

INNOVATIVE SPACES AND PEDAGOGIES FOR ENHANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING

A recent Forum event, hosted by FaulknerBrowns Architects, explored how innovative teaching and learning spaces could support radical new pedagogies. Chaired by Judy Friedberg, Guardian HE editor, the event combined expert opinion from a range of speakers including Ian Caldwell (King's College London), Dr John Craig (HEA), Michelle Morgan (Kingston University) and David Morris (NUS).

There was general acknowledgement that the rise in tuition fees over recent years has created an imperative for institutions to deliver value to current and prospective students. This 'value era' has placed a renewed spotlight on the quality of teaching and learning spaces within HE. Although 'social learning space' has become ubiquitous, its effectiveness and lack of development was challenged, leading some to question 'is it time now to go beyond the beanbag'?

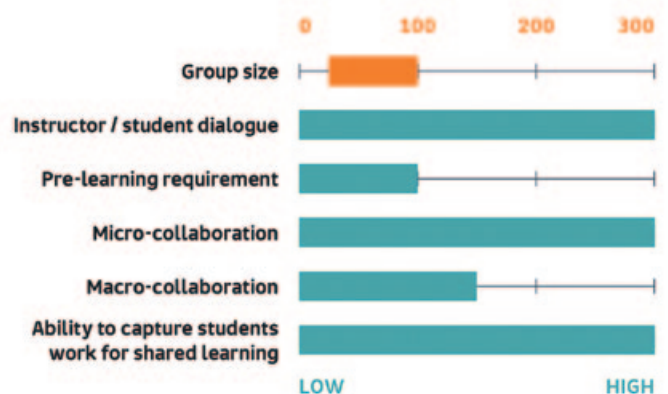
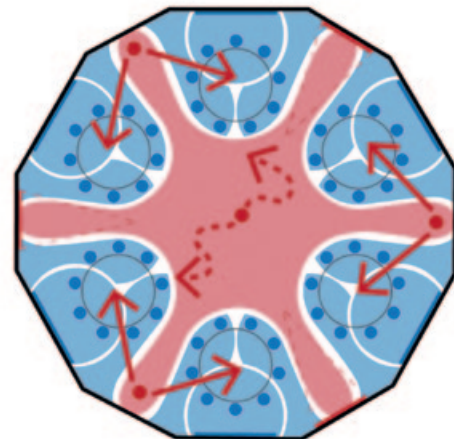
Recognising that business schools have often been at the forefront of delivering value for money in a highly

competitive environment, FaulknerBrowns outlined some key findings from recent benchmarking visits to Harvard, Yale and Vienna. Exploration of teaching spaces, group sizes and learning spaces had highlighted some important factors in relation to 'active learning', collaboration and spatial flexibility.

The common theme in all of the exceptional teaching spaces was the degree of collaboration. The traditional lecture theatre is a 'delivery style' space with low levels of interaction and collaboration. Two distinct forms of more collaboration-focused learning space models were identified; a 'macro

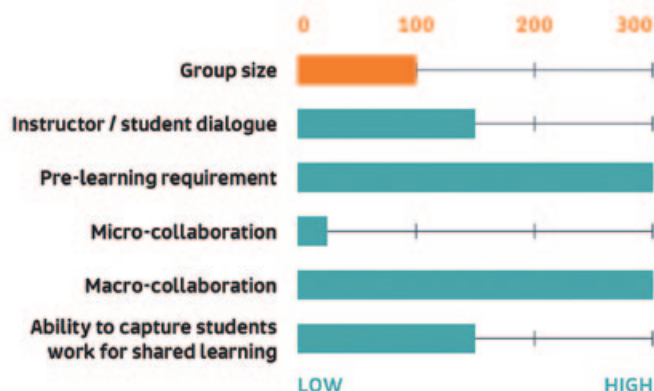
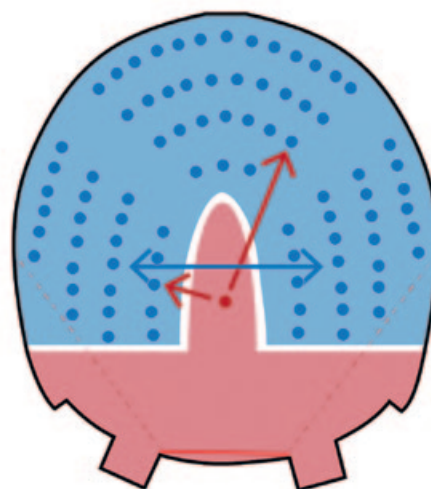
'Micro Collaboration' Form MIT Physics TEAL studio

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'Macro Collaboration' Form Harvard Case Method Classroom

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collaboration' space stimulating interaction and engagement for the entire lecture group, and a 'micro collaboration' space using active learning principles to stimulate improved learning for small groups.

In both instances overall lecture groups of 100 were maintained, indicating that a large space does not have to lead to a low level of collaboration, or poor student experience. This ensures that facilities costs need not rise.

To maximise the effectiveness of these collaborative teaching spaces a new type of support space has become apparent; a space to work together, a space to experiment and a space to think, read and write. So called 'project rooms' provide such spaces where pre-learning and reflection can support collaborative learning in the classroom. Surprisingly these types of spaces are still rare in the UK and perhaps we've not grasped the immense value they can offer to improve the teaching and learning experience.

The Forum concluded that a holistic model of learning space had emerged, one that didn't necessarily make traditional 'delivery' style lecture spaces defunct, but instead balanced them with teaching spaces that support 'micro' and 'macro' style collaborative pedagogies. In combination with 'project room' spaces, they offer a stronger model for improving the quality of UK higher education teaching and learning. Using these new models, designers and educators can work in partnership to achieve a balance of people, pedagogy, systems and space that can transform the teaching and learning experience in UK universities.

Article contributed by FaulknerBrowns Architects: www.faulknerbrowns.co.uk

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