

A photograph of a modern university building with a large glass facade and a courtyard with people walking. The building has a distinctive geometric pattern on its upper floors. The courtyard is paved with brick and has several benches. People are walking around the courtyard, and there are some trees and bushes in the foreground.

AUDE

Together, for excellent university estates & facilities

Executive Summary of the

Higher Education Estates Management Report

Summary, insights and analysis of the 2020/21 academic year

2022

ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY DIRECTORS OF ESTATES

An unprecedented turning point

There can have been few, if any, Estates Management Reports from AUDE during the 30 years of the association's existence that have seen anything like the swings, reversals, highs and lows in the reported data that we see in this year's edition.

The reason is simple: Covid. Every graph shows an outlier, a story to be remembered and retold, a point of change and disruption the like of which none of us has experienced. The dataset included in the 2022 EMR covers 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021. It's worth getting to grips with the timeline and checking that your memory of this period is accurate.



This is the time of a lull in Covid cases after the initial lockdown of March 2020, but it is also the time of the 'cancelled Christmas', of the first delivery of vaccines, and of a slow reopening of society after the third national lockdown. It's the time when we were all learning at pace how to keep ourselves and our families safe, and how (and whether) to keep campuses open and functioning. It's the time of big decisions about whether to proceed with, mothball or cancel capital projects, with an increased daily focus on building management systems, including ventilation and air-conditioning that suddenly took on new importance. And it's the time when the significant efforts of estates and facilities staff, cleaners, security officers and project teams played a crucial part in keeping the entire HE show on the road. This was a period in which directors of estates and facilities found themselves at the very heart of university planning. It was also a period of massive uncertainty.

This uncertainty included planning for the new academic year starting in September 2020 and the key question of student numbers – who was going to make up that year's academic cohort and what income did they bring? Demographic trends will continue to deliver increases in home students for much of this decade. Faced with a poor employment market and little opportunity for international travel, home students navigated the uncertainty of exams and grades in huge numbers to reach their university destinations. Income growth for teaching-focused institutions grew by as much as 10% during this period as a result.

Many universities slammed on the spending brakes where it was viable to do so as every element of institutional income and expenditure faced challenges. At the same time, universities needed to allocate specific Covid budgets to allow for enhanced cleaning regimes, extra signage, increased ventilation (and the associated costs) and security, and a host of pastoral support services for those isolating or isolated on campus, as well as many more one-off interventions.

