

Press release

05 September 2003

Topping Out of Imperial College Faculty Building

Today saw the topping out ceremony for the Imperial College Faculty Building, Foster and Partners fourth building on Imperial Colleges South Kensington campus. The four-storey building, which will be completed in April 2004, brings together the Colleges key administrative staff for the first time under one roof. The scheme also forms part of a wider masterplan to improve the environment of Dalby Court and to rationalise circulation through the heart of the campus.

The building sits at the south side of Dalby Court, a small site bordered on all four sides by existing 1950s and 1960s college buildings. The existing deck has been extended to hide the service road, plant area and electricity sub station below. A gently rising ramp cuts diagonally through the building, creating a dramatic view of the Queens Tower and a much-needed shortcut through the campus, and negotiating the 5-metre level change.

The building houses four levels of office accommodation, a combination of open-plan spaces around the central core and cellular offices at the buildings periphery. The two basement levels provide parking spaces for 30 cars and secure storage for 600 bicycles, satisfying the requirement for the entire campus.

The cladding, consisting of a seemingly random distribution of opaque panels in three shades of blue, chosen by the Danish artist Per Arnoldi, responds to the path of the sun and the buildings shading requirements. Blood-orange coloured columns, along the diagonal line of the ramp, are also visible through the blue-tinted glass vision panels, further animating the facade and enlivening Dalby Court.

Amongst the buildings green credentials is the composite of recycled timber and plastic used to surface the new deck. Much of the buildings heating demand will be supplied by waste heat from the Central Heat and Power Plant, which is housed beneath the new deck and serves the entire campus. Chilled beams mounted on the exposed concrete ceilings provide efficient cooling and are housed in a bespoke ceiling element that consolidates air distribution, lighting, motion and smoke detectors, fire alarms and acoustic absorption.

Credits

Client
Imperial College

Architects
Foster and Partners
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Warrington Fire Research

Acoustic Engineering
Sandy Brown Associates

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Facts and Figures

Location:
Dalby Court, South Kensington Campus, London SW7

Area:
Approx. 4,000 m² office space

Appointment:
September 2001

Construction:
February 2003 April 2004 (expected)

Floors:
6 total (ground floor car park, mezzanine level bicycle park, 4 floors office accommodation)

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Parking:

600 secure bicycle parking spaces on the Mezzanine level. 30 car parking spaces on the ground floor

Cladding (Offices):

Blue glass vision panels with opaque glass insulation panels back painted in three different blues; the colours were specially mixed by Per Arnoldi

Ramp:

An 80m long ramp cuts through the building and links an existing raised walkway (also at the entrance level of office accommodation), to ground level, approximately 5m below.

The ramp makes a direct connection to the Queens Lawn, linking the new main entrance (a feature of the Tanaka Business School, also under construction) and the Queens Tower, which is the architectural symbol and heart of the South Kensington campus. The ramp thus becomes a key circulation route for the entire campus.

The ramp is a glossy black steel box with integral lighting and handrail for its entire length, its surface in grey composite timber planks.

Two rows of columns sitting either side of the ramp within the building will be painted blood orange, a colour chosen by Per Arnoldi, to complement the blue glass facade.

Deck:

The building is sited on a former car park and above the campus central heat and power plant. Linking the building to the existing raised walkway is a new lightweight deck, which spans over a service road and plant area.

The proposed deck doubles the existing Dalby Court walkway area to approximately 2500m², and its surface is grey composite timber planks made of recycled timber and plastic.

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