How to write a business case

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A practical guide to writing a business case

- Some background
- Focus on building projects but applicable to other projects
- Key steps and considerations
- Some interaction will be required!

Background

- Joined University of Warwick in November 2022

- Previously Director of Library Services and Arts Strategy at University of Southampton (1999-2022)

- Previously Director of Information Services (converged service) at University of Chichester

- SCONUL board member and Chair of Technology and Markets Strategy Group

- RLUK board member
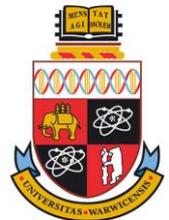
Business Cases

- **New build library**

- **Refurbished library**

- New technology

- Replacement technology

- Increased staff resource

- Organisational change

- Basic principles apply

1. How to get started

- Understand the governance route – the committees or means by which a decision will be made, likely to be multiple stages and different stages are likely go to different committees/decision makers

- Find the right templates for each stage of approval (there is likely to be more than one)

  - **Stage 1: pre-concept paper, statement of need, initial qualification assessment or…**
  - **Stage 2: concept paper, options appraisal or…**
  - **Stage 3: business case**

- Start talking/referencing – socialisation is key (more to follow on this)

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2. Begin with why

"People don't buy *in to* what you do, they buy *in to* why you do it." Simon Sinek

- In order to write a case you need to understand the problem

- Find the 'why' before even thinking about the 'what'

- Problems and Benefits

- Issues and Opportunities

- Link to **your** University strategy, wider sector developments, feedback

- Create a vision – when you are finished what will it look like – needs to be concise and clear – your elevator pitch

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Q: What business case are you thinking about – what's your pitch?

3. Understand your audience

What is important to your university?

- League tables / Ranking

- Student Experience

- Research Impact

- Community / Regional engagement

- Innovation / Enterprise

- Value for money / Invest to save

- Future plans (growth / diversification / apprenticeships etc)

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4. Where's your evidence?

- Benchmarking (who is in your competitor 'basket'?), what are they doing, what impact has it had?

- League tables can you suggest a link that can act as a 'lever' e.g. NSS

- Narrative **and** data : qualitative and quantitative

- Visuals – think hard about the presentation (and what goes in the appendix)

Summary of some HEI library developments in last 10 years (coloured cells are buildings which include library space)

Institution	Date	Student FTE	Value £m	Increase area (sqm)	Increase study spaces	Sqm per student FTE ratio	FTE per study space	NSS % agree	Library building developments
Canterbury Christchurch	2009	13,094	30	12,000		0.83	12.25	86	New main library building
Leicester	2009	15,486	32		1,500	0.82	7.97	89	Refurbishment and extension
Manchester	2014	37,277	24	5,500	1,000	1.10	8.64	89	Refurbishment to create learning commons
Oxford Brookes	2014	14,930	83	24,320 (library 9,393)		0.63	13.31	88	New library building that links student services and other buildings across campus
Leeds	2015	32,524	26 + 27.5	6,278 (Laidlaw)	200 + 1,000	0.88	6.79	93	Refurbishment of Edward Boyle library and new Laidlaw library
Birmingham	2016	31,392	60	17,000	1,800	0.79	6.31	86	New main library building
Nottingham	2016	30,991	19	7,200		0.82	6.39	89	Refurbishment and expansion of library for engineering and sciences
Kent	2017	18,411	27	5,400		1.25	7.68	87	Refurbishment
Roehampton	2017	10,605	35	6,708	1,200	0.74	8.84	88	New main library building
Royal Holloway	2017	9,789	42	10,000		0.64	7.83	86	Refurbishment and expansion
Northampton	2018	9,955	45	22,000 (library 7,365)		0.74	8.15	81	New library building that links student services and teaching areas
Reading	2019	15,670	40			0.61	N/A	70	Final phase of refurbishment
UCL	2019	34,780	67.4	5,765	1,000	0.65	7.90	86	New student centre
Liverpool John Moores	2020	20,370	100	36,000 (which includes library)		0.76	10.65	92	Refurbishment of libraries and new study spaces in student centre
Bristol	2023/24	23,936	100	14,000	2,000	0.71	5.82	87	New main library building
Warwick		23,112				0.82	6.89	86	
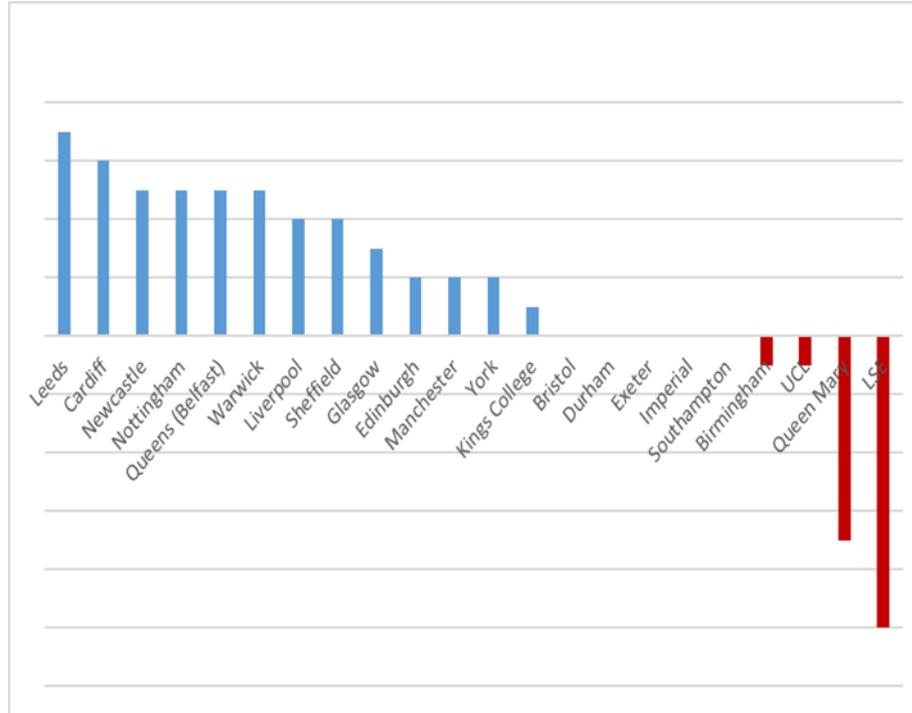
NSS score: We are currently performing towards the bottom of our comparator group