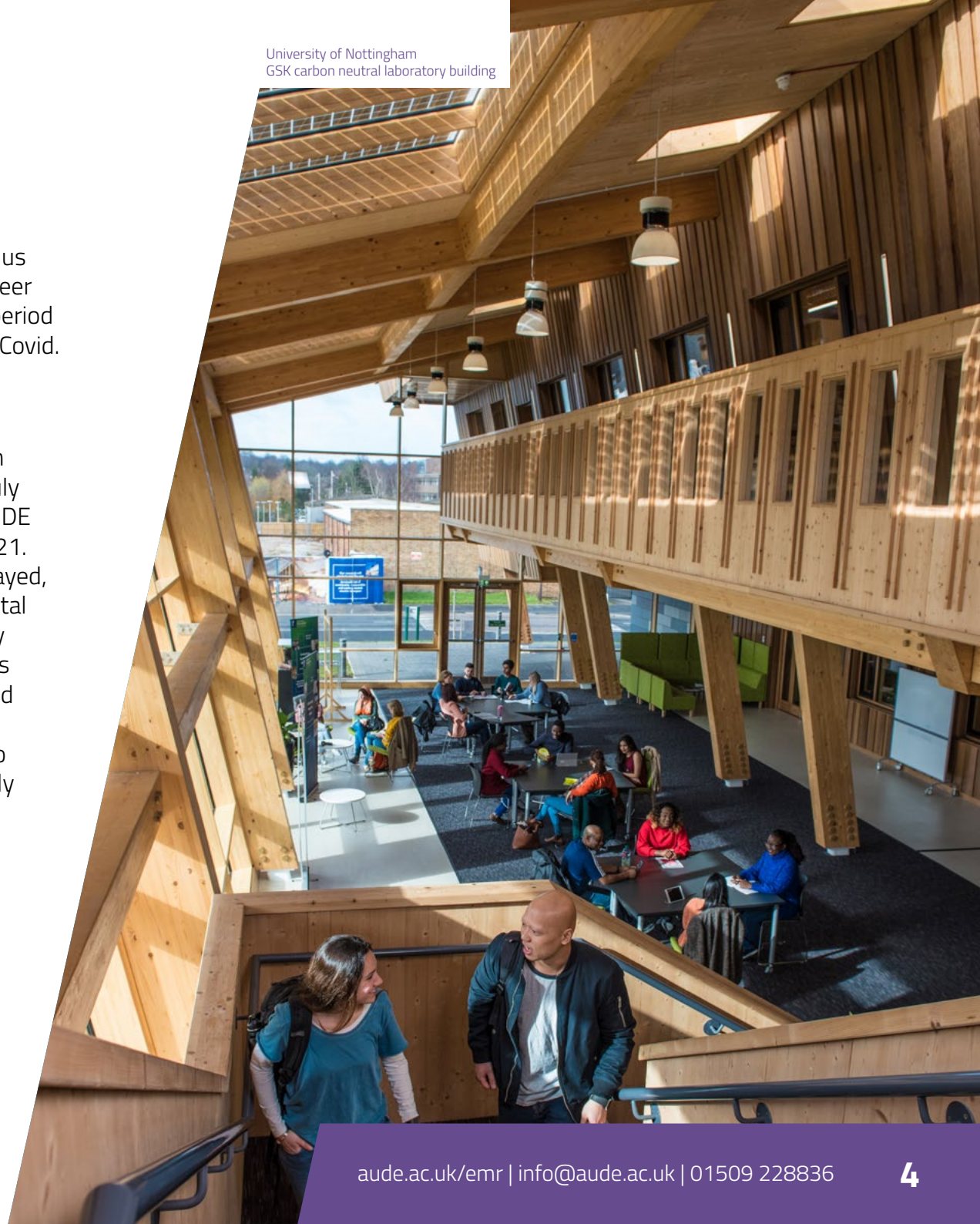
This is a period of big decisions on whether to proceed with, mothball or cancel capital projects, and an increased focus on daily building management systems including ventilation and air-conditioning that suddenly took on new importance.

University of Glasgow
Mazumdar-Shaw Advanced Research Centre (ARC)
Photography by University of Glasgow Photographic Unit
University of Glasgow charity number SC004401

This report marks an unprecedented turning point. For all of us we can only hope that the pandemic is a one-off life and career event. It is inevitable that those of us working through this period will continue to think of times BC and AC – before and after Covid. Changes set in train during this extraordinary time are likely to last forever.

Our estates and facilities teams were appreciated with fresh eyes by university leadership teams during this period as truly vital functions, and gratitude for their work was tangible. AUDE reflected this in its Covid Heroes campaign of November 2021. While capital expenditure took a big hit as projects were delayed, there were also real achievements in this space. Overall capital spending slipped back to its 2015/16 level, hardly a calamity given the scale of the crisis. Directors of estates and facilities found new ways to cooperate with contractors, suppliers and other stakeholders, from government to local authorities, in ways that kept projects moving. Projects were re-planned to keep workers on site and many universities today are proudly able to point to projects completed during this period – with massive ingenuity and thought, but no loss in quality, and variable loss in terms of timescale and increased cost.

On comparatively empty campuses we see an upswing of 5% in spend on repairs as estates and facilities teams found ways to make use of times in the stop-start Covid calendar to catch up with maintenance. Spending on non-statutory compliance activity virtually stopped for many.



The move to online teaching and hybrid working allowed universities to continue with much vital work but has raised questions for the future about delivery models that still need permanent answers.

