Progress Report on the work of the Programme Board for Education Space (PBES)

INTRODUCTION

This report aims to summarise progress against the Board's vision, priorities and work programme, outline the challenges and ask questions to enable further progress.

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THE PROGRAMME BOARD FOR EDUCATION SPACE

1. **The established vision of the Programme Board for Education Space (PBES) is:**

   To develop an estate that continuously provides teaching, learning and examination facilities for staff and students that are fit for purpose for a world-class institution now and in the future and which are used efficiently.

2. **The purpose of PBES** is to:

   - Define the University's vision for education space, and to work with the Estates Division, University information Services and Schools, Faculties and Departments.

   - To stimulate collaboration across the University; prioritise the development of areas most in need.

   - To advocate to Estates the requirements of those engaged in education, and to set the operating standards, which can be implemented in new builds and monitored in current spaces.

3. **In terms of governance**, PBES, is accountable to the General Board, and reports to the Planning and Resources Committee (PRC) and supports the delivery of the vision for the education estate whilst also ensuring initiatives proposed by Schools, Faculties and Departments support the strategic education needs of the University. Noting the importance of education space, the University's General Board agreed a formal Education Space programme within Reshaping our Estate.

4. The Board's priorities are:

   - **Consultation and feedback:** We seek the views of Schools, faculties and departments on education space at Cambridge. Members of the Programme Board will consult a wide range of students and colleagues to inform our plan of action.

   - **Data-gathering and modelling**: We collect as much information as possible about educational need and current patterns of space usage, and develop better modelling tools to process that data, to ensure that our recommendations are based on robust evidence.

- **Identifying and sharing good practice**: We gather examples of good practice, successful projects and innovative ideas around education space, from across the University and beyond.

5. **The Board supports initiatives** around education space at School and department level, as well as coordinating space-related work in Education Services, Estates Division, and University Information Services. PBES has also carried out refurbishments and other projects to deliver improvements to the provision and quality of shared teaching space across the University, thanks to £5m funding approved by PRC.

6. **A summary of PBES in pictorial form** is shown below.
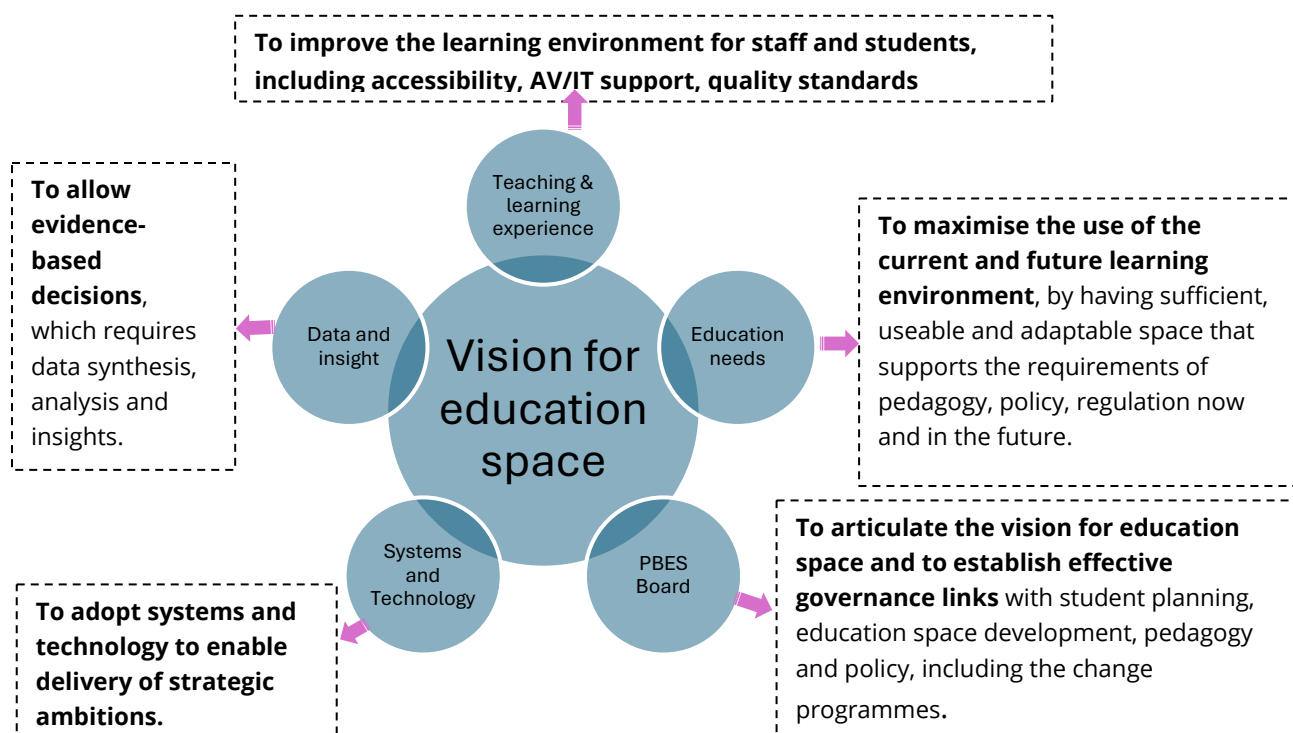
PBES PRIORITIES AND WORK PROGRAMME 2024-26

