

# AUDE

Together, for excellent university estates & facilities

Summary, insights and analysis of the 2019/20 academic year



ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY DIRECTORS OF ESTATES

**Executive Summary of the  
Higher Education Estates Management Report**

# 2021

# An urgent return to the sustainability agenda?

Bournemouth University,  
Gateway Building

## THE EMR: A TOOL FOR IMPROVEMENT

The unprecedented events of the last two years have created challenges for universities and estates and facilities teams the like of which we have never known before. A source of valuable information and support, AUDE's Estates Management Report (EMR) repays careful study, as universities use the data to benchmark against similar, local and competitor institutions, and develop their long-term estate strategies. As always, the EMR is a tool for improvement.

While Covid became the focus of our attention in 2020, the recent UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) was a powerful reminder that the biggest challenge of all is the need to do everything we can to address climate change – led by the research at our universities, of course, but also by our net zero carbon leadership in action.

The pandemic may have temporarily knocked us off course – and it will no doubt spring many more unwelcome surprises on us. But COP26 has highlighted the need to find headspace for an urgent return of focus to the sustainability agenda.

All data based on HESA returns

## A WHOLE-SYSTEM APPROACH

After another year of extreme weather events around the world, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's sixth assessment report (August 2021) makes it abundantly clear that climate change is here, is man-made, and that the most enormous, society-wide effort has to be brought to bear to combat its effects. That means every business, every organisation and every individual joining together in a concerted effort. Within the UK's higher education sector, every university is already highly engaged on this issue, but recent research\* carried out by the Association for Decentralised Energy (ADE) on behalf of AUDE and SAUDE (the Scottish Association of University Directors of Estates) points to a stark truth. While the UK government has been among the first to establish a clear national target of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, which in turn has encouraged others, including local authorities and universities, to make similar commitments, it has not yet used every lever at its disposal to draw together the required whole-system approach. It urgently needs to do so.

The outcomes of COP26 will be scrutinised for years, and our universities are keenly waiting to see if the UK government's major themes for the conference – around mobilising private finance, collaboration across civil society on shared solutions, and the global push towards net zero – lead to concrete actions that enable sustainable campuses for the long term. Collaboration across the HE sector is already happening in many forms, including Universities UK's long-standing work to connect and inform on this agenda, and the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges' Race to Zero initiative. In university estates and facilities teams we recognise that we are part of this huge, shared task.

**“There is a fantastic opportunity for the government to make inroads into the UK's carbon emissions by supporting large organisations like universities. For instance, natural gas is responsible for around 60% of carbon emissions in the HE sector and considerable barriers remain for universities to move to low-carbon alternatives. While amazing work is being carried out across UK HE in everything from climate science to the practical delivery of new energy-efficient technologies, universities need a public policy framework that gives long-term confidence in alternatives to gas, the financial resources for infrastructure investment, and the cross-sector links into other public or private sector organisations that would facilitate collaborative action, in order to achieve the 2050 goal, which is now less than 30 years away.”**

Andrew Nolan, Director of Sustainability at the University of Nottingham and Chair of AUDE's Sustainability Advisory Group



University of Lincoln,  
Medical School

\* Decarbonising Heat Networks in University Estates, July 2021

## INTERPRETING THE COVID EFFECT

This year's report includes data from the first five months of the pandemic – the period of maximum uncertainty. While Covid skews some of the data, it is important to identify the long-term patterns where we can. However what is evident from the data from 2019/20 is the immediate impact of Covid when things were being locked down. The major impact in the academic estate was a reduction in spend. We see the reduction in capital expenditure, as well as spend on energy and maintenance. This we conclude is the impact of buildings being closed down, operational staff being furloughed and buildings not requiring heating/cooling.

Overall capital expenditure on the university estate is affected by the delays to a host of projects in the immediate aftermath of the initial lockdown. Some projects will just have been delayed, linked as they are to major infrastructure renewal, and hence the capital expenditure will merely be delayed. Other projects will have been be completely re-thought or cancelled.