NSS score vs study space provision - SCONUL data from 2017/18
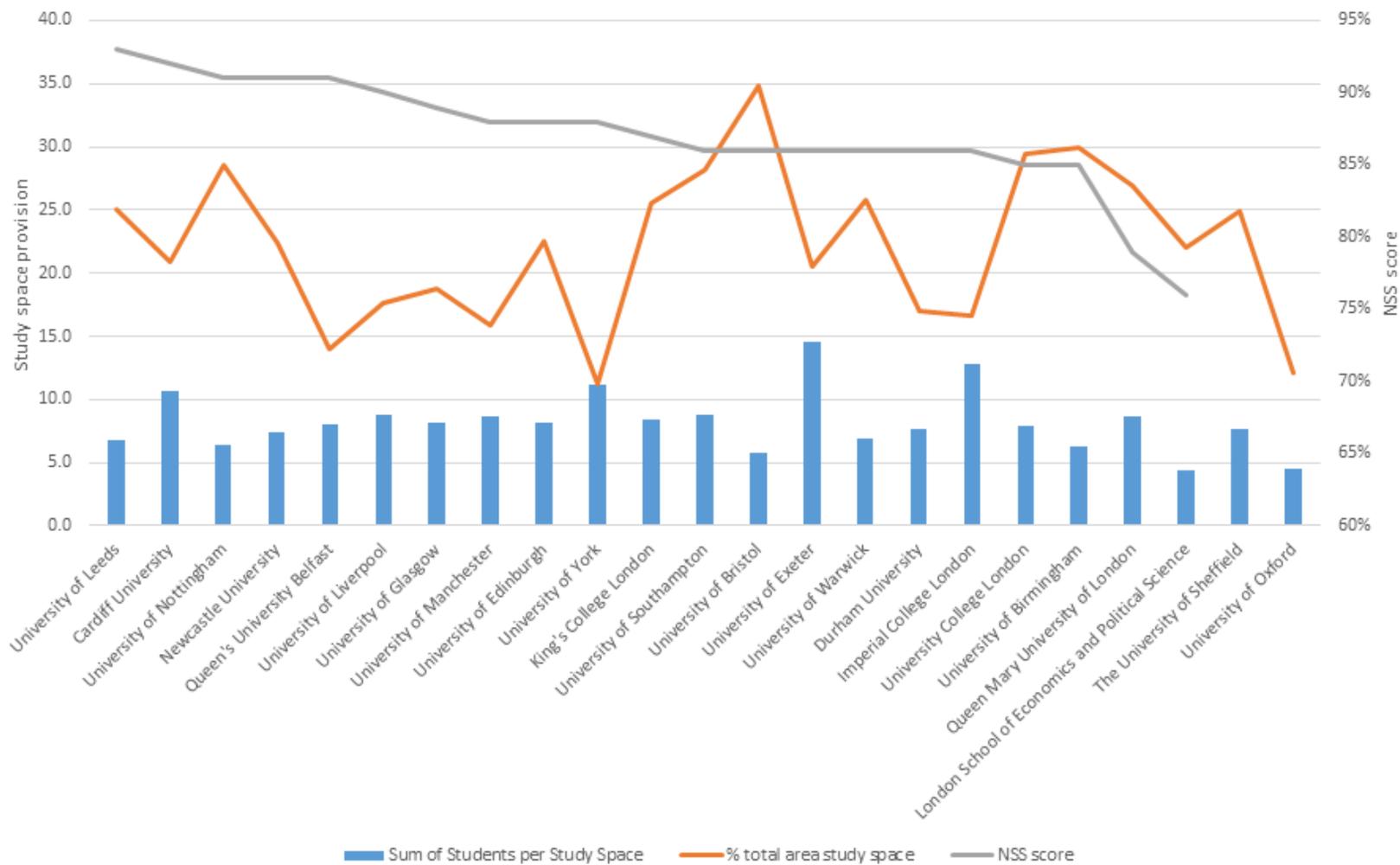
As a Humanities student, I also do not feel as valued by the university as Science or Medical students seem to, despite paying the same amount of fees to the university

