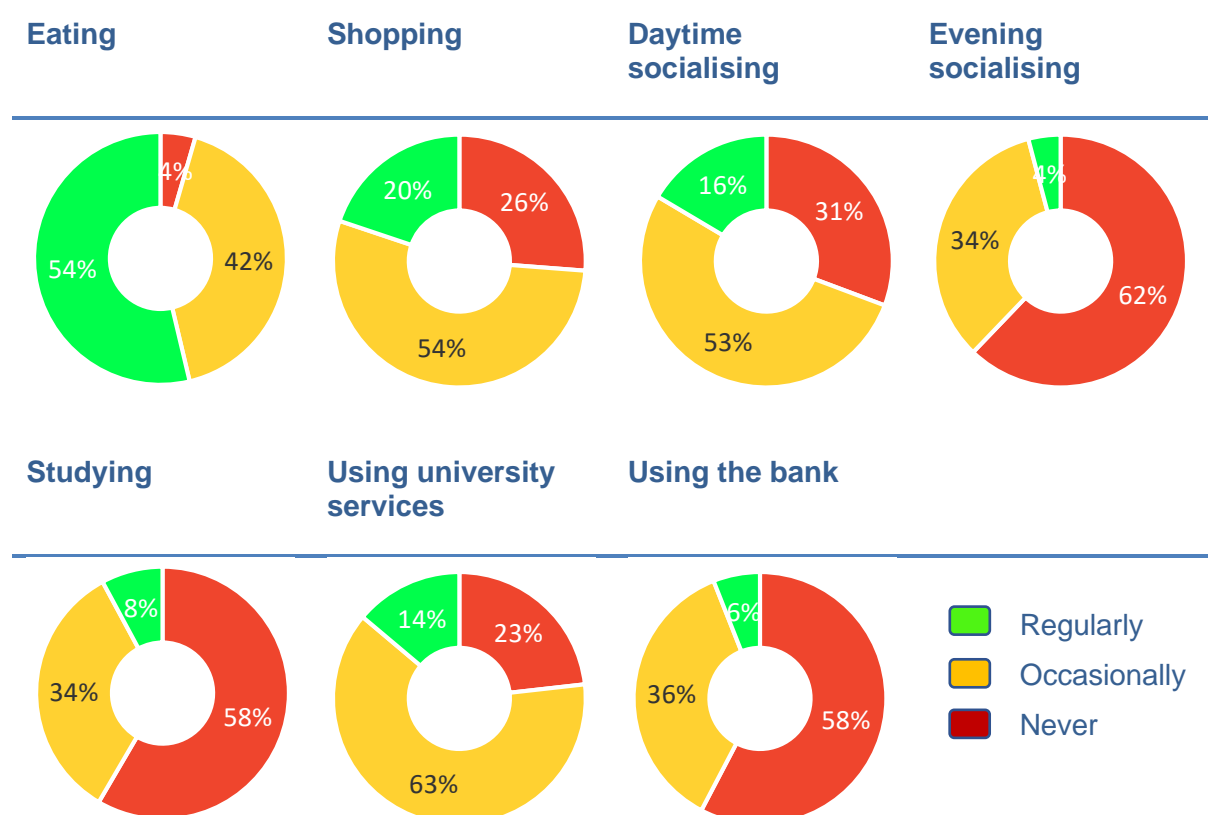


Fig 15: How students use the Portland Building

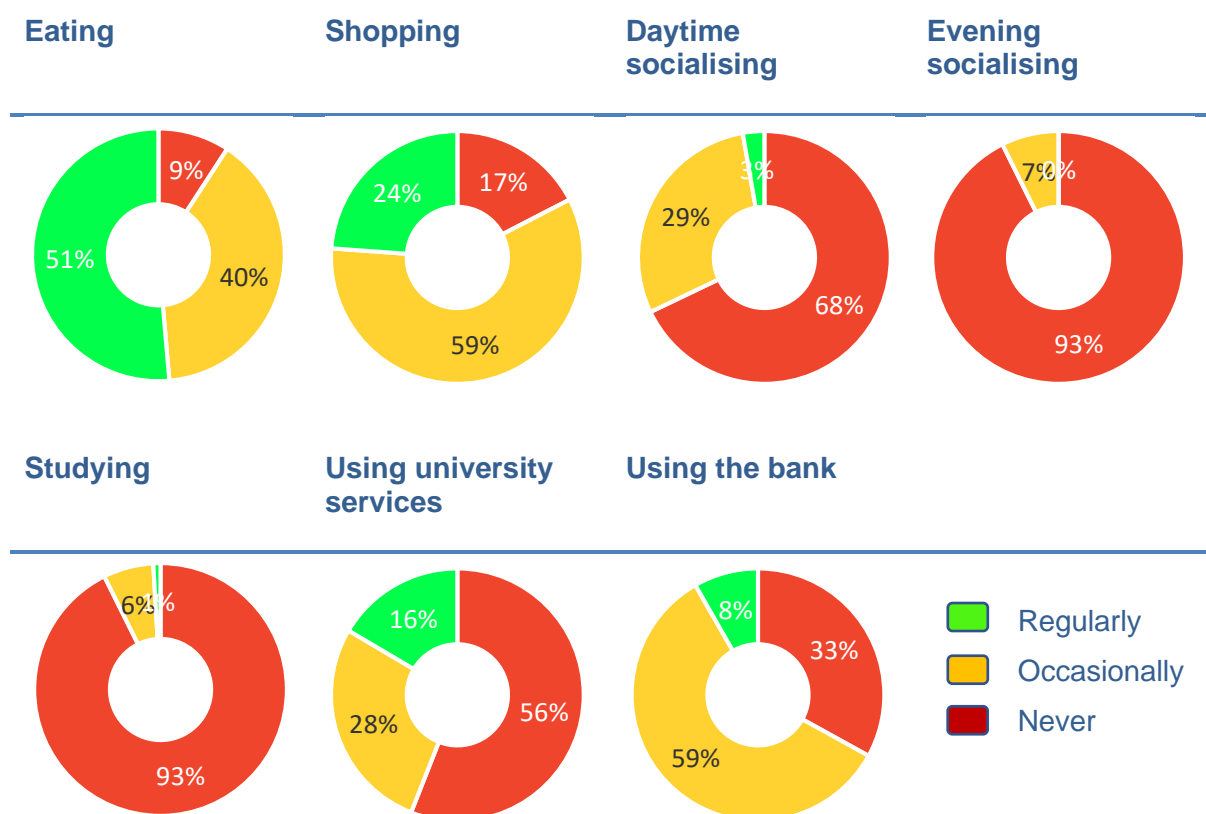


Fig 16: How non-students use the Portland Building

## Most frequently suggested changes or improvements to the Portland Building

Given that eating was the overall most regular activity in the Portland Building, it is perhaps no surprise that the highest number of suggestions for improvements, among all users, were connected with this.

Respondents were keen to see an even wider choice of food in the Portland Building, and suggestions included more healthy options, salad bars, baguettes and pasta. Access to cheaper food and drink was also suggested by respondents, as was additional seating. A number of respondents requested additional water fountains, and some made reference to existing ones, which leak.

For students, nearly as many suggestions related to seating and study spaces were received as for eating, so the Portland Building is clearly a location where they would like to study, even though feedback suggested that few are currently doing so regularly. Students were keen to have access to a greater variety of study spaces, such as quiet spaces, '1-2-1' spaces and communal areas. One student suggested: *"New/more sofas and seating areas that are 'quieter'."* With regards to print hubs, workshop attendees explained that there are print facilities within the building, mainly in staff areas, which students are able to use. However, to publicise more facilities might detract from the overall aim of the building which is as a place for students to relax and socialise yet work if they wish.

Both students and staff made a number of suggestions about retail provision, being keen to see a greater variety of shops. Suggestions relating to specific spaces were also referred to

by both staff and students, Also, the closure of the atrium was mentioned by a number of respondents.

## Overall satisfaction with the Portland Building

Overall satisfaction with the Portland Building among those canvassed falls within the 'just satisfied' band, with an average rating of 7.6.

Students, for whom the space was designed, were more satisfied overall with the Portland Building than staff, with an average rating of 7.9. Staff rated their level of overall satisfaction as 7.0.

