

**Title:**                    **Extending Learning: constructing community through space design**

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## **Abstract:**

### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Reflect upon their own learning spaces preferences and contribute to the wider body of knowledge
- Appraise student learning environments based on user needs
- Devise appropriate and robust research strategies to enable understanding of user learning behaviours and activities
- Translate student learning preferences into space design principles and plan learning environments accordingly
- Implement small scale developments to existing learning environments

### **Session Outline**

Key issues to be addressed are:

An exploration of how Sheffield Hallam University has coordinated learning centre space design with the institution's pedagogical beliefs. Emphasis will be placed upon a recent large scale project to redevelop the learning centre and the creation of a new space which seeks to support social and informal learning communities.

In the current climate, a number of factors have increased the institution's awareness of the importance of learning spaces. For example, changing approaches to learning and teaching and the "emergence of the constructivist paradigm" (Brown & Long, 2006) mean students are increasingly expected - and expecting - to learn actively and participate in groupwork. Traditional classroom and library design, however, constrains opportunities for students to engage with work of this nature on campus. It is imperative therefore that we start to acknowledge and address notions of 'built pedagogy' (Monahan, 2002) by using approaches such as human-centred design guidelines (Gee, 2006).

This interactive session will reflect upon the ongoing development, management and evaluation of this new learning environment at Sheffield Hallam and its' impact on the main body of the learning centre, and relationship to the wider campus environment. The workshop will provide practical examples of research strategies employed, and measure impact from both a learner and staff perspective; offering insight transferable to your own institutions.

Commitment to the successful ongoing development of the learning centre at Sheffield Hallam has also resulted in increased involvement in cross faculty partnerships and collaborative projects. In addition, the authors have recently led the development of a UK learning spaces special interest group

to promote the dissemination of best practice and support educational change. Consideration will be given to the value (and challenges) associated with partnership working and cross disciplinary projects, and we will seek to identify further opportunities.

### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

- Short 'fly on the wall' film to ensure delegates have insight into the space and design principles of the learning centre at Sheffield Hallam University. (2 minutes)
  - Participants invited to construct and share a representation of their preferred learning environment(s), using paper and lego. (20 minutes)
  - Group exploration of student responses to photographic mapping exercise to identify components of their favourite learning environments. (20 minutes)
  - Typology of student learning behaviours and activities drawn out from a longitudinal study leading to an overview of how this data continues to feed into the ongoing development, management and evaluation of learning spaces at Sheffield Hallam University (15 minutes)
  - Video feedback from learning centre staff sharing their experiences (5 minutes)
  - Reflection on the first 12 months of developing a special interest group (10 minutes)
  - Facilitated discussion about practical ways of moving forward with space projects including small-scale, low-cost changes to existing environments as well as large-scale complex new builds (15 minutes)
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- Delegates will be invited to leave feedback and/or queries on scribble board post session. Responses will be facilitated via learning space special interest group blog.

### **References**

- Brown, M. & Long, P.D. (2006). Trends in learning space design. [online]. In: OBLINGER, D. G. (ed.). *Learning Spaces*, Educause. Last accessed 16 March 2009 at: <http://www.educause.edu/books/learningspaces/10569>.
- Gee, L. (2006). Human-Centred Design Guidelines. [online]. In: OBLINGER, D.G. (ed.). *Learning Spaces*, Educause. Last accessed 16 March 2009 at: <http://www.educause.edu/books/learningspaces/10569>.
- Monahan, T. (2002). Flexible Space & Built Pedagogy: emerging IT embodiments. [online]. *Inventio*, 4 (16), 1-19. Article last accessed 14 March 2009 at: <http://www.torinmonahan.com/papers/Inventio.html>.