

Student accommodation, culture or cringe?

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Intended or not, student accommodation reflects and shapes culture. Culture is the learned behaviour of a group of people. It can be shaped by spatial arrangements, objects and aesthetics, things that comprise a student residence. The significant impact of accommodation on overall student experience is rarely mapped out. Warren and Mahoney have developed a method for eliciting desired culture and behaviours in the briefing stages, but just as importantly, we deploy a Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE) survey in order to understand the outcomes of our projects. The POE tool is an online student survey, so our findings reflect the student's own point of view. The survey also measures experiences outside student accommodation, to pick up on broader student experience and expectations.

In this talk Warren and Mahoney will share methods in eliciting the cultural requirements of student accommodation and then share the post occupancy evaluation technique and results. This will be explained through three case studies.

The 2015 Papua New Guinea University Student Accommodation won the PNG Institute of Architects Best Overall Project last year. It began life as accommodation for the 2015 Pacific Games and seamlessly transitioned into campus digs. Art, colour, and indigenous architectural patterning were introduced into the planning. Understanding the behavioural implications of gathering places, shade canopies, the structural concept of the apex heavily guided the design. Our post occupancy evaluation examines their impact on behaviour.

In 2014 the Carlaw Campus of The University of Auckland opened and picked up several Multi-Unit Residential awards. This 668-bed provides for a range of spaces across the public to private spectrum. It is also designed on a gradient from the urbane (one side of the site is a proposed central transport hub) to the natural (Auckland Domain on the other side). The planning has manifested a micro community due to the multiple experiences offered by the site. This is tested through the POE.

University Hall, also at The University of Auckland, was conceived as a 'home for learning' in 2012. Our POE explores the effectiveness to living inside one of the 442 prefabricated bedrooms. We compare the experience of a factory finished interior with the typical interior construction methods, and what the cultural implications might be.

Our findings show a link between focusing on culture in the briefing stages with outcomes that more closely align to desired behaviours. The results can inform the design of future student accommodation projects.