



Learning & Information
Services

Welcome to our second newsletter about the Learning Gateway - the College's new and innovative learning space on the Carlisle campus - due for occupation in Spring 2006. The aim of this newsletter is to update you on Learning Gateway developments. Also, we are keen to obtain your ideas and views on the services that will be provided.

The Learning Gateway is a unique building unlike any other. Along with the Change Academy Project, it will enable the College to achieve its aspirations for Flexible and Distributed Learning as outlined in the Corporate Plan. This is a most exciting time for the College; the Gateway promises to be a focal point . . . and with your help an asset that will attract learners from across the regions.

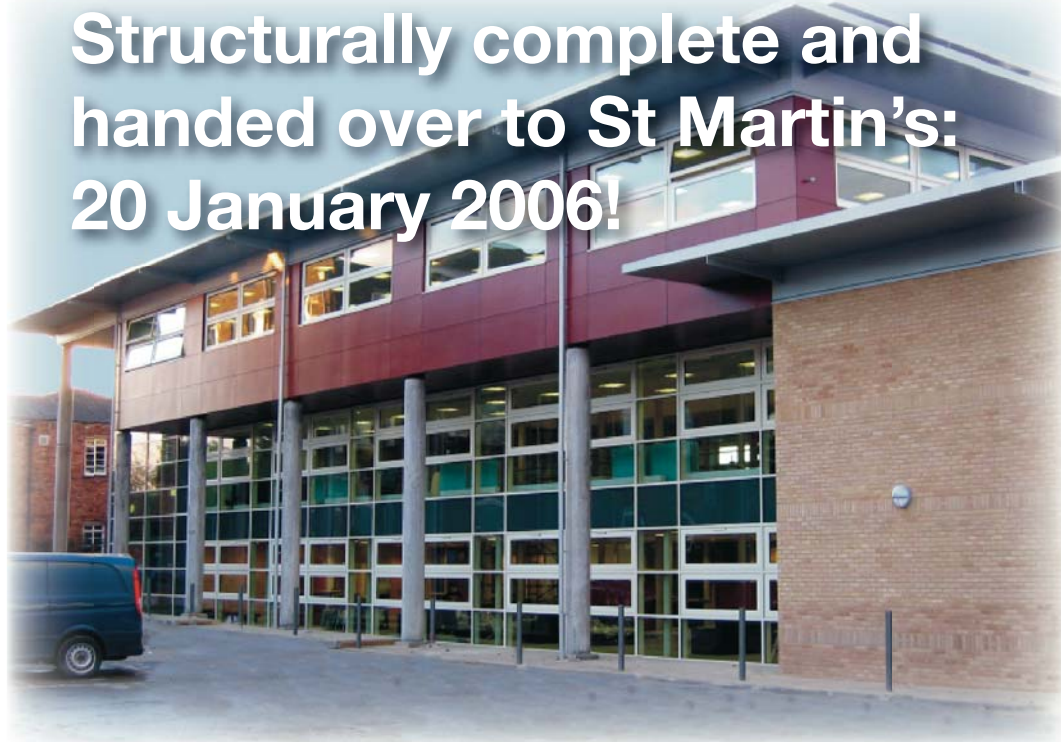
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Learning Gateway

NEWS UPDATE 2

February 2006

Structurally complete and handed over to St Martin's: 20 January 2006!



The Learning Gateway, Carlisle Campus

The Learning Gateway is now structurally complete and officially belongs to the College; handover took place on 20th January 2006, from the contractors, Lambert and Gill. Now the exciting work begins of fitting the Gateway with its wireless network, digital and multimedia facilities, equipment and furnishings that will personalise the physical space and support flexible and distributed learning as envisaged by the Corporate Plan.

The impressive building on the Carlisle campus is a visible indicator of the College's commitment to lifelong learning in Cumbria. The colour scheme has been planned to delineate the various areas where different learning activities may take place, without restricting what students and staff may wish to do. Inspiration for the environment and layouts in the

Gateway came from inspiration from working with the Change Academy team, and the creative thinking techniques that were employed assisted its formation.

