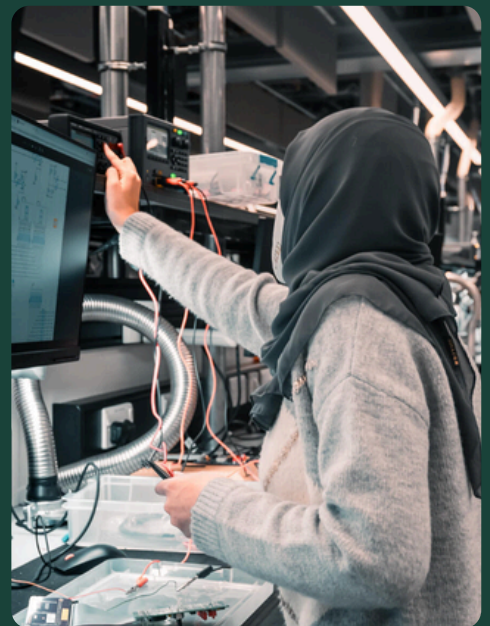


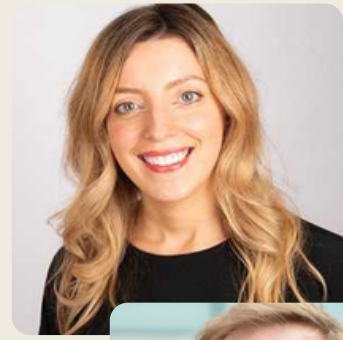
The home of Engineering and Materials

Year 3 evaluation report



September 2026

Introduction



The relocation from North Campus to, what was then known as, the Manchester Engineering Campus Development (MECD) marked a significant moment in our Faculty and University's history, moving us from historic sites we had occupied for nearly 200 years into brand-new facilities designed to transform how we work, teach and conduct research.

In the four years since we've moved, and almost 15 years since plans were first developed, we have experienced unprecedented amounts of change across the sector and society. Many of us now work more flexibly, our research areas and teaching approaches are constantly evolving, and we are already looking ahead to our future as a University driven by From Manchester for the World – our strategy to 2035.

It's with all of this in mind that, for the past three years, we have asked colleagues and Postgraduate Researchers to share their experience working here as part of our post-occupancy evaluation.

This evaluation was not about looking back but looking forwards and informing three main aims:

- Assessing how our original vision for the buildings aligns with current operational priorities and using insights to inform ongoing reviews of building governance and principles.
- Using insights to steer the next generation of University spaces by informing future physical and digital estate investment priorities now being guided through the Integrated Investment Plan (IIP).
- Translating feedback into actionable recommendations for operations and leadership teams, helping to drive continuous improvements.

With over 2,300 responses recorded over the past three years, this report provides a snapshot into the successes, challenges and emergent themes captured during this initial embedding period, as well as looking forward to next steps.

Catherine Grills, Executive Director of Faculty Operations

Peter Green, Deputy Dean of FSE

Year 3 survey background

Broadly speaking, [Year 1 survey findings](#) (from a total of 934 colleagues and PGRs) were mixed. Almost all responses praised the quality of new workspace, research and teaching facilities, and PS staff and PGRs reported a broadly positive experience. Academic and technical workspace colleagues reported a number of challenges and feelings of community across most staff groups were low.

[Year 2 survey insights](#) (from a total of 822 colleagues and PGRs) revealed a more positive picture. Whilst feelings of community remained low, PS staff and PGRs continued to report a positive experience and shared office and technical workspace colleagues reported notable increases in satisfaction across a number of areas.

Survey responses

A total of 639 responses were recorded for the Year 3 post-occupancy evaluation, representing around 27% of all building users contacted to take part in the survey (down 7% from Year 2 and down 12% from Year 1).