One of the most serious impacts of Covid during the year was the impact it had on income in the residential sector. Residential income reduced significantly as institutions typically had to give refunds to students for a proportion of the year. The amount of this rebate varied between institutions, but typically it was a significant proportion of the third instalment of student rents. Catering income reduced practically to zero for the last quarter of the year.

We anticipate is that for the EMR return for the year 2020/21, we will see a significant increase in operational costs as the impact of additional ventilation, additional cleaning etc will become clear.



Solent University, Moot Court Room



Residential income fell from

**£1,669m** (18/19)

to

**£1,318m** (19/20)



Catering income fell from

**£381m** (18/19)

to

**£244m** (19/20)



Academic capital expenditure fell from

**£3,261m** (18/19)

to

**£2,694m** (19/20)

We continue to live in a time of immense change, even without the stresses of the pandemic. We can see some of the assumptions we made during spring 2020 have proven wrong, not least about the likely effect of Covid on the number of students starting their education in autumn 2020. Based on UK demographics alone, we have the best part of a decade of growth in student numbers ahead of us, even if the advantage of this isn't gained evenly by all universities. The ripples created by the 2019 Augar Review are yet to be felt, while the government's non-committal stance on differential course pricing and capping of numbers on some courses adds to a picture of uncertainty.

The longer-term effects of the pandemic – on overall HE estate space, on design and layout, or the need to change and then perhaps to manage our physical spaces differently, and much more – will become clearer over the years. None of us could have predicted the extent to which working-from-home regimes would quickly go from the extraordinary to the expectation for many. It is clear that some roles cannot be performed remotely. For some, the workplace is looking very different post-Covid, but not for all, particularly those in front-facing roles. The reality of this situation will have to be recognised and dealt with as post-Covid work patterns become better understood. We'll be learning from Covid-19 in 2029 and beyond.



Repairs and maintenance total expenditure fell from

**£655m** (18/19)

to

**£623m** (19/20)



Energy expenditure reduced slightly from

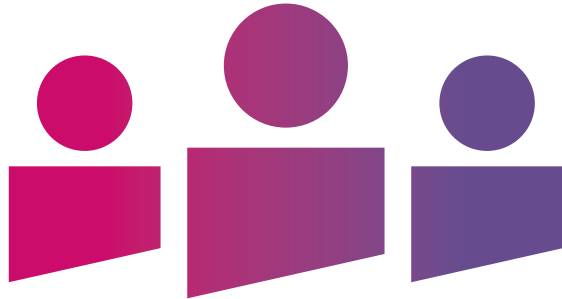
**£397m** (18/19)

to

**£391m** (19/20)



Lancaster University,  
School of Architecture



### Student numbers by segment

Large research

**514,985** (18/19)  
to  
**530,515** (19/20)

Research intensive

**229,771** (18/19)  
to  
**233,317** (19/20)

Large teaching

**750,656** (18/19)  
to  
**781,072** (19/20)

Small teaching

**124,726** (18/19)  
to  
**125,569** (19/20)



Teaching income up from

**£20,018m** (18/19)  
to  
**£21,081m** (19/20)

Research income down from

**£8,022m** (18/19)  
to  
**£7,911m** (19/20)

Carbon emissions down from

**0.0927** (18/19) kg CO<sub>2</sub>/m<sup>2</sup>  
to  
**0.0836** (19/20) kg CO<sub>2</sub>/m<sup>2</sup>



Estate size (GIA) up from

**20,589,170 m<sup>2</sup>** (18/19)

to

**20,924,549 m<sup>2</sup>** (19/20)

an increase of

**335,379 m<sup>2</sup>**



Capital expenditure for the residential estate fell from

**£417m** (18/19)

to

**£247m** (19/20)



Repairs and maintenance account for

**30.5%**

of total property costs

**£623m pa**



Energy accounts for

**18.3%**

of total property costs

**£391m pa**



Cleaning accounts for

**12.2%**

of total property costs

**£248m pa**



Security accounts for

**8.2%**

of total property costs

**£167m pa**

## HESA ESTATES MANAGEMENT REPORT DATA

The regular sector conversation about the usefulness of the annual HESA estates management data and its collection process took on new life recently as the latest information featured within this report was released. Do we need all of the data? Do we value all of it? Does it help to drive high-quality decision-making on vital estates activity? Are we collecting the right data? In extraordinarily busy times, can we afford to collect it? Can we afford not to?