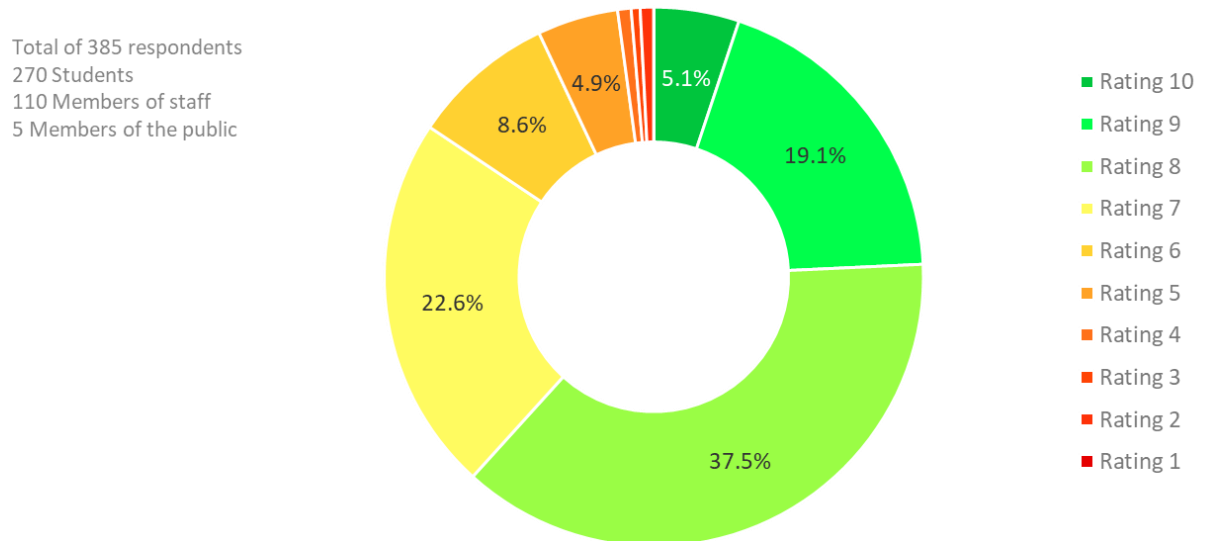


Fig 17: Overall satisfaction with the Portland Building among all users

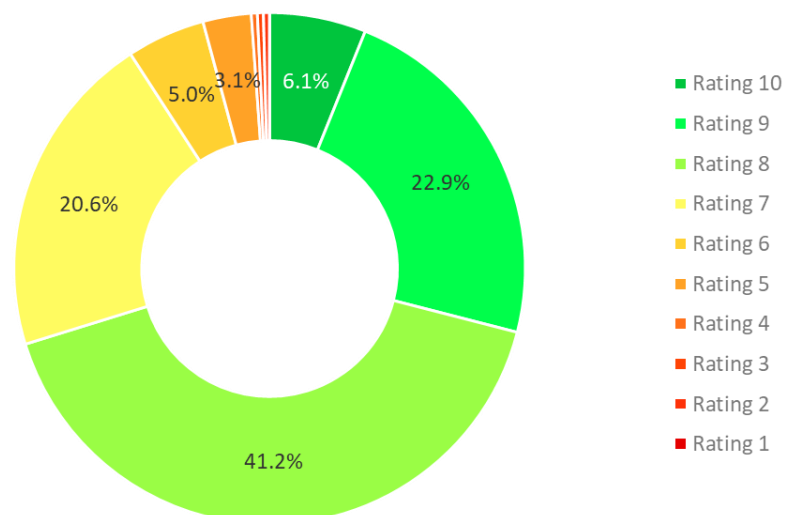


Fig 18: Overall satisfaction with the Portland Building among students



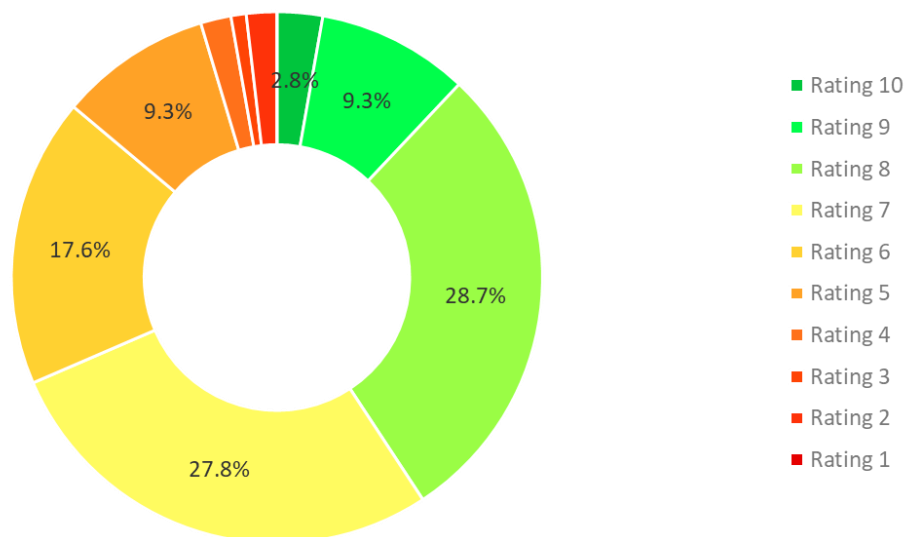


Fig 19: Overall satisfaction with the Portland Building among non-students

## Conclusion

Overall, satisfaction with the Portland Building among building users is good, but there is room for improvement.

The refurbished building was primarily designed with the needs of students at its heart, and clearly, overall, they are satisfied with the space. While the Portland Building has provided a venue in which students to meet during the day and where they access University services, based on the feedback in this report, it has not yet provided the study space that they expect, or need, and evening socialising remained less of a focus for this building,

With regards to study spaces, the original ethos of the building was more about creating a multifunctional building, which could be used for study, rather than specific study spaces. The workshop engendered a discussion around this and an acknowledgement that students needed and wanted different spaces to study. It was said that different students thrive in different environments and that, '*variety is what people want*'. More bookable space was made available through this development, space which could be used for anything, including study, and the profile of this facility could be increased.

Staff working in the building are slightly less satisfied than the students. Elements of the environment make it less well suited to their needs, with variable temperature and lighting. However, these issues were not those that concerned students, suggesting that there is a challenge to creating a lively, open and student-focused space which also meets the needs of staff located within it.

## Recommendations:

- Explore the possibility of introducing an app to highlight the locations of available study spaces.
- Consider the possibility of the Students' Union conducting some research concerning study spaces, and whether increasing the provision of study spaces is the right option for this building.

- If there is agreement that additional study spaces are needed, SU should propose to the Estates Office as to how that the need should be met and whether it is a case of adding extra desks, or power points.