7. **In October 2024**, PBES endorsed (PBES68_03) Summary of priorities and work programme 2024-26.

8. **Progress against each element** is recorded overleaf.

A. TEACHING & LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Goal: To improve the learning environment for staff and students, including accessibility, AV/IT support, quality standards, information and feedback

Focus Areas	Progress Rating
Define and establish a common specification for education space – functional and performance specifications (these require updating), but also the AV and IT requirements and support for lecturers.	Green
Provide useful information about space for staff and students (web-based information on space, access, wayfinding etc).	Green
Agree standards for teaching and examination space across the University to ensure student and academic experience which devolved administration undertakes to implement.	Amber

B. DATA & INSIGHT

Goal: To allow evidence-based decisions, which requires data synthesis, analysis and insights.

Focus Areas	Progress Rating	
Work with the Schools of A&H and H&SS to consider the outcomes of the Sidgwick analysis (an exercise to capture and analyse how to optimise the utilisation of all education space in Sidgwick during M23 which will give visibility and a baseline of timetabling fact, covering a significant proportion (>40%) of all taught students). The insights gained can be used for several purposes including de risking certain assumptions made about space utilisation across the University, providing clarity on space needs and providing departments with realistic opportunities to optimise space utilisation (or not).	Green	
Achieve comprehensive visibility of all teaching and education spaces across the University, including systems used to manage them locally.	Amber	
Build on the 'state of the union' (education space facts and figures) information. Next update due in September 2025.	Green	
Continue to build and use reliable data to create effective management information and decision support, with particular attention to timetable-driven data to provide visibility on education space utilisation to inform options for improvement and future proofing.	Red /	Amber

C. EDUCATION NEEDS

Goal: To maximise the use of the current and future learning environment, by having sufficient, useable and adaptable space that supports the requirements of pedagogy, student numbers and needs, policy, regulation now and in the future.

Focus Areas	Progress Rating
Expand and upgrade examination spaces to accommodate more students (including those with exam adjustments) and improve exam conditions.	Amber
Ensure education estate is prepared for digital assessment.	Amber
Establish a rolling programme of improvement and refurbishment for all education space that should be informed by the following, all of which requires an established process: ▪ ongoing audit of education space – looking at more than physical space (whether lecture space has access, ventilation, clock, temperature control) but also whether the lecturer set up and support and staff/student information is working too. ▪ working with Schools via the planning process, using data about demand and live utilisation models to identify options for teaching and examination space in different areas of the city. ▪ identifying options for space based on current and potential demand for both teaching and exam space and establish a process for improving them to the required standard and to maintain that standard.	Red

D. NEW SYSTEMS

Goal: To adopt systems and technology to enable delivery of strategic ambitions, which also includes change management and change support.

Focus Areas	Progress Rating
Facilitate PBES' oversight of the development of a scheduling and room booking system.	Green
Ensure a University-wide and strategic approach is taken to replacement of Timetable.cam (it is not a like for like replacement as scheduling and room booking need to be part of the outcome).	Green

E. PBES GOVERNANCE

Goal: To articulate the vision for education space and to establish effective governance links with student planning, education space development, pedagogy and policy, including the change programmes.

Focus Areas	Progress Rating
Owner of the education space vision.	**Green**
Allocate and oversee progress on PRC funded improvement programmes.	**Green**

IMPROVEMENTS TO EDUCATION SPACE

9. **In January 2024, the PRC accepted the recommendation from Estates Committee to earmark £5M** from the Investment Fund to meet the costs of minor works to education space as prioritised by PBES.