We see longer-term issues arising in this year's data. Income from retail, food concessions and accommodation all took an obvious hit from part-closed or part-empty campuses. The move to online teaching and hybrid working allowed universities to continue with much vital work, but it has raised questions for the future about delivery models that still need permanent answers. It started to become clear during this time that a return to the status quo might never happen. A decade's worth of thinking about how and where we taught, studied and worked was being compressed into a very short time. The irony of paying to heat, light and ventilate spaces that seem likely to be far emptier than in the past has not escaped directors of estates and facilities and will inevitably lead to consideration around space and estate rationalisation.

As for energy – cost, generation, future viability – we see early signals of the most pressing concern of 2022. In the article 'Same path, different roads', our main report looks at some of the answers our universities are finding. While we could not have predicted the hit to costs associated with the war in Ukraine, other aspects of the cost-of-living crisis, including damaged supply chains and increased global demand for materials, can be traced back to this period. While the report shows more students wanting to come to university, and a welcome increase in income associated with this, there are clear cost pressures too. There is little chance of fee income rising per student, yet virtually wherever else we look there are cost pressures – materials, labour, energy – meaning total property costs are bound to rise.

The future of the EMR

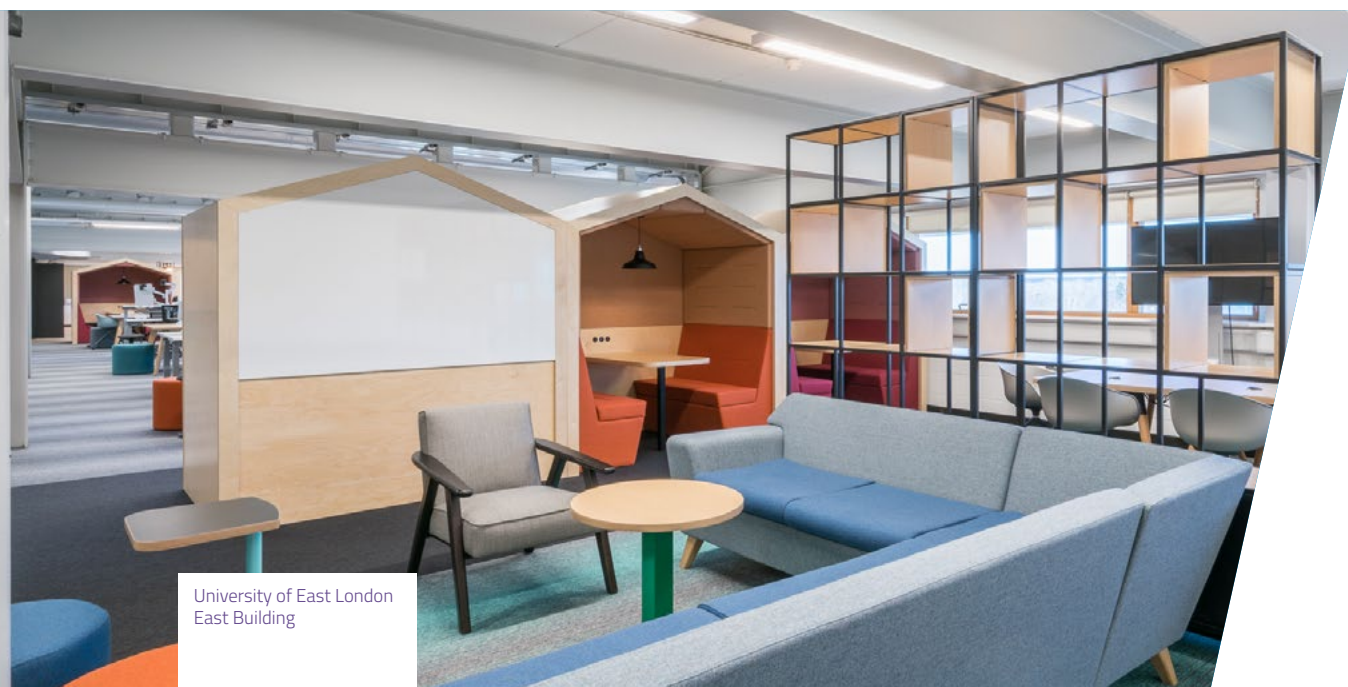
AUDE has been a staunch supporter of the value of this dataset for many years and continues to be. The data allows universities to benchmark their activity against peers, see historic patterns and identify problematic trends that need resolving before they become entrenched.