Breakdowns and response rates across staff groups are provided below:

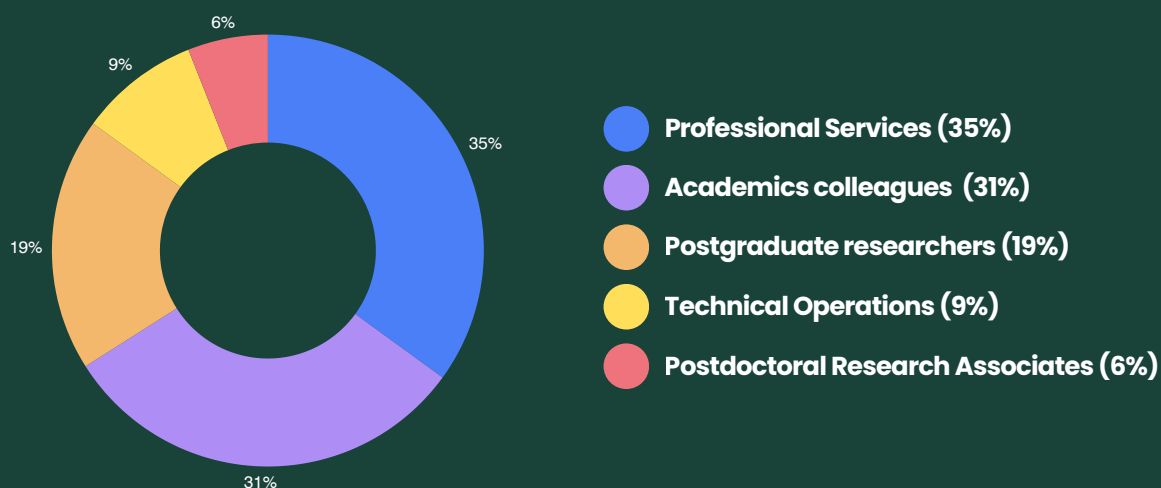


Figure 1: Breakdown of overall responses by staff group

Staff group	PS	Academic	PGR	Tech Ops	PDRA
Response rate	46%	22%	9%	16%	17%

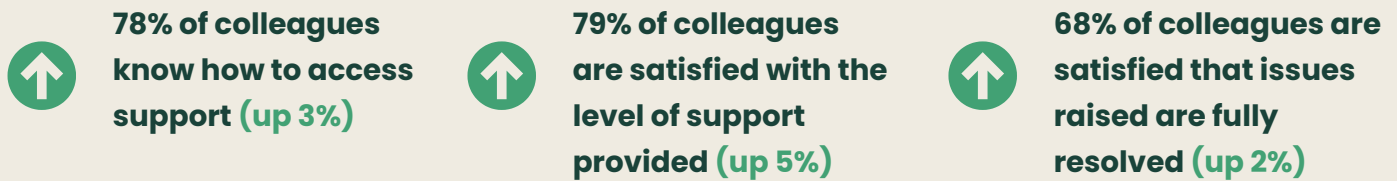
Figure 2: Response rate by staff group (% of overall MECD population who responded to the survey)

Day-to-day building experience

Service Delivery Team

The introduction of a dedicated service delivery team was a new approach for our Faculty, recognising the complexities of day-to-day operations for a site of this scale and footfall of around 7,000 colleagues, students and visitors each day.

Feedback captured has been extremely positive, with satisfaction increasing year on year.



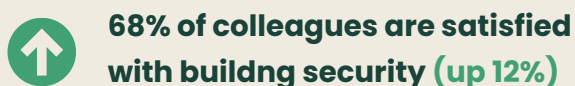
“We're proud to be a visible and approachable presence across our buildings. If there's anything we can help with, or if you'd simply like to talk through an idea, concern or suggestion, just drop into our office or grab one of us while we're out and about – we're always happy to listen and support wherever we can.”

Matthew Foulkes, Operations Manager (MECD)

Security

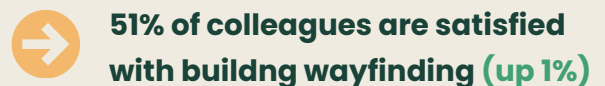
The accessible nature of our building's lower floors has required us to think proactively about how we ensure we're maintaining a safe environment for staff and students.

Following a programme of work to review and limit access between building areas and laboratories last year, satisfaction with security reached its highest levels in Year 3.



Wayfinding

Despite the introduction of our **MECD digital map** in 2022, we have seen minimal change in colleagues' experience finding their way around the buildings over the past three years.



Workspace and ways of working



Academic colleague experience

Shared office occupants

Based on responses from 65 shared office occupants (compared to 129 in Year 2), almost all areas saw decreases in satisfaction in Year 3, with rates largely comparable to Year 1 responses.