# POST-OCCUPATION – KEY STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

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## Feedback on the overall quality of the Portland Building

Most respondents, when asked to rate their satisfaction with the overall quality of the Portland Building, were ‘just satisfied’.

Feedback overall was that the quality of the finish was variable. The fast pace of the development meant that quality, in some respects, was compromised. For some, the building did not feel finished. However, for the University, while changes had to be made as the budget fell short, it is felt that the building “*does the job pretty well*”.

There were areas, such as the Accommodation Office and the Faith Zone, where quality standards were seen to be really good. However, the atrium being out of use and the fact that the planned changes to E floor hadn’t been undertaken affected a number of respondents’ views on the overall quality of the building.

The rear entrance remains less aesthetically pleasing for one user and others mentioned issues around the heating in that area. Leaking water fountains affected satisfaction among respondents as well: “*The water fountains that were put in are already leaking so they have got flood sacks around them. In terms of meeting the requirements for the space, it’s just those attention to detail things that just let it down, so I would probably say a ‘seven’.*”

There is more mixed feedback on how well the building is standing up to day to day use. For some, aside from directional signs peeling off the walls, the building is seen to be wearing well. However, for others, ongoing leaks and regularly out-of-order WC facilities have clouded their view. There was an acknowledgement that because the programme had been so protracted, some areas altered during the early stages of the project would soon require refreshing.

The flooring looks good and there were positive comments on the feeling of space in the building, and also on the quality of the furniture.

## Feedback on the quality of the interior finishes and workmanship

Feedback on the quality of the finish spanned from ‘somewhat dissatisfied’ through to ‘mostly satisfied,’ depending on respondents’ individual experiences with the building.

