

Agile Working at UCL



Making best use of staff expertise and space is essential in a climate that demands universities are efficient, sustainable and agile. To address this challenge, UCL has introduced the concept of 'Agile Working' into some divisions of Professional Services and are planning to extend it to other areas of the University.

Taking the opportunity presented by the acquisition of a new building – Bidborough House – the University sought to improve space utilisation by moving away from a traditional 'one desk per person' model and introduce new ways of working.

SUMS provided project management support for the implementation of the Agile Working project that, overall, saw the movement of approximately 800 Professional Services staff.

Key to the success of this project was a facilitative approach to engage and represent all stakeholder groups and the coordination of activities across Professional Services departments to make the changes in working location and to new working practices as smooth as possible.

An essential element of the project was to ensure that staff had both desktop and mobile computing to enable remote working and devised a set of working practices to introduce and embed agile working. Practical support during and after the move included an IT helpdesk and occupational health consultancy.

This is a bold programme that has potential to deliver some big benefits for UCL. Professional Services staff have the ability to work in an agile way and not be tied to a desk. The amount of office space needed to accommodate those staff has been significantly reduced, while their overall working environment is perceived to have improved. UCL also now has increased space for teaching, helping to improve the overall student experience.

Jon Moon
SUMS Consultant

The project has been very valuable for UCL. The post-implementation survey indicates that staff are generally positive about the change, and it has enabled us to make more efficient use of the space we have available than would have been possible with a more traditional approach. The success of the project has given us confidence in launching Agile 2, which will see the Agile approach extended to further Professional Services functions at UCL. SUMS' support was key to the success of the project.

Rex Knight
Vice-Provost (Operations), UCL

SUMS works for universities. SUMS is different – we really understand the culture of universities and how to bring about change within them.

SUMS consultants combine commercial expertise with a deep understanding of the sector. Our consultants come from the commercial sector – including from the big four consultancy firms – and senior roles within universities. Our principal consultants are a professional team that share their experience of commercial and public sector best practice. We learn from what has worked well elsewhere, from other sectors and within HE. We horizon scan, are aware of the issues that will be impacting UK HE and are developing solutions to help our Members meet the challenges ahead.

SUMS membership gives unique access to other Members and other SUMS international networks: in USA, EU and Australia.



SUMS Consulting
Science & Technology Centre
University of Reading
Earley Gate
Whiteknights Road
Reading RG6 6BZ

E: SUMS@reading.ac.uk
T: 0118 935 7073
www.sums.org.uk