37% satisfied with office temperature
(down 12%)



25% satisfied with office ventilation
(down 36%)



31% satisfied with office lighting (down 29%)



28% satisfied with office noise levels
(down 18%)



25% satisfied with confidentiality
(down 29%)



17% agree they are able to achieve their best work (down 25%)

Though a smaller group (19% of all shared office occupants), shared office occupants who were not previously based in North Campus reported consistently higher rates of satisfaction than those who were across all environmental elements.

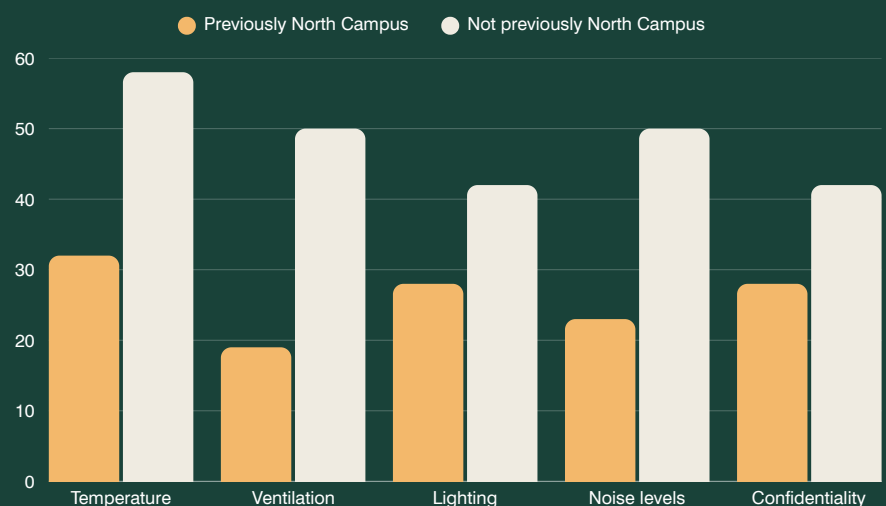


Figure 3: Satisfaction with shared office environmental conditions

This has been a consistent trend across all three surveys.

Open plan academics

In line with Years 1 and 2, feedback from academics based in open plan (based on a group of 28 academics) remained notably more positive than from those based in shared four-person offices across all environmental elements.

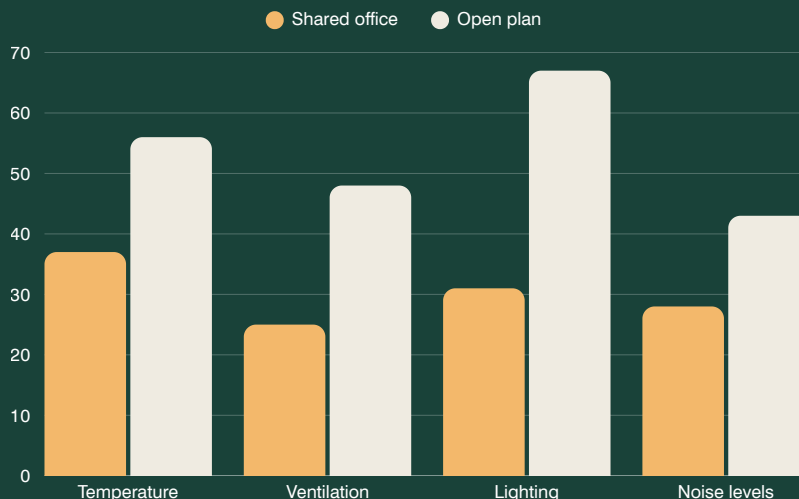


Figure 4: Open plan and shared office feedback comparison

This group did report drops in satisfaction across some elements however, and two areas in particular emerged as more challenging in open plan areas than shared offices.



30% satisfied with confidentiality (no change)



28% satisfied with personal storage (down 14%)



41% agree they are able to achieve their best work (down 27%)

PS colleague experience

Feedback from Professional Services colleagues remained consistently positive this year (based on 215 responses, down 60 from Year 2), with some elements reaching peaks in satisfaction in Year 3.