For one interviewee, the standard of workmanship lets the overall interior finish of the building down. There was a lack effort to protect finishes, such as the newly laid flooring. Also, the length of the project and the changes in the leadership within the Students Union meant that a new brand identity was ‘imposed’ on the building, which meant that original design intent was lost or mixed up and negatively impacted on the quality of the interior finishes. For example, red staircases, which were intended to help wayfinding, were superseded by a new Union brand identity.

For others, again, the perception that the building is not yet fully finished, the fact that the atrium remains closed, along with the continuing leaks, have negatively impacted on their

view of the overall finish of the building and the quality of workmanship. *“The atrium is a really bad example of workmanship. The roof is leaking in more than one place. The atrium roof is still leaking and there’s still a leak that comes through near the Welcome Zone.”*

Those who were ‘mostly satisfied’ felt that, while they weren’t ‘wowed with amazing finishes’, and that there were little bits where there could have been improvements, these were largely smaller details, and finishes were generally ‘good enough’. Flooring, while affected in some respects by subsequent phases of work, was, on the whole, better than previously. WC blocks, particularly those opposite Blackwells, were of a good quality. The back staircase, up to the food court and down to the Mooch and the difference it made to that area, in terms paint finish, the handrails and the coverings on the steps, was considered to be ‘pretty good’ by to one respondent. For one respondent, Phase one was a notable success in terms of the finish: *“It was an absolute dive of a space, which was turned into a bright and usable area, which has probably been used to the max over the last three years or so. The quality of the finish helps; it is bright and airy.”*

For some, the environment in the building is a little too ‘clinical’ and discussions are underway to about how to create a sense that the building is one that belongs to students.

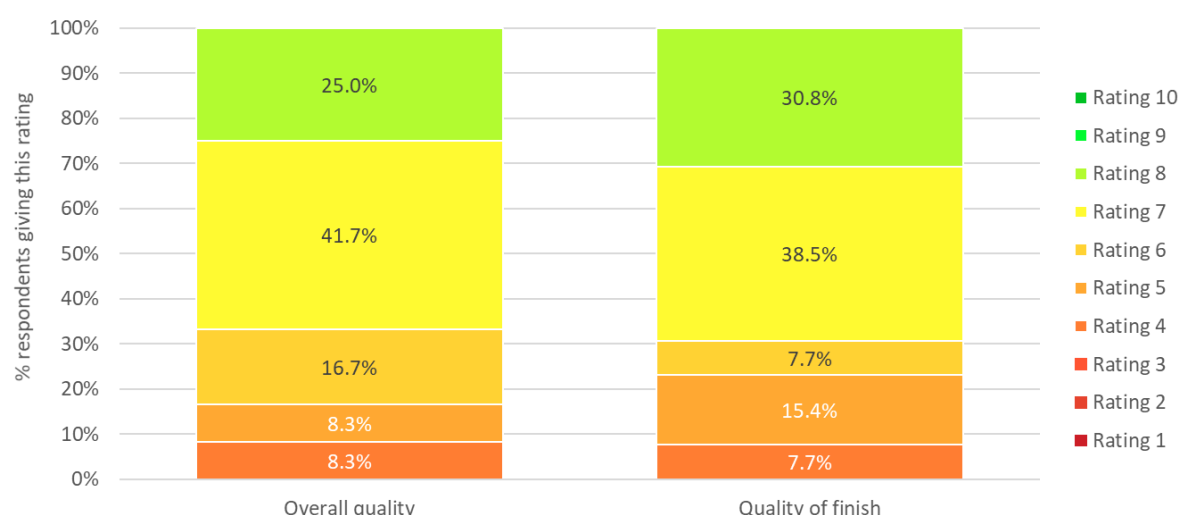


Fig 20: Satisfaction with the overall quality of the Portland Building and the quality of finish among interviewed stakeholders

## Functionality

As this was a refurbishment rather than a building designed from scratch, the design was somewhat restricted by the basic fabric of the building, and this, therefore, did have an impact on what could be achieved with the space.

However, some of the changes that have been possible, such as the Welcome Zone, have made a significant impact on functionality of the building. Not only has it freed up space and reduced the potential for a bottleneck around the entrance to the building, it has created a high-profile space for activity. It has provided a ‘central home’ to lots of services that students want and that they need.

From two respondents, there was a sense that the building was not used to its capacity, one noting that meeting rooms do not seem to be in high demand during the day, and another

explaining that footfall is down, as noted both by Domestic Services and by the catering team.

*“The cleaners are saying that they use 200 fewer toilet rolls a month than they did before which indicates usage. It’s not just catering that has noticed a decline in use of the building. It’s a shame but the building used to be more of a destination if it was used for exams and teaching, and that isn’t so heavily featured now in the building so students would only come if they wanted something to eat or use any of the other facilities in the building. Those facilities are available in other areas of the campus so if their teaching is taking place in a different part of the campus and there are dining facilities and social spaces there, that is more likely where they will go.”*

One respondent thinks that the building lacks the functionality it set out to achieve, because of the lack of true ownership for the space. The rooms have been designed to be multi-use: available for teaching, meetings and for student use, and in some cases, such as with the dance studio, this has created challenges. To truly utilise some of the spaces that were designed to be flexible in the building, such as Studio One, there needs to be a dedicated resource available to reconfigure spaces and use the furniture provided to make them welcome and attractive to use. Studio One was intended as a social study space when it wasn’t in use for an activity. As one respondent noted: *“Nobody is loving the space and owning it.”*

However, for students, who are the main users of the space, it is clear that they would like flexibility in how they use the spaces. One workshop attendee noted: *“Students tend to be curators of their own activities. It’s not necessarily a case of providing rooms with set functions, it’s the case of presenting them with a room that they can book and create what they want with it.”*

This mixed feedback on functionality is reflected in ratings, with ratings ranging from ‘four’, ‘somewhat dissatisfied’ through to ‘eight’, ‘mostly satisfied’.

