

Achieving Good Design in Small Projects

As part of the HEDQF's ongoing initiative to develop a program of workshops with estates professionals within the University sector, we ran a workshop for Queens University Belfast and colleagues of other local institutions. The aim was to assist project teams within Universities to improve the quality of smaller projects, the workshop was chaired by Ian Caldwell and facilitated by Julian Robinson, Ian Goodfellow and Rupert Cook.

The causes of unsatisfactory overall design :

Very often there are poor overall design results on small projects for some of the following reasons:

- no one within Estates owned the space
- the client's brief was not clear enough
- the team were not up to the task
- little thought was given to how project fitted into overall university branding
- furniture, AV, graphics & signage were procured separately and not coordinated with the design
- 3rd party involvement continued in an uncoordinated way after the project was completed (eg H&S, AV, Fire)

10 Top Tips to achieving good designs :

1. Make sure you have a good design team
2. Be clear in your brief, articulate client's 'design vision' and your success criteria
3. Appoint a 'design champion' who has responsibility for ensuring design quality and who 'owns the space'
4. Have a book of 'bloopers' that is widely shared and you will not repeat!
5. Create a palette of coordinated materials and finishes for particular buildings – one size does not fit all
6. Establish a hierarchy of areas where particular attention must be paid to design.
7. Integrate FF&E, AV, graphics and signage into design
8. Organise Estates and Design Team walk around on Completion to learn lessons
9. Remember design doesn't finish at PC - control other agencies within university (eg H&S, AV, Fire) from ruining the design
10. Be Visually Aware. Be Vigilant. Be Consistent.