Colleagues in other sectors – from the NHS to local authorities and further afield – are envious of the comprehensive support this dataset provides, as are universities across the world. Our colleagues in the Republic of Ireland, for instance, are setting out to create something similar for the first time, just as we make the data return non-mandatory. This dataset informs the estate strategy in every single UK university by allowing close comparison of data for similar institutions. At a time of immense change and challenge, it is a complete national dataset that supports decision-making in every area of the estates remit, from our capital expenditure developments to our maintenance spend.

When analysed and included in our EMR, the data carries historical meaning, allowing us to understand changing cost and expenditure patterns over many years. Finance directors use condition data within the EMR to infer financial sustainability, as well as capital and maintenance budget requirements. It is a critical data source for Universities UK's work on efficiencies and costs, and is frequently referenced in the Valuation Office Agency's work on rates revaluation. The EMR also facilitates the collection of scope 3 carbon emissions data, required as part of the Climate Change Act, and is used in the Sustainability Leadership Scorecard, the sector-leading AUDE/EAUC tool that helps universities plan and prioritise their sustainability activity.

And so, of course, at AUDE we value the EMR highly. We absolutely recognise that collecting of the full dataset is an onerous task for some universities, and we note that 28 universities have chosen not to submit responses, while a small number are large teaching universities, many are among our small institutions.

Approximately 96% of the total university estate is reflected within the report's pages. There is no catastrophic decline in the quality of the data or the analysis we are able to provide. We fully understand that some universities may not have the resources to manage the task of data collection. So, arguably, a localised efficiency saving is achieved by not submitting the data, partially enabled by the OfS, whose decision to make its collection non-mandatory in England and Northern Ireland always risked causing a slow deterioration in the overall quality of this dataset. These small efficiency gains are at the expense of a comprehensive national picture – a complete dataset that has supported benchmarking and the development of estate strategies at our universities for many years, and that underpins our collective efforts on the net zero carbon agenda.

So what next? AUDE wants to focus on solving problems for our member universities, and that includes listening to concerns about difficulties in data collection and finding ways to ameliorate those issues.

The data needs a thorough review. There are differences of opinion among our own steering committee: some would change a certain item, or remove it, while for others the same item is important and helps them benchmark their university against other institutions.

AUDE sincerely thanks all the institutions that submit data and make the EMR a beacon of benchmarking success.



Town House, Kingston University, London. RIBA Stirling Prize winner 2021  
Designed by Grafton Architects and built by Willmott Dixon. © Ed Reeve





University of Bristol,  
Senate House

This useful dataset will become valueless unless we do everything we can to ensure it is fit for the challenges we now face – less than 30 years from the 2050 net zero carbon target. Through our EMR steering group and member universities, we are working with Jisc and HESA first, and will bring in stakeholders with their many and varied insights as we progress. The result of the review must be capable of attracting broad support. As part of this work we will look at new ways to present the data in a digital format to maximise its value to universities. Gains achieved through this process may come in increments. An obvious area of focus should be on measurable environmental data that helps us to reach our net zero carbon targets.

In the meantime, we urge universities to continue to submit the fullest possible data return for each academic year. AUDE has consistently argued against the decision to make collection non-mandatory, with the obvious overall loss of sector benchmarking capability. When did any of us make good decisions without the data to support those decisions? We have seen many of our universities take on societal leadership roles in the fight against Covid, and many aspire to similar leadership in helping society respond to our major environmental challenges. Please continue to support the collection of this data while AUDE engages across the sector to make changes to the dataset. We really can't afford this to be a case of "You don't know what you've got till it's gone".

**Jane White**  
Executive Director, AUDE



The University of Warwick,  
Interdisciplinary Biomedical Research Building

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