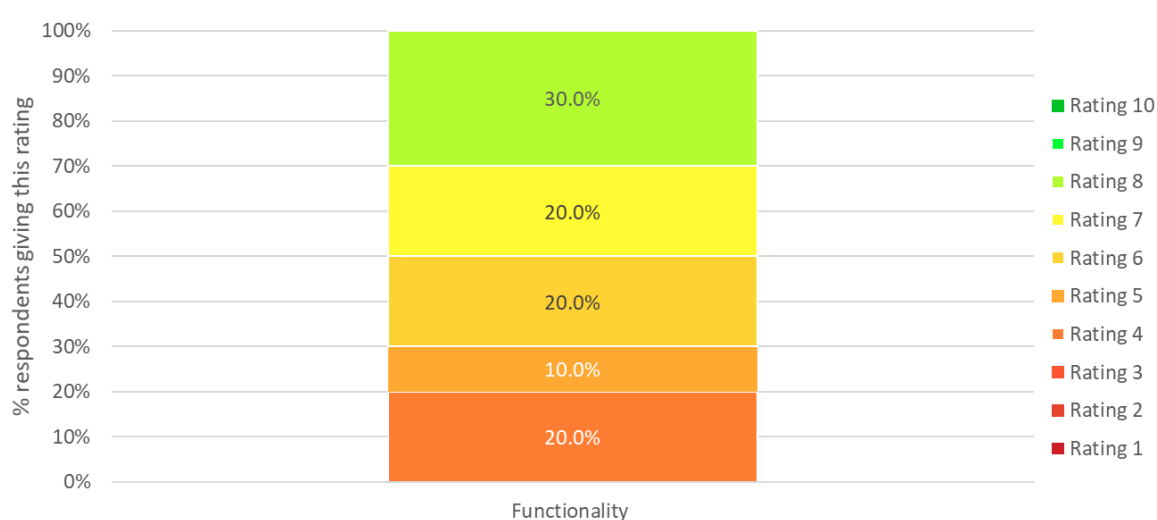


Fig 21: Overall satisfaction with the functionality of the Portland Building among interviewed stakeholders

## FEEDBACK RELATING TO OPERATIONAL ISSUES

### Satisfaction with how the building operates

There is a wide range of levels of satisfaction with how the Portland Building operates. 44% of respondents rated it 'mostly satisfied', however 22% were 'somewhat dissatisfied'.

Those who think the building operates well, feel that the building works because it is able to be configured as users require, for example, to accommodate different events, such as the vintage clothing fair. The Welcome Zone works well for respondents as does the coffee shop and the circulation space.

The atrium will work well, according to respondents, when it is opened, but its continued closure, and the unfinished E floor, negatively affected other users' ratings of how well the space operates. As users have not yet been able to see how the atrium would work within the finished building and with a refurbished E floor, there is a sense that activity that is currently dispersed across the campus would come to the Portland Building if these areas were complete and in use. While the building is busy at lunchtimes, at other times, footfall in the Portland Building is reduced.

The Get Involved office space on C Floor is considered to not to work as well as users would like and in some meeting rooms, which are under-utilised, users have experienced issues with poor sound proofing.

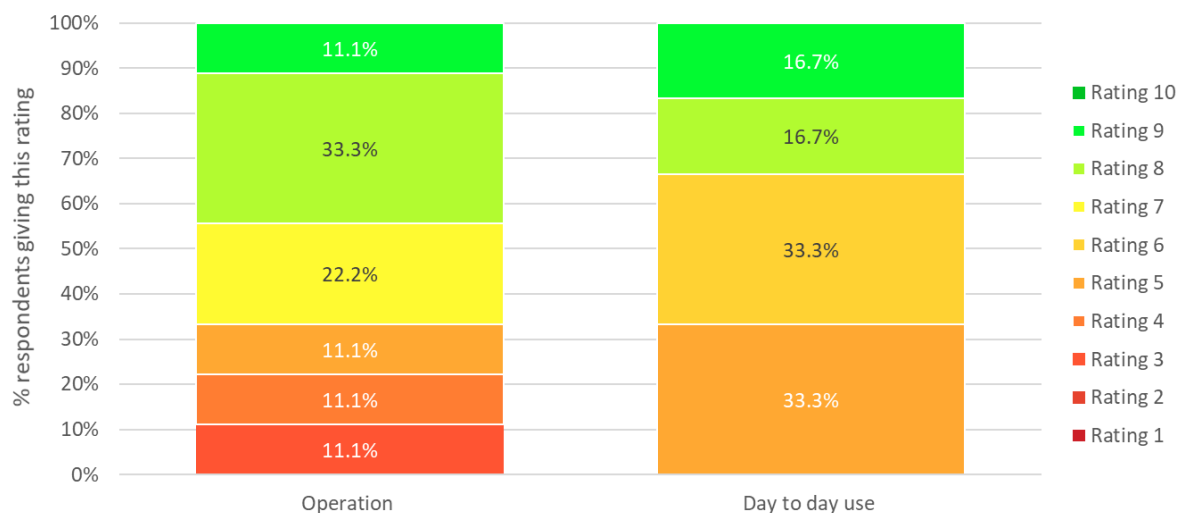


Fig 22: Satisfaction with how the Portland Building operates and how well it is standing up to day to day use among interviewed stakeholders

### Lifts

The reliability of the lifts was one of the operational issues mentioned by users. They regularly break down, particularly at times of high usage, and this has made the building even more challenging for those with mobility issues.