The Learning Gateway has been designed to be adaptable and provide learners with space to experiment. The fit-out takes place during February and early March and we look forward to welcoming you when the doors open in late March 2006.

All this coincides with the launch of the restructured Learning and Information Services (LIS) department, marking a new beginning that is congruent with the launch of the Learning Gateway and the aims of the Corporate Plan.

Margaret Weaver.

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Looking forward . . .

Academic Staff Consultation: Looking Forward to Learning in the Gateway

Around thirty academic staff based at Carlisle took a tour of the building and contributed to planning for the future use of the flexible spaces and technology that it will provide. There was an enthusiastic response to the potential of the building. Staff identified the need to welcome and support experimentation with varied learning and teaching strategies in the use of the building. The need for teaching teams to take a lead in the evaluation of its impact on learning was stressed.



Some of the ideas discussed involved teaching taking place within the Gateway building. It is seen as offering an ideal situation for lectures or briefings leading to breakout activities in groups. It is also viewed as

providing ideal facilities for integrating use of ICT into face-to-face sessions and this might be particularly useful when introducing blended courses.

Other teaching opportunities identified by staff did not directly involve the use of a base room in the Gateway building. Considerable numbers of staff identified the benefit of the Gateway for independent collaborative work by students as part of problem-based learning (PBL) and enquiry-based learning (EBL).

Staff predicted an enthusiastic response by students and tutors and expect very high demand for both bookable rooms and laptops. They hope that building the bridge across to the library might be possible as soon as possible and that the Gateway might become a 24/7 learning space.

The use of the Learning Gateway as a venue for a learning and teaching conference day focused on problem-based learning is one part of the response to the academic staff consultation.

Pete Boyd, CDLT.



And the Winner is . . .



The Winning Chair

During November 2005, extensive consultation took place with staff and students for the best chair for the flexible learning rooms in the Learning Gateway.

There were six contenders. Testing took place in the Library at Carlisle over a period of two weeks. Users were asked to complete a questionnaire to compare the flexibility, moveability, style and comfort of each chair. They were then asked to mark their overall favourite.

The outright winner was Chair B.

Laptops Software and Laptop Loan

A laptop loan service will be available to users whilst in the Gateway. The software available will be the same as that found in the open access computer areas, plus Smartboard software and SPSS. Any staff requests for additional software will follow the normal College process via ICT Services.

Staff are asked to note that a valid Library Membership card will be required to borrow a laptop for staff use in the Gateway. This must be done **in advance** as a photograph is required and authorisation from your line manager/HOD. Please contact your site library to obtain the registration form so we may register you as soon as possible.

Supporting Collaboration in Cumbria

The Collaborative Learning in Cumbria project - CLiC - is being set up with Lakes College to take advantage of the Learning Gateway technology. It will serve as a testbed for future developments.

The aim is to connect the two institutions in new ways using the ICT facilities in the Gateway and to exploit the concepts of the Learning Gateway as a hub for flexible learning in Cumbria. A portable video conferencing facility will be set up between St Martin's and Lakes College, connecting the two institutions via the Learning Gateway.

One aspect of the project will be to test the facility in a number of settings, for example shared taster sessions for students on common curriculum areas; staff development and training, student action learning and provision of shared learning materials.

Learning at Lakes College . . .



CLiC will test the viability of technical connectivity between the two institutions as well as bring academic and support staff together facilitating knowledge transfer. It will help both organisations to translate the strategy for Cumbria into a reality that staff and students can see, feel and be an active part of.

Penny Weatherall, Curriculum Development Manager at Lakes College comments:

"The Learning Gateway offers exciting opportunities to support students in their transitions between FE and HE in a way that has not been possible previously. It also builds on the existing good relationships between our respective institutions. We are looking forward to involving students in the project in both locations, and see this as a way to enhance access and learn more about introducing ICT into the curriculum."

Thinking about the way I might use the Learning Gateway to enhance students' learning . . .

