

Title: New Classrooms to Support Active Learning

Abstract: At the University of Westminster a review of infrastructure for learning and teaching in 2014 showed clearly that academic staff felt constrained by the physical spaces they taught in. They collectively highlighted a range of issues that made it difficult for them to contemplate flexible forms of in-class curriculum delivery. Many problems cited were quite basic such as lighting, availability of sufficient whiteboard space and room blackout capability. Classroom furniture was also frequently raised as requiring attention. Audio-visual (AV) and Information Technology (IT) facilities were of course seen as key to the set of teacher's tools within a modern classroom. The ease of use of the AV and IT was critical in determining the extent to which they were used. Current AV/IT configurations were not seen to encourage nor enable student engagement, tending to lead to a teacher-centric model of operating within the classroom environment.

Using the feedback gathered about classrooms during the infrastructure review the University embarked on a project to refurbish 22 classrooms across the estate during a 5 month period in 2015. The objectives were broadly to develop classrooms that were more adaptable and therefore hopefully suited to a range of in-class delivery approaches. In addition there was intent to experiment with a number of different technology and furniture options across the 22 rooms.

In this paper we will explore how the designs of the classrooms were agreed and what reasons were used for the various features that are found across the rooms. In addition, we will present on initial user feedback, both staff and students, on the general utility of the rooms and how they believe the new spaces will influence the conduct of their classroom sessions.

Professor Gunter Saunders
Associate Director Internet and Education Technology Services
University of Westminster

Professor Peter Hartley
Independent HE consultant
and also Visiting Professor at Edge Hill University

Antonia Klemming
Education Technology Specialist
University of Westminster

Federica Oradini
Senior Lecturer E-Learning
University of Westminster