

Press release

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New centre for the advanced study of the social sciences opens at Oxford University

On 4 November the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford - officially opened the university's new Centre for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences. Working closely with the faculty involved, this Foster-designed building exemplifies the studio's approach to creating architecture that enables current teaching methods and anticipates future trends. By uniting all the social science faculties under a single roof for the first time, the building encourages the interdisciplinary interaction that is central to the university's stated objectives for the Centre.

The recently completed Phase II is the planned extension of Phase I, which was finished in 1998, and it completes the overall four-storey building, tripling its original floor area. The majority of the floor-space is open-plan accommodation, with a flexible office system of self-supporting partitions, which can be easily reconfigured to allow teams to share research and work together on joint projects. Phase II augments the Centre's scholastic program by providing a number of shared communal facilities, including a library, seminar rooms, lecture theatres, common areas, and a canteen, which overlooks the Mill Stream. Circulation is organised around a large, naturally top-lit, central atrium that is the social focus of the building.

Phase II continues the architectural vocabulary and refined material palette that were established in Phase I, ensuring the building is read as a continuous entity. The principal

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facades follow the interior grid and are clad in pre-cast concrete panels, with alternate clear and opaque infill panels and parallel opening vents that allow occupants to regulate natural ventilation. The in-situ concrete work refers to the contemporary vernacular of the Oxford campus, established by such prominent works as Sir Leslie Martin's St Cross Building (1962) and Arne Jacobson's St Catherine's College (1964). The massing of the completed building reiterates the scale of the St Cross Building, and the colouring and 'natural' finish of the concrete also compliment the natural sandstone of Oxford's historic buildings. A comprehensive landscaping strategy was employed to further blend the Centre for Advanced Studies with Oxford's famous campus.

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