"Last week brought it into focus . . . I'd booked one of the 'open access' computer labs at Carlisle for use with a small group of students . . . well we got the computers we needed, but I also had to get FIRM in order to eject some other poor students who were waiting for their assignments to print (which made me feel like a heel too!!) . . ., the remote for the projector (attached to the 'tutor computer') wouldn't work (? flat batteries); it was chokingly hot, we had our backs to each other . . . and so on.



IMAGINE instead . . . a comfortable shared space, wireless laptops, face-to-face, light and airy, comfortable temperature . . . sounds good! So we can work at the activities we had planned and compare the resources and issues we find. I can more easily see which students are making heavy weather with their IT skills (navigating the Web & Blackboard, saving links, etc), and which members of the group could help them or whether I need to step in or indeed refer them to someone else for support."

Jan Summerscales, Faculty of Health and Social Care.

Architectural Statement . . .

“The Learning Gateway concept is based on the key assumption that the relationship between the physical setting and the students’ learning experience is vital and that the latter can be enhanced if the former is designed right from the start”.

To have such a statement within an architectural brief is unusual and to the architect both daunting and exciting at the same time. It acknowledges that a building is not merely a passive box within which activities take place but a structure that can actively affect how the occupants interact. In fact the brief for the Learning Gateway was unusual in many ways. It did not specify the number or size of rooms but instead spoke of interactivity, flexibility, innovation and institutional pride.

The finished building has a simple and transparent logic. At the south end are the main entrance, toilet facilities and primary circulation with the wrap around glazing and the three storey high column acting as a beacon and marker for the facility. At the north end is the lecture theatre, acoustically treated for unaided speech, fitted with IT and AV technology and containing over 140 seats. The theatre acts as a solid bookend to the building and acknowledges the presence of neighbouring residences.

Between these two elements are the open plan learning spaces looking out to the campus on the east with a series of individual seminar rooms on the west. The nature of the spaces changes from formal to informal as you rise through

the building. On the ground floor there is soft seating and curved meeting pods, while on the 1st floor snaking team desking encourages small group working and on the 2nd floor semi-circular study carousels are designed for individual study.

This layering is also emphasized in the colour scheme with the ground floor picked out in earthy terracotta colours, the 1st floor in the greens of the hills and vegetation and the top floor in the more ethereal blues of the air and sky.

At the heart of the learning spaces is the most dramatic element of the building, a soaring four storey atrium. This demonstrates the transparent open nature of the Learning Gateway and encourages interaction between its users. With large glazed facades and glass partitions and balustrades visibility is a recurring theme in the building.



But the atrium also serves practical purposes as well as allowing natural light to penetrate into the heart of the building. It acts as a natural ventilation chimney drawing fresh air up through the floors and avoiding the wasteful cost of mechanical extraction.

The Learning Gateway is a bold statement that looks forward to new ways of learning but does not dictate rigidly how it is to be used. It is now up to students and staff to make the building their own and only then will the physical setting enhance their learning experience as the original brief required.

Raymond Whittaker, Architects Plus.



Cast your vote NOW!

The lecture theatre contains an audience personal response system consisting of 150 hand-held wireless transmitters which communicate with a computer via receivers positioned around the room.

The system provides individual interaction and assessment through the use of questions.

The questions can either be created using the authoring tool or imported, and can be asked in a variety of formats, including true or false, multiple choice or numerical.

You can also convert a PowerPoint slide into a question slide.

Audience members respond to each question by pressing the appropriate buttons on their transmitter. There is the option to allow each participant to indicate a confidence level with their responses so you can not only gauge if the answers are correct or incorrect, but how confident they were in answering the question.

Results can be instantly displayed as a chart for real-time feedback and enabling lesson refinement.

The results can also be displayed anonymously ensuring that

participants respond uninhibitedly, with participation by every member of the audience. At the end of the question period, a statistical summary of the responses received can be automatically shown in the form of a histogram.

After the session the grades can be recorded in the system Gradebook, exported in an Excel format or into a grade course management system such as Blackboard Learning System™.

There are also several reports that can be used to analyse the results for a single question or for a series of lessons.