UAL User Research: 18 Jun, 2025

Recommendations

Areas For Further Study

Deeper study
As this was the first study, it was necessarily high-level. A second, similar study would be more targeted on the areas learned here and would allow us to dig deeper into issues raised.

Investigate "Ghost Bookings"
Conduct further study into the prevalence and impact of meeting rooms being booked but not used, exploring potential automated solutions such as movement sensors or improved check-in/release systems to free up spaces

Optimise Teaching Room Availability
Research methods to increase the availability and bookability of teaching rooms for non-teaching meetings and events, exploring how timetabling services can be more flexible without compromising academic priorities

Evaluate Hybrid Meeting Engagement
Further assess how hybrid meeting setups impact engagement and participation, particularly for remote attendees, to inform future design and technology choices that foster more equitable interaction

Audio Visual Technology

Standardise Equipment
Implement uniform audio-visual (AV) technology across all meeting rooms to simplify the user experience and reduce IT support complexities. This uniformity should allow for adaptable configurations (e.g., additional microphones or speakers) in larger spaces to maintain consistent sound quality.

Improve Sound Quality and Isolation
Address existing issues with sound leakage and poor room acoustics, especially in areas

with glass walls, by improving sound deadening and strategically placing acoustic materials. This is a common and ongoing complaint.

Ensure consistent and reliable audio functionality for hybrid meetings, resolving technical glitches that prevent participants from hearing or being heard clearly.

Ensure Reliable Connectivity and Power
Verify that all plug sockets in meeting rooms and collaborative areas (like 'Wendy houses') are functional and easily accessible, avoiding floor-level or hard-to-reach outlets.

Provide necessary adapters (e.g., HDMI) as standard equipment in meeting rooms to accommodate various devices, reducing the burden on users to bring their own.

Enhance IT Support Processes
Maintain and potentially expand the use of Teams room admin portals for proactive monitoring and early detection of AV issues, allowing IT to resolve problems before users encounter them.

Establish a clear, rapid, and reliable IT support process for urgent in-meeting technical issues, potentially including a dedicated emergency contact or on-site support to avoid delays caused by traditional ticket logging.

Maintain Booth Technology
Ensure lights, air conditioning, and power sockets are consistently functional in all meeting booths and pods to support their intended use.

Facilities

Increase Meeting Space Availability
Increase the number of dedicated meeting rooms, especially larger ones capable of accommodating significant groups, to meet the high demand for various meeting sizes and types.

Significantly increase the number of private booths and pods, prioritising comfortable sit-down options over standing ones, and ensuring all are accessible and fully equipped with working power outlets.

Re-evaluate current booking policies for underutilised teaching rooms, aiming to maximise their availability for general meetings during non-teaching hours.

Optimise Room Design and Comfort
Prioritise comfortable, flexible, and easily movable furniture (chairs and desks) to allow for diverse meeting setups and adaptability to user preferences.

Incorporate ample natural light and improve overall lighting quality in rooms, addressing sensitivities for neurodivergent individuals and ensuring a pleasant environment.

Address persistent temperature control issues across buildings to ensure comfortable conditions for all users, avoiding extremes of heat or cold.

Investigate and mitigate dust issues in office and meeting spaces, which can affect staff with respiratory conditions.

Enhance Aesthetics and Amenities
Improve the aesthetics of office and meeting spaces by incorporating more colour and prominently displaying student artwork, creating a more inspiring and welcoming environment that reflects the university's identity.

Provide basic amenities such as water stations (ideally within rooms) and ensure consistently stocked kitchen supplies (e.g., plates, glasses, cutlery) in shared areas.

Improve Wayfinding
Implement clear and consistent signposting and wayfinding solutions within and across all UAL buildings to help users, especially visitors and those unfamiliar with a college, easily locate meeting rooms and facilities.

Other

Centralised and User-Friendly Booking System
Develop a single, comprehensive, and centralised booking system for all meeting rooms and spaces across all UAL colleges, replacing disparate systems and reliance on email communication.

Integrate the booking system with user calendars for automatic syncing and reminders. Include detailed information for each room within the booking system, such as photos/videos, 3D/4D views, capacity, accessibility details, and available resources (e.g., flip chart paper, stationary).

Allow for booking of additional resources (e.g., stationary, catering) directly through the main booking system.
Implement an effective automated check-in and release system for booked rooms to reduce "ghost bookings" without inconveniencing users or PAs who book for others.

Streamline External Event Booking
Simplify the process for booking large internal venues for non-teaching events, allowing for earlier confirmation and reducing reliance on costly external venues.

Promote Responsible Booking Culture
Actively encourage users to release meeting room bookings if they are cancelled or no longer needed, fostering a more considerate and efficient use of shared resources.

Optimise Desk Booking/Usage
Re-evaluate the desk booking system (e.g., potentially allowing a "rock up" approach) and standardise desk setups to improve the hot-desking experience and reduce issues arising from varied technology configurations.

Implement Meeting Buffers
Encourage a 50 or 55-minute meeting culture to create built-in buffer time between sessions, allowing for setup, tech checks, and smooth transitions between bookings.

Empower Building User Group
Grant the Building User Group more authority and resources to implement decisions and address recurrent issues, moving beyond just raising problems repeatedly.

Clear Communication of Room Policies
Clearly communicate specific policies for certain rooms (e.g., those not suitable for confidential conversations) and provide transparent information on who to contact for rooms not listed on the main booking system.