The humanities need better study spaces. Currently the desks are too cluttered and equipment (ie docking stations and screens) often need to be reassembled in order to work. The desk chairs are not ergonomic at all. PhD students really need a proper place to work, we really need our own desks

Hartley Library Refurbishment		
Review of Options		
	Option 1	**Option 2**
Description of requirement	**Full refurbishment**	**New build**
Compliance with Library brief	(green)	(green)
Location: In Heart of Campus	(green)	(red)
Programme complexity	(red)	(green)
Costs	£50M (green)	£75-80M (red)
Disruption levels	(red)	(green)
Need for decant solutions	(red)	(green)
Maintenance of Hartley completed	(green)	(red)
Building services upgraded	(green)	(red)
Ventilation to modern standard	(green)	(green)
Environmental impact	(green)	(red)
Natural lighting provided	(red)	(green)
Legacy building to repurpose	(green)	(red)
Logistics	(red)	(green)
Ability to increase learning spaces	(green)	(green)
Compliant fire strategy	(green)	(green)

- **University of Bristol Library**

- New library on brownfield site

- £100m

- 14,000 sqm

- 2,000 study spaces

- 2 x galleries, coffee shop, staff space, teaching space

- Old arts and social science building will be converted to 1000 study spaces

- Senate House converted to create 550 study spaces

- Supporting wellbeing - 'carefully designed areas will provide a sense of relaxation and support'

- Inspirational - architecture will inspire; spaces that create opportunities for intellectual pursuit
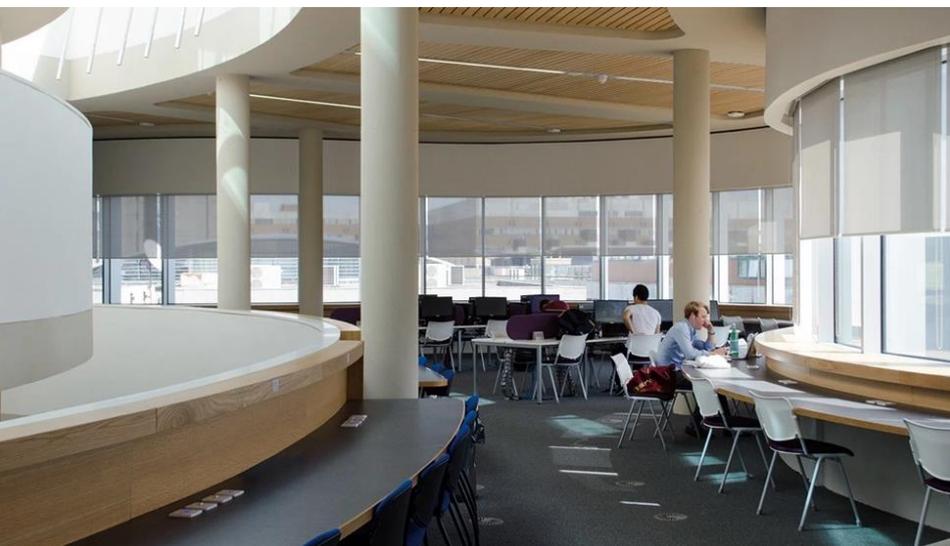
- **University of Nottingham – George Green extension (engineering and science)**
- - £19m
- - 7,200 sqm
- - 2016
- - refurbishment and extension
- - group learning spaces have doubled in building
- - combined with social hub at ground floor
- - Planning a new building for Jubilee campus and keen to collaborate

5. How to build support

- No case can be submitted cold

- Socialise the need and build support before writing anything down

- Business case will need to evidence engagement with stakeholders

Q: Who are your advocates and influencers?

6. Start writing

Think about your audience

- Compelling argument – start with why

- Objective facts and data – evidence

- Powerful visuals

- Headings and bullet points

- Options appraisal – be careful!

- Appendices for the data lovers

- Executive Summary and recommendations

7. About the money

- Think in stages – what's the first ask? Small sums to do options appraisal / feasibility

- Set up costs – additional admin support / project manager

- Work with colleagues (estates/finance)

- Pre-marketing testing (procurement)

- IT costs / time (internal charging)

- Don't forget the VAT

8. What happens next

The business case has been agreed, but how do you move from theory to practice?

- Steering group of key stakeholders (who you will already have engaged with)

- Project Manager + Project Board = Project Delivery

- Communication and engagement plan

- The process will dictate e.g. standard process

- Don't forget your internal stakeholders – your own team!

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Thank you and Good Luck!
Questions and comments

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