



**STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY**

**CAMPUS RENEWAL**

**STOKE**

**CASE STUDY**

## Campus transformation at Staffordshire University - A digital vision for a connected University

The audio visual project completed as part of the £40million transformation of Staffordshire University's Stoke-on-Trent campus includes the design, installation and commissioning of around 40 teaching rooms, consisting of labs, lecture halls and teaching spaces, along with a new social, collaboration space - the Digital Kiln.

With a summer installation scheduled, room plans, system designs and technology selections were on the point of being finalised, when the arrival in April 2016 of new Vice Chancellor Professor Liz Barnes introduced a new strategic vision for the university that required a complete change to the planned approach for the learning spaces.

### FLEXIBLE, INTERACTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The Digital Kiln needed to offer a dual purpose space to support both formal and informal learning and provide a venue for events. The idea was that small groups of students would be able to use the space to work together in an informal but focused way; using collaborative pod areas located around the room to develop ideas and deliver projects. In addition the room needed to offer a large presentation area for events with the potential to simultaneously broadcast the content to the all of the screens in the room.

The new teaching rooms needed to support a more interactive, discursive style of learning in line with the Vice Chancellor's vision of the Connected University. Traditional front of room projection was to be replaced with touchscreen solutions to enable a more dynamic approach to content management and delivery. Furniture configuration needed to be flexible and repeater screens used to ensure clear visibility of content regardless of the student position in the room.

“We effectively had to rip up all of our existing plans. Pure AV reacted really quickly and working in close partnership with our Digital Services Team, helped us to design, build and deliver new learning spaces within the required timescales and in line with the Vice Chancellor's strategic vision. Something we would have struggled to achieve without the expertise and proactive input of the team at Pure.”

**ED MATTHEWS**

Senior IT & learning technology officer,  
Staffordshire University

### PROGRESSING BEYOND FORMAL CLASSROOM SPACES

The Digital Kiln is working as a bridge between formal and informal learning. It supports the Vice Chancellors' concept of the "sticky campus", creating seamless opportunities for learning and extending learning beyond just the formal teaching spaces.

*"The Digital Kiln was buzzing, people working together exactly as it was designed to work. It was great to see."* Simon Birkett, I.T Learning & Technology Manager

### A NEW MODEL FOR ACTIVE LEARNING

The university has established two new models for interactive learning spaces; a typical collaborative learning space and a Node room. These are now being carried forward into other areas within the campus.

*"Room T101 is one of the new style collaboration rooms and it is a brilliant space. The students to start with are almost taken aback by the new layout, but they really enjoy it. The new learning space adds to what we can do in terms of teaching, in terms of delivery, in terms of the student experience and, I believe, in the quality of the teaching we provide."* Nico Decourt, Senior Lecturer, Staffordshire University.





## TECHNOLOGY WITH PURPOSE

Consultation with academics, students as well as with the digital services team has ensured that all equipment has a purpose and is in-line with the digital vision of the University. There is no pursuit of technology for technology's sake.



The design created by Pure AV for the Digital Kiln uses a 9 screen video wall as the main display along with 6 collaboration pods each with a 55" display that can be used individually by students to get together for both informal learning with an academic or to work together on projects, or alternatively to receive content broadcast from the main video wall display.

## A NEW STANDARD FOR COLLABORATIVE SPACES

In a typical collaborative learning space in the Beacon building the furniture is no longer in static rows with a single point for presentation. Students are seated in groups with furniture that is on wheels and can be easily reconfigured to suit the activity taking place. There are multiple repeater screens to ensure that content displayed can be easily viewed regardless of the direction of the seating and to contribute towards group activity.

The historical projector and lectern based presentation area has been replaced with a wall mounted 80" Sharp PN-80TC3 interactive touch screen. The lectern has been made smaller and been positioned against the wall, so that it serves as a cabinet and site for a visualiser, rather than as a point from which to deliver the session.

There is a deliberate mix of high technology and "low technology" within the room designs. Alongside the interactive screens and large format displays there are also high quality glass writing boards and each room has a 42" SMART Kapp electronic flip chart. These tools offer the ability for individuals and groups to articulate and develop ideas very quickly and encourage active participation and physical movement around the learning space.



## ADDING FLEXIBILITY TO ROOM LAYOUTS

The principle of a reduced size lectern positioned against the wall and the use of an 80" Sharp interactive touch screen as the main content delivery tool is carried over into the design of the Node Rooms with the most obvious difference evident in the furniture selected.

In a Node Room there are individual chairs for each student with their own desk space built in. They are on wheels allowing the room to be configured and reconfigured as the learning session develops. With various writing surfaces including SMART Kapp digital flipcharts on trolleys, MC Squared whiteboard tiles and glass writing boards, the space becomes completely dynamic and switching between whole group learning and individual or group activity is quick and easy.



## AN ENHANCED STUDENT EXPERIENCE

At the heart of this project is a strategic decision made by the Staffordshire University to move away from didactic, front of class teaching to create a more active and interactive student experience. It is a vision that extends through the design of the space, the furniture, the choice of audio visual technology and the teaching approach.

Key to the success of the project was the partnership approach between Pure AV and the Digital services team at Staffordshire University supported by wider engagement with academics and a clear strategic direction from University management. It enabled the Pure AV team to truly understand the needs of the University and establish a standard template for learning spaces that could then be deployed across campus and has the potential to evolve as confidence in the usage of the rooms grows and new teaching practice is developed.