78% satisfied with temperature (up 15%)



66% satisfied with noise levels (up 12%)



77% satisfied with lighting (up 15%)



80% agree they are able to achieve their best work (up 12%)

Only two elements received a satisfaction score of less than 65% for this group.



55% satisfied with personal storage (down 3%)



47% satisfied with post and delivery management (no change)

PDRA experience

Feedback from PDRA's in Year 3 (based on 33 responses, down 18) has remained consistent with previous years with the exception of more significant changes around lighting and ventilation.

➔ **53% agree they are able to achieve their best work (down 1%)**

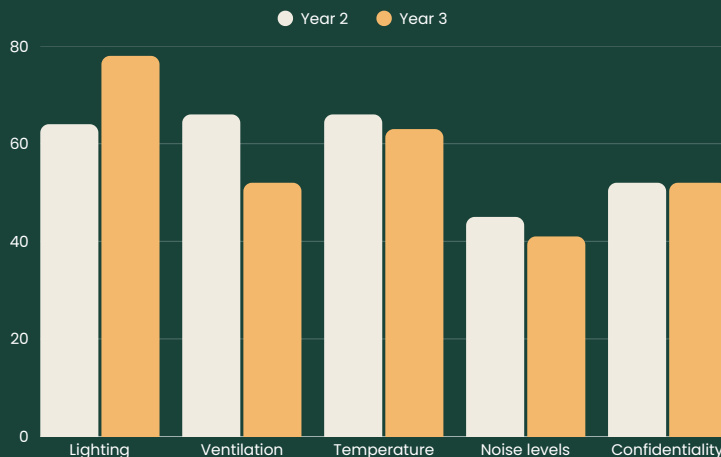


Figure 4: PDRA Year 2 and Year 3 feedback comparison

Technical Operations colleague experience

Technical Operations colleagues reported notable improvements in satisfaction between Year 1 and Year 2 and increased further in Year 3 (based on 49 responses, down 18).

➔ **61% satisfied with office lighting (up 9%)**

➔ **63% satisfied with temperature (up 4%)**

➔ **63% satisfied with ventilation (up 2%)**

⬆ **67% agree they are able to achieve their best work (up 8%)**

Only satisfaction with confidentiality fell this year (down 9% to 40% satisfaction).

PGR experience

Postgraduate researchers continued to report a positive experience across almost all elements (based on 117 responses, down 69 from Year 2), with a number of elements reaching peaks in Year 3.

⬆ **87% satisfied with lighting (up 14%)**

⬆ **76% satisfied with comfort of desk set-up (up 4%)**

➔ **63% satisfied with temperature (down 3%)**

⬆ **76% agree they are able to achieve their best work (up 7%)**

Only two areas received less than 62% satisfaction and showed no change from Year 2.

➔ **46% satisfied with noise levels**

➔ **57% satisfied with confidentiality**

Building facilities

Workspace facilities

Informal meeting spaces (73%)

Social spaces (70%)

Meeting rooms (68%)

Kitchens (61%)

Wellbeing facilities

Showers and changing facilities (69%)

Active travel hub (68%)

Multi-faith space (67%)

Welfare rooms (56%)

Access to spaces



75% of respondents reported they could access meeting rooms 'Always' or 'Most of the time' (no change from Year 2)



75% of respondents they could access space for collaborative work 'Always' or 'Most of the time' (up 3% from Year 2)



52% of respondents they could access space for quiet concentration 'Always' or 'Most of the time' (up 4% from Year 2)

Collaboration and community



Collaboration

Across all staff groups, agreement that the workspace supports collaboration rose to an all-time high of 57% in Year 3. This was highest for PS staff (up 26% to 72% agreement) and PGRs (up 11% to 67% agreement) and lowest for academic colleagues based in shared offices (down 3% to 21% agreement).

Community

Across all staff groups, agreement that the workspace has feelings of community rose 1% but remained low at 45%. This was highest for PGRs (no change at 56%) and academics based in open plan (up 14% to 52% agreement) and lowest for academics in shared offices (down 6% to 11% agreement).

Teaching and learning

Quality of teaching facilities

Feedback around traditional taught spaces remained high across Year 1 and Year 2 data but recorded drops in satisfaction in Year 3 (based on 103 responses, down 38).