### The Atrium

Issues with the atrium being out of service, due to leaks, were one of the most regularly mentioned issues by respondents. Its closure, for over a year running up to this report, has

impacted on the original vision for the building for connectivity between spaces. It was designed to connect both sides of the building, provide a breakout space and a highly visible, lively activity space which would foster group activity. Without it in operation, people still need to go through the central spine of the building to get around, creating bottlenecks at busy times. The atrium being out of use has forced people who would ordinarily use it to make alternative arrangements.

## Quality of internal spaces

There was overall satisfaction with the quality of spaces within the Portland Building, with all respondents rating this as 'just' and 'mostly satisfied'. Areas pulled out for particular feedback included:

### Catering outlets

Overall, the catering outlets are seen as 'hugely successful' The Portland Coffee Company is considered to be a particular success with only positive comments received. It is clearly a popular and well-used space, which in the eyes of one respondent, would rival a city-centre coffee bar: *"Portland Coffee has to rate a 'ten'! We could not have asked for more."*

### Social spaces

Workstations and social spaces are well used, according to respondents, and the small, intimate nature of the social spaces means that they work well. *"For two, three or four students wanting to sit together they are not feeling overcrowded. I definitely think the smaller spaces are a benefit as well as the computer side of things."*

### Get Involved zone

The C Floor Get Involved office space does not work as well as would have been liked, as it is seen more as an office space, rather than somewhere where students can drop in. One respondent commented: *"You look at other areas like the Get Involved Zone bringing all of those teams together in one location with a central reception point. There is concern that 'Get Involved' hasn't gone as well as we thought it could because people can't come in. That's because you haven't got all of the rest of the things that surround it, you can't use it properly."*

Since the research was undertaken, a plan has been created to alter this space to make it better meet the needs of building users.

### Recommendations:

- Look at changing the Get Involved office space to create a less formal area. Currently it looks like an office, which might be intimidating and off-putting for students.
- Consider adding a manned reception desk and an adjacent waiting space.

### **Welcome Zone**

The Welcome Zone received largely positive comments from respondents, thanks to the flexibility of the space it offers and the prominence of its position in the building. One respondent felt it was *“the most impactful thing”* because it gives a prominent visual element and links well to the screen and to the exterior landscaping. Desk-height tables in the space would encourage people to use it for working.

### **Meeting rooms**

The smaller meeting rooms received mixed feedback. There are issues with sound transference, heating and lighting, and some respondents feel that they are under-utilised, while the bigger spaces are more successful.

### **Portland steps/Djanogly Terrace**

While not strictly part of the Portland Building refurbishment, the construction of the Djanogly steps was considered to be extremely successful and a “fundamental benefit” to the building. *“Though it may only be fully utilised occasionally with big events, and hot summer days, just the impact of that terrace has is amazing. That allows the welcome to connect up to the back and then the new TLB and suddenly all of the desire lines have moved.”*

### **Studio One**

Studio One was viewed far less positively by respondents. One respondent explained, *“I would say Studio One feels an odd space. It’s a big open space but it’s very bare.”* Designed to be extremely flexible, thanks to the use of specially selected furniture, without ownership of the space, as referred to earlier in this report, the space sits empty for prolonged periods.

Discussion at the workshop suggested that introducing a better identity for the space, along with improved heating, as it sometimes felt cold, might encourage more use.

### **Recommendations:**

- Look to introduce measures to appease issues in current spaces, such as Studio One, where furniture is not being put back.
- Consider the possibility of the University taking ownership of spaces and to use Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FFE) layouts that are there as a model of how that room should be set out. The layouts could be printed on laminated paper and stuck on the door.

### **Faith Zone/Chaplaincy**

According to respondents this space has worked well, providing a proper welcome area alongside a chillout space which is getting more and more used by students.



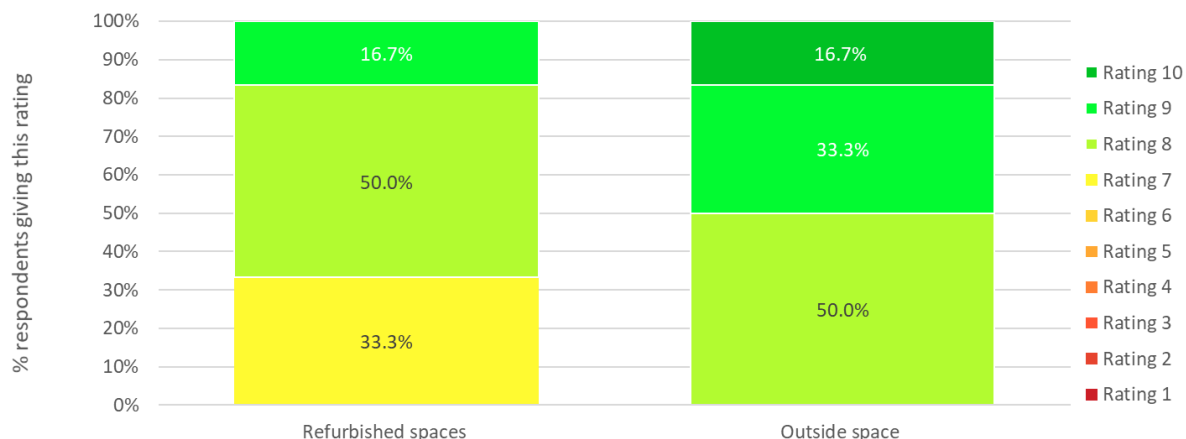


Fig 23: Satisfaction with spaces in the Portland Building among interviewed stakeholders

## FEEDBACK ON AV AND DATA CONNECTIVITY

### AV

Overall, feedback on AV was positive. However, in future developments, it is worth being mindful that floor boxes are unsuitable for this kind of space, and in some areas of the building, would limit the use of the space.