10. **In April 2024 PBES considered the prioritisation process** (PBES66_02 PBES investment in teaching space_decision criteria) agreeing that the Board would strive to ensure there would be a spread of projects funded from across the University, so every School could benefit. In prioritising projects, PBES agreed to consider according to urgency of need, impact, and value for money, and include the following:

    a. Transformational improvement, adding value rather than maintenance

    b. Specific impact on students

    c. Urgency – and the impact of project non-delivery or delay

    d. Value of money

    e. Reshaping the Estate and Estates Committee guidelines

11. **Requests were received from all but one School**: the School of Physical Sciences.

12. The table below shows the number of requests submitted by School and the number of requests approved.

School	N^O of Requests	N^O Approved
School of Arts and Humanities	2	1
School of Biological Sciences	2	2
School of Clinical Medicine	2	1
School of Humanities and Social Sciences	4	3
School of Technology	1	1 (but then funded by another route)

13. The following table gives a summary of the progress made by end 2024-25 on projects that are moving forward.

Project	School	Original upper end estimate (£k)	Latest cost est (min) (£k)	Latest cost est (max) (£k)	Comment
Music Faculty soundproofing (S049)	A&H	538.2	30	30	Original base estimate much higher but now progressing via Estates Facilities
Hopkins Building Seminar Room (D037)	SBS	245.3	318	424	Progressing to RIBA stage 3 (TSC considering options) – practical difficulties have emerged in situ which have pushed costs up
Pathology building redesign raked LT (D017)	SBS	1,354	937.4	1,354	Original base estimate £1,041.6k, department considering potential design options having considered requirements carefully
East Forvie refurbish /extend (H140)	SCM	707	607.5	810	Progressing to RIBA stage 3, 4 procurement (TSC considering this option)
Austin Robinson minor improvements (S012)	HSS	500.2	346.3	500.2	Original base estimate £384k but could be less, being delivered by Facilities – original estimates used as a precautionary basis
17 Mill Lane improvements (B031)	HSS	552.5	425	425	Original base estimate £425k but project has changed, and will be significantly less than base estimate (leaving estimate in on a precautionary basis)
Archaeology building refurb (D031)	HSS	432.9	128.7	185.9	Original base estimate of £333k likely to be much lower, department considering options
Norwich LT - contribution	UAS	0	0	145	Sum to contribute to the develop further the design for the Norwich Auditorium in the Roger Needham Building
Estimated Total		**4,330.1**	**2792.9**	**3,874.1**	

14. **Currently, there is c £1.2m funding not yet allocated**. This should be a conservative estimate.

EDUCATION SPACE WORKSTREAM, RESHAPING THE ESTATE

15. **In July 2024, the University's General Board agreed that the estate related work of PBES should be formally brought into scope of the Reshaping our Estate programme**, to be delivered through a formal Education Space programme. This change aimed to integrate education space with wider transformational plans and to give PBES leadership additional delivery support to push forward with the momentum needed to provide the right spaces, in the right locations, to the right standard.

16. **In December 2024, PBES signed off an [Education Space Programme Initiation Document](#) (PID)** (PBES69_01) which described the broad principles and themes for the Education Space Programme. The PID broke the work into two workstreams:

    Workstream one: meeting the needs of today.

    Workstream two: looking to the future.

    Workstream One aligned with the established priorities of PBES, and Workstream Two provided greater connection with Reshaping the Estate, particularly on the collaboration and transfer of data. The PID separated out the timescales for delivery suggesting that Workstream One would occur from January 2025 to August 2025 and Workstream Two from January 2025 to Autumn 2026. In reality, activity is occurring on both simultaneously.

17. **Progress on Workstream One** is documented above ([PBES Priorities and Work Programme 2024-26](#))

18. **Progress on Workstream Two** is good because of the work on data that is not only testing out the assumptions but will also inform the anticipated Principal Programmes, those being PP1 – Downing, New Museum and part of Old Addenbrookes and PP3 – Sidgwick and University Library.

CHALLENGES

19. Across many elements of the work, challenges have occurred which fall within the following themes have emerged as frequent challenges. These are not unique to the work of PBES.

    a. Overall, organisational complexity and lack of University-wide policies (e.g. about space sharing) make it difficult to move from planning to delivery.

    b. Governance and decision-making unclear, conflicting and there are also gaps.

    c. Tensions between short-term needs v long term goals.

    d. Resource dependencies (people, money, information).

    e. Conflicting standards for systems, processes and services.

    f. Workload and multiple (sometimes) conflicting priorities.

g. Culture and systems need to change.

QUESTIONS

1. How content is PBES with progress?

2. Do the priorities and work programme align with current ambitions?

3. Does PBES recognise the challenges and if so, what action might it take to make further progress?