It also feeds into our thinking on sustainability. 97% of the overall HE estate is represented in the EMR, and it therefore remains the valuable comparison tool it has always been. But in a period when the four nations of the UK follow different guidance on the data's collection, it is inevitable that we look with fresh eyes at the process and value gained, and at how EMR data contributes to all of the understanding needed by our institutions. What might we do differently to contribute more fully to this understanding?

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Some members have identified that the task of submission has become too onerous, and this is particularly the case at some of our smaller institutions. Inevitably over time ideas change about which indicators are vital and which aren't. We recognise there is a call for a leaner dataset and, although we have consulted AUDE members and others on what this might be, we ought to be clear that, while AUDE values this data highly, we do not 'operationally own' it, even though we make use of it for something that is as vital to us and our members as the EMR.

This dataset is part of an important set of related activities, including our role in the development of the Standardised Carbon Emissions Reporting Framework (SEF) with partner organisations including BUFDG, the EAUC, HESA and the Department for Education. In November 2022 the Department for Education reminded us of the process that will be newly adopted for submissions to the SEF reporting system, and their expectation that this activity and the AUDE dataset review should align. Clearly every stakeholder wants to be able to recommend to the sector a streamlined and efficient process for collecting a dataset that meets broad sector expectations and needs. We expect to be able to report progress to AUDE members during the first quarter of 2023, and also to update them on the development of our Carbon Costs Calculator that aims to solidify sector understanding around the crucial metric of the estimated overall cost to universities of the shift to zero carbon campuses.



University of East London
East Building

In the meantime, AUDE has been working on a digital version of the EMR that will be ready to launch in 2023, which we hope will become part of members' toolkits. It will enable them to benchmark easily against comparable universities, export reports in useful formats, and engage with the whole of the report in new ways – and, through all of this, it will help directors of estates and facilities and their teams build their case for the right investment in the right things. Whether this innovation means that the days of the printed report are numbered remains to be seen. But the new 'EMR digital' tool will provide options we haven't had before, perhaps greater clarity and, therefore, a better chance of making the high-impact, long-term choices. We will, of course, keep you posted on this project.

Jane White
AUDE Executive Director





Residential income fell from

£1,318m (19/20)

£1,121m (20/21)



Catering income fell from

£249m (19/20)

to

£90.2m (20/21)



Academic capital expenditure fell from

£3,694m (19/20)

to

£2,610m (20/21)



Repairs and maintenance total expenditure increased from

£623m (19/20)

to

£661m (20/21)



Energy expenditure reduced slightly from

£391m (19/20)

to

£379m (20/21)



Teaching income up from

£21,081m (19/20)
to
£23,410m (20/21)

Research income up from

£7,911m (19/20)
to
£8,252m (20/21)



Carbon emissions up from

54.6 (19/20)
to
55.1 (20/21)
kg CO₂/m² GIA



Student numbers by segment

Large research

530,515 (19/20)
to
564,000 (20/21)

Research intensive

233,317 (19/20)
to
260,000 (20/21)

Large teaching

781,072 (19/20)
to
846,000 (20/21)

Small teaching

125,569 (19/20)
to
144,000 (20/21)



Estate size (GIA) up from

20,924,549 m² (19/20)

to

21,448,000 m² (20/21)

an increase of

523,451 m²



Capital expenditure for the residential estate fell from

£247m (19/20)

to

£139m (20/21)



Repairs and maintenance account for

32.3%

of total property costs

£661m pa



Energy accounts for

18.5%

of total property costs

£379m pa



Cleaning accounts for

12.7%

of total property costs

£259.75m pa



Security accounts for

8.1%

of total property costs

£166.186m pa

Town House, Kingston University, London. RIBA Stirling Prize winner 2021
and EU Mies Van der Rohe Award for Contemporary Architecture winner 2022.
Designed by Grafton Architects and built by Willmott Dixon.
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