### Data connectivity

Overall, data connectivity was rated extremely positively, with most respondents giving this as an 'eight', 'mostly satisfied', or above. There appeared to be no issues with accessing the systems in the Portland Building.

## FEEDBACK RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF THE INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

### Lighting

Lighting, again, received mixed feedback from those who use the building and views differed depending on their location in the building. It was felt by one respondent that the current configuration is complex and is probably focussing more on the aesthetic than on practicality.

Blinds in some areas with double-height windows were needed where strong natural light meant it was difficult to see computer screens. Other areas were felt to be somewhat dark, with switches on timer that occasionally time out while people are working.

Areas of B floor are seen to be dark and require 'harsh artificial lighting' due to a lack of natural daylight in places. The Welcome Zone and the Service Centre are seen as 'light, bright and airy'. All the lighting was refurbished to be low voltage, which was positively received by one respondent.

### Recommendation:

- Look to repurpose the darker spaces. Instead of them being spaces that are occupied throughout the day, they are occupied for a sporadic length of time, e.g.: as a bookable space.

## Cleanliness

The Portland Building is rated positively by Domestic Services in terms of how easy it is to keep clean. While acknowledging the scale of the building means that cleaning can be difficult to keep on top of, respondents think the building is being well looked after by the cleaning team on site. Members of the Domestic Services team also worked closely with contractors to maintain cleanliness during the build. However, there was discussion at the workshop about the difficulties that cleaning staff had been experiencing with the WC facilities and a lack of respect for these facilities from some building users. More regular cleaning may be required in order to keep these well-used facilities presentable.

## Temperature

The temperature in the Portland Building is an area where respondents see room for improvement.

A building of this type was considered to be difficult to heat and some rooms are felt to be “bitterly cold”. There are single sash windows throughout the building and in places, double-height ceilings, all of which combine to make an area difficult to heat. The entrance on Floor B has an overdoor heater, but this is felt by one respondent to be not fit for purpose, and that cold air is still a problem in that area. One respondent noted that this could be addressed by putting in external buffer zone to make the environment a bit more comfortable and efficient to heat, however that could be detrimental to the aesthetics of the building. In other areas, building occupants have purchased radiators in order to boost heating, and there is a concern that circulation spaces where people sit and meet in my also be affected by the cold.

The Estates team noted at the workshop that this is an area that can now be assessed, and the current centrally controlled heating system could be adapted to make it meet the needs of building users more closely.

## Noise

While most respondents are largely satisfied with noise levels within the building, there was feedback that in some areas soundproofing had not been as effective as it could have been. For example, one respondent noted that in some of the smaller meeting rooms, the sound proofing is poor, meaning that you can hear conversations side-by-side, and in the radio studio there isn't enough sound proofing. Also, noise from the dance studio permeates to other areas.

However, one respondent, while noting that the building is noisy in the open areas, added that it is purposely so, because it is trying to be a lively and vibrant building.

## WCs

Most respondents were 'mostly satisfied' with WC facilities within the Portland Building. There was an acknowledgement that the WCs are heavily used and, while they are well looked after by cleaning staff, they do demand regular attendance. This was of particular importance in the gender-neutral WC blocks, which received mixed feedback from members of staff, some of whom were uncomfortable with the fact that there is no outer door to the area.

There had been some breakdowns and one set of WCs had recently been out of operation for the early part of term for several weeks due to a leak. One respondent felt that the finished quality of the WCs completed by the contractor in phase four was much better than that work done in phase three.



Fig 24: Feedback from interviewed stakeholders relating to the quality of the internal environment in the Portland Building

## FEEDBACK RELATING TO ACCESSIBILITY AND NAVIGATION

### Navigation around the building

Feedback from a number of respondents says that, while signage and wayfinding had gone some way to helping with navigation around the building, the Portland Building remained a 'confusing' place to get around: *"The signage has helped but it is a confusing building, generally. The multiple doors and access points don't help but there is no way of operating this building without them because of the number of people going through it and working in it."* Combined with this, there are also areas of the building, such as the radio station, where, unless you knew where to go, you would have no signage to point you there, and it was felt that budget restraints had exacerbated this.

### Accessibility and access for disabled users

Ratings were lower for the accessibility of the Portland Building, with most respondents rating it at a 'five' or 'six'. There was an acknowledgement that the Portland Building would always be difficult to make accessible due to the limitations inherent to this building and that nothing had got worse through the course of the development, but accessibility remained difficult, particularly if lifts were out of order. Ratings for the provision for disabled users were even lower. The issues with accessibility overall cause additional issues for those with disabilities. The new flooring was reported to be slippery when wet, which was raised by the colleague of one respondent with mobility issues. While there are ramps available, there are many steps at the entrance of the building to negotiate. The lifts being out of order are a particular issue for those with disabilities as well as some extremely heavy doors and touch pads. However, all doors were noted, at the workshop, to be in-line with fire specifications and there was little available ability to change those, as space around them for automation is minimal. However, there would be checks to see whether all doors that should be hold-open or automated were operating in that way.

