The University of Bristol acknowledges that space is an expensive resource, second only to personnel costs in the University’s revenue accounts. The University recognises that the effective management of space is necessary to ensure that the total amount of space available within the estate is of optimum size, well located, fit for purpose and in sound condition. To this end, the space policy sets out the overriding principles upon which space in the University is intended to be managed. It will be supported by a series of detailed statements, backed by robust data and informed by space utilisation studies.

In setting out this policy, the University would wish to follow a programme of planned reduction in its total space portfolio over the period from 2010 to 2016. Detail will be provided in the estates strategy where specific targets will be set out.

1. It is accepted as a core principle of space policy that all space belongs to the University, rather than to individual academic or administrative departments. The University, through Policy and Resources Committee (UPARC) the Capital Investment Programme Board (CIPB) and the Estates Office, will manage space to obtain the optimal pattern of usage.

2. The University’s land and property assets will be managed and maintained by the Estates Office, which will be responsible for all purchase, disposal and leasing transactions. This includes responsibility for all lettings of University space to third parties.

3. The University’s estate strategy will play a key role in determining the total amount of space required, looking ahead over a period of five to ten years. The estate strategy will also be the principal tool for determining optimal location, type of space required and provision of policies to ensure that all retained space is well maintained and fit for purpose. The strategy will be subject to consultation across the University community.
4. The estate strategy should look carefully at the balance of space needed on the Central Precinct in Bristol, at Langford and on other outlying sites. The Strategy should work to ensure that each zone of the Precinct and each other major site is properly provided with the necessary range of space types to enable the full array of University activities within that zone to be properly housed. The distribution of space should reflect the need to build and maintain cohesive academic communities. An example would be the adequate distribution of central teaching space within appropriate distance from departmental bases.

5. The University will seek to establish a range of space standards which would inform all future new build and refurbishment projects and aid in the process of establishing best fit for all academic and support departments.

6. The Estates Office on behalf of the University will undertake a series of space audits, using external consultancy where necessary and approved by CIPB, to review existing space allocations and help in preparing short and long term models for the more effective use or allocation of space. Detailed proposals for space audits will be developed and agreed on an annual basis.

7. The University will produce a cost model for the Estate which will ensure that there is a close fit between the amount of space owned and the financial capacity required to support it. The output of this exercise will inform the University’s requirements for allocating capital and revenue funding to support the Estate.

8. All requests for additional or new space emanating from any area of the University will be considered by the Estates Office, with reference to CIBP where necessary. The Estates Office will be responsible for creating and maintaining robust data on all University space and also for keeping records on vacant or underutilised space that might be better redeployed elsewhere, to help inform the process.

9. Where space audits and the establishment of space standards point to a surplus of space in any given area, the Estates Office and the occupying departments will work to establish a mutually agreeable plan for the release of space that could realistically be assigned to other occupiers or that could be released from the Estate. CIPB will take an overview of all major projects of this nature.

10. The Estates Office has begun a process of validation and improvement of all of its descriptive and spatial records across all University sites. The Estates Office
will work with all building occupiers to ensure that accurate data is held on space occupation, which is checked annually for accuracy.

11. The University will operate on the principle that all dedicated teaching spaces will be centrally timetabled and centrally managed. A detailed migration plan from the partial model currently in operation will be agreed.

In spatial planning at the University of Bristol, it needs to be acknowledged that the Bristol estate has characteristics that are not common to the HE sector overall. These include a preponderance of smaller buildings, a significant proportion (over 20%) of the estate being listed as of historical and architectural interest and the majority of the estate being located within a number of conservation areas both in Bristol and at Langford. These characteristics impose constraints on space modelling. While we will seek to reduce the overall size of the estate, it is recognised that its overall characteristic will not change substantially in 10 years. Indeed, the undoubted attractiveness and location of our estate makes a positive contribution to the popularity of the University. The University will therefore seek to find innovative ways of overcoming these constraints to make best use of its iconic property portfolio.

Patrick Finch
Sue Somerset
July 2010