Lecture theatres		77% 'Excellent' or 'Good' (down 3%)
Blended lecture theatres		54% 'Excellent' or 'Good' (down 15%)
Small meet and teach rooms		54% 'Excellent' or 'Good' (down 13%)
Large meet and teach rooms		62% 'Excellent' or 'Good' (down 10%)
Teaching clusters		44% 'Excellent' or 'Good' (down 6%)

Feedback around practical spaces also recorded drops this year.

Workshops		77% 'Excellent' or 'Good' (down 3%)
Blended lecture theatres		54% 'Excellent' or 'Good' (down 15%)
Small meet and teach rooms		54% 'Excellent' or 'Good' (down 13%)

Meeting with students

83 academics (down 42) reported on their ability to find spaces to meet with students for different types of meetings.

Pre-arranged meeting		57% 'Always' or 'Most of the time' (down 18% from Year 2)
Ad-hoc meetings		42% 'Always' or 'Most of the time' (down 2% from Year 2)
Confidential or sensitive meetings		43% 'Always' or 'Most of the time' (down 5% from Year 2)
Meeting distressed or upset students		38% 'Always' or 'Most of the time' (down 6% from Year 2)

When asked to rate their overall experience meeting with students, 43% rated their experience 'Excellent' or 'Very good' (down 9% from Year 2). This rose to 74% for academic colleagues who has been teaching for 2 years or less, compared to 35% for those who had taught with the University for five years or more.

Research and technical spaces

Facilities, equipment and processes

Research colleagues' satisfaction with their laboratories and day-to-day processes remained generally high in Year 3 (based on 133 responses, down 79).

Usability of equipment (86%)

Health and safety provision (81%)

Access to equipment (75%)

Laboratory functionality (68%)

Technical induction (68%)

Waste management (62%)

Stores processes (61%)

Laboratory storage (52%)

67% agreed they are able to achieve their best work in their laboratory space 'Always' or 'Most of the time' (up 1%) with almost all staff groups reaching peak agreement in Year 3.



Academics
53% (up 4%)



PDRAs
83% (up 7%)



PGRs
72% (down 3%)



Tech Ops
72% (up 4%)

Impact of facilities on research

When asked to consider what, if any, impact the move to the new facilities was having across a number of elements, when comparing their experience in new facilities and North Campus technical spaces, responses remained mixed.

Impact on quality of research

33% more positive experience (down 5%)

Impact on levels of interdisciplinary collaboration

35% more positive experience (up 1%)

Impact on forming of networks and communities

39% more positive experience (up 1%)

Impact on ability to maintain confidentiality

24% more positive experience (down 3%)



Next steps

Over two thirds of colleagues who took part reported a consistently positive experience and we have seen improvements in satisfaction in a number of key areas – security, support provision, quality of workspace and research facilities.

There are areas where further action is needed however, particularly in improving the academic experience and feelings of community.

Shared office experience

In line with the wider sector and changing working patterns, we believe the decision to shift to shared and more flexible workspaces was the right one, but ensuring colleagues can achieve their best work is a priority.

That is why, in late 2026, we will begin to pilot new approaches and solutions in a small number of shared offices. Working within set parameters, we aim to identify ways the shared office experience can be improved.

Improving community and discipline-specific identity

We are proud of the work that goes on here and want colleagues to feel they work in an environment which celebrates our history, successes and aspirations for the future.

To address this, new display solutions will be delivered across workspace and public areas over the coming months. This will include cabinets to showcase historic and contemporary items, poster displays to share achievements and a new visual installation in the event space to celebrate our past, present and future. All of this work will be community-led and owned, to create a stronger sense of place and identity here.

Moving forwards

At a time of significant pressure across the sector and with competing demands for investment across the University, we must be pragmatic about how we respond to challenges. Physical structural change is not within our gift to deliver, and we should be looking to practical local arrangements to make the best use of our facilities and foster more positive ways of working.

Beyond this evaluation, we will be continuing to monitor emergent themes at a Departmental and cross-building level and encourage colleagues to continue to feed back ideas, suggestions and thoughts via your School Operations teams or our Service Delivery Team.

Catherine Grills, Executive Director of Faculty Operations
Peter Green, Deputy Dean of FSE