

Sector: Education

Robertson business: Robertson Central

Clients:

Glasgow Caledonian University

Value: £20m

Date of involvement: June 2014—March 2016

Location: Cowcaddens Road, Glasgow



Glasgow Caledonian University

Breathing life back into the heart of the campus

This project has transformed the Glasgow Caledonian University's city centre campus. We worked in a live education environment on a tight city centre site for two years, all with the aim of dramatically improving the student experience.

Improving connectivity

The Heart of the Campus project is the physical expression of the University's exciting vision for the future. In our £20m element of the project, over the course of 90 weeks, four phases and seven sectional completions, we have succeeded in creating inspiring and productive spaces for teaching, research and social interaction. The existing concrete-framed George Moore and Hamish Wood buildings have been extensively renewed and reconfigured to connect better with the Saltire Centre and the wider campus. This technically challenging project also involved demolition, new-build elements and major public realm works.

We have constructed a glass pavilion gateway, a new restaurant, a 500-seat lecture theatre and conference centre, revitalised outdoor spaces with landscaped courtyards, and a centralised entrance with an extended front canopy.

Located in a restricted and densely occupied city-centre site, these GCU campus facilities are used by over 17,000 students every day. To keep the campus operational during the build, and to keep its people safe, we worked in close cooperation with the University to develop a phasing and temporary works strategy. To promote this culture of collaborative working, we shared an office space with the GCU project team – making sure it was not just the buildings that were better connected, but the people within them.

Maintaining 'business as usual'

The Heart of the Campus project has been a prime example of our ability to liaise closely and flexibly with the client, the design team, the local community and other stakeholders to make the project a success. During the demolition works, the upper floors remained in use by students. To maintain their occupation, we created a new main entrance and temporary access stairs to the building. Careful planning of all works was required, as was a thorough understanding of the intricate nature of the existing building services: it was of prime importance to 'keep the lights on' during the whole life of the project.

We worked nights and weekend shifts to reduce the noise impact and disruption for students and staff – especially during exam time. Low-impact construction techniques were also used at all times to minimise noise and dust, and staff in the floors above our working area were issued with decibel meters to monitor our works.

Involving the community

In partnership with the GCU and other local organisations, we created a tailor-made series of community benefit activities. We worked with the Caledonia Club on an outreach programme with St Joseph's Primary School, which centred on waste management and culminated in multi-activity sustainability workshops during the Glasgow Science Festival.

We offered student placements on this project, as well as helping the University's Construction Management students with their dissertation research. Throughout the project, our work on site has provided them with an invaluable live working model to visit and observe.



"Walking around the development, it's easy to forget that there's a university functioning in the same buildings. You are overwhelmed by the tight working conditions of a site where no space is wasted as machines, men and equipment work in compact zones to ensure construction progresses according to the demanding schedule."

Project Scotland Magazine