One respondent summed up their feedback with: *"For anybody with disability issues, this building can be a challenge."*

## FEEDBACK RELATING TO SECURITY

### Security

Security in a building of this nature can be a challenge as it is open long hours, has various entrances and many users. For some respondents, security is poor. The Chaplaincy area *"can feel very isolated"* and there have been incidents of vandalism and intruders in the building. There are regular incidents of small theft reported by the catering teams, especially in areas that can't be closed off or there is a lack of CCTV. However, one respondent acknowledged the challenge of balancing a facility that's open to users when they need it, and security: *"Broadly, this building is as secure as it can be given that is an open building from 7am to 10pm every day. There can be issues with 15-year olds trying to get into the building."*

## Recommendations:

- Improve the presence and visibility of building attendants, proactively patrolling the building.
- Increase the CCTV coverage for Mooch.
- Consider carrying out a security assessment to assess the security of the whole building like the one that took place in the Teaching and Learning Building.

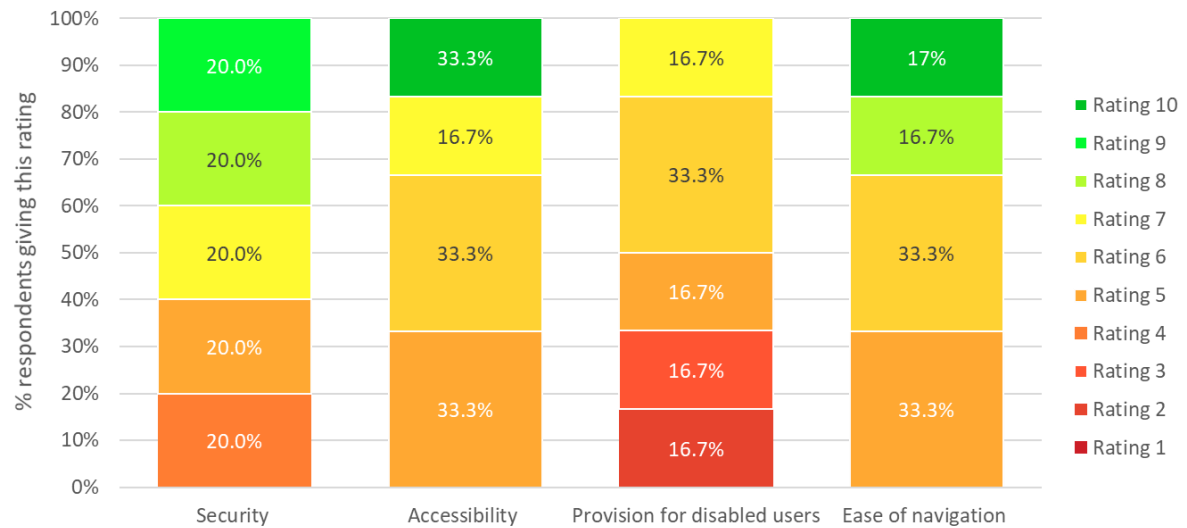


Fig 25: Feedback relating to security, navigation and access in the Portland Building according to key stakeholders

# APPENDIX I: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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## Design and layout

- It would be valuable to have improved, more thorough, formal steering group/stakeholder meetings feeding back to the PMG in some way.
- There is scope for improved emailed communication from steering group meetings.
- Interconnecting PMGs, working on connected projects such as the Portland Building and the Teaching and Learning Building should discuss with each other the impact of any decisions made.

## Communication

- Ensure all relevant stakeholders are kept properly informed at all stages.
- Make sure that information concerning timings and progress against programme is transparent and complete.

## Programme

- In order to mitigate the impact of delays, ensure effective contractor communication, making sure this is as transparent and accurate as possible.
- Look at ways of ensuring a more robust approach from the University's contractor teams, so that contractors' minds are focused on timely delivery.
- Ensure the programme is realistic at the outset.
- Look at working beyond only the duration of the summer months, where possible.
- Explore whether specific subcontractors can be nominated. While this may come at a price, but it may be worth it to get the right teams of subcontractors.
- Look at ways of mitigating the impact of delays on footfall, such as advertising and promotional campaigns to draw people into the building.

## Food and Retail

- Take steps to keep up with ongoing trends with regard to food and retail outlets

## Study Spaces

- Explore the possibility of introducing an app to highlight the locations of available study spaces.
- Consider the possibility of the Students' Union conducting some research concerning study spaces, and whether increasing the provision of study spaces is the right option for this building.

If there is agreement that additional study spaces are needed, SU should propose to the Estates Office as to how that the need should be met and whether it is a case of adding extra desks, or power points. Different Spaces

- Look at changing the Get Involved office space to create a less formal area. Currently it looks like an office, which might be intimidating and off-putting for students.
- Consider adding a manned reception desk and an adjacent waiting space.

- Look to introduce measures to appease issues in current spaces, such as Studio One, where furniture is not being put back.
- Consider the possibility of the University taking ownership of spaces and to use FFE layouts that are there as a model of how that room should be set out. The layouts could be printed on laminated paper and stuck on the door.

#### Lighting

- Look to repurpose the darker spaces. Instead of them being spaces that are occupied throughout the day, they are occupied for a sporadic length of time, e.g: as a bookable space.

#### Security

- Improve the presence and visibility of building attendants, proactively patrolling the building.
- Increase the CCTV coverage for Mooch.
- Consider carrying out a security assessment to assess the security of the whole building like the one that took place in the Teaching and Learning Building.