



University of the
Built Environment
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Honorary Community newsletter



Welcome to University of the Built Environment's latest update to our Honorary Awards community – the institution's Honorary and Associate Fellows, Honorary Degree recipients, Built Environment Award (formerly known as the Property Award) winners and current/former Trustees – our community of loyal and supportive friends. This festive edition brings you up to speed on all things University of the Built Environment this winter and as ever, we welcome your feedback and comments so we can continue to evolve the newsletter and better support the community. Thank you for your ongoing support of the institution – we wish you all a healthy and happy festive season and a very happy New Year from all the staff here at the University!



Ashley
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Jane
Deputy Vice Chancellor and
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University of the Built Environment update

What a year 2025 has been for the University – words such as momentous and memorable sit right alongside busy and exhausting! As we approach the end of the year, it is incredibly timely to reflect on all that has happened.



All the guests at the Hong Kong University name launch event

University Title

We were thrilled to recently launch the name change to University of the Built Environment in our Hong Kong operations, holding an official launch event there on 22 October 2025. The event brought together leading figures from across the built environment sector with around 200 guests from industry, academic and professional bodies and Stephen Bartle, Pro Vice Chancellor Commercial, gave the keynote address. In this speech he invited all our partners in the region to not just celebrate with us but to join us in this new chapter and work together to shape the future of Hong Kong, Macau and the wider region. Professor Ling Kar Kan SBS, Chairman of the Hong Kong Housing Society and an Associate Fellow of the University, was the guest speaker. We also presented two Honorary Fellowships to Mr Andrew Keung and Mr Dick Kwok and an Associate Fellowship to Mr Marcelino Wong. The sense of community and ambition during the evening was palpable and we thank everyone who was involved in making it such a memorable occasion.



New Honorary Community members – Marcelino Wong, Dick Kwok and Andrew Keung – with the University's Trustee Professor Nick Braisby



The successful validation team for the MSc Renewable Energy and AI

Growth and Accreditation

The University has taken great strides forward in its growth ambitions with continued new product development for further new programmes to be launched in 2026 and 2027. In addition to our new architecture provision secured through the merger with the London School of Architecture earlier this year, we have also approved and validated various other new programmes:

- Level 6 Design, Construction and Management (Degree) Apprenticeship approved for delivery from September 2026
- MSc Renewable Energy and AI approved for delivery from September 2027 (also including a Postgraduate Diploma in Renewable Energy and AI and a Postgraduate Certificate in Renewable Energy and AI)

We have also successfully recredited our existing programmes with the Chartered Association of Building Engineers (CABE) up to 2030 with some exceptional feedback complimenting our exemplary quality of documentation and robust course enhancement processes. We are now gearing up for reaccreditation with the CIOB in early 2026.

The University Board of Trustees

We were saddened to announce in September that Peter McCrea OBE had stepped down from his role as Chair of the Board of Trustees. We thank him sincerely for his service to the institution and are delighted that he will remain on the Board as an Independent Trustee. We announced that Ros



Kerslake CBE has kindly agreed to become Chair of the Board, until a new Chair is appointed through a recruitment process which we anticipate taking place throughout early 2026. We are also delighted to welcome Professor Michelle Jones into the role of Vice Chair to support Ros through her period as Chair in 2026. Michelle has been an Independent Trustee since 2022 and away from the University is the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Provost of Plymouth Marjon University.

Institutional Update

In other news:

- We were delighted to achieve an overall positivity score of 81% in the National Student Survey of student satisfaction, meeting or exceeding the benchmark for most themes within the survey. Although this was very marginally down on last year, it is still a score that reflects the commitment and contributions of all staff in making this institution a destination of choice for students of the built environment disciplines.
- Earlier this year, we also launched a new Student Support System which seamlessly transitioned into operation and provides a much-enhanced user experience for both students and staff.
- We have once again succeeded in beating our new student recruitment targets for the autumn semester, which very much bucks the trend in a higher education sector under immense financial challenges at the current time.
- We successfully secured provider status for modular provision under the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) which gives us increased potential and flexibility for how we evolve our provision over the coming years.
- We successfully passed our two-day external audit to retain the ISO140001 accreditation standard for Environmental Management at our Horizons office building in August.

And finally...

We are delighted to congratulate both Jane and Ashley on some recent accolades they have received. Ashley was awarded a CABE Honorary Fellowship back in May and an Institute of Construction Management Honorary Fellowship in November. Jane Fawkes was listed on the 50 Leading Lights list 2025 for Kindness and Leadership from **Kindnessrules** and as the many reactions to this on LinkedIn will testify, it's a most apt award to a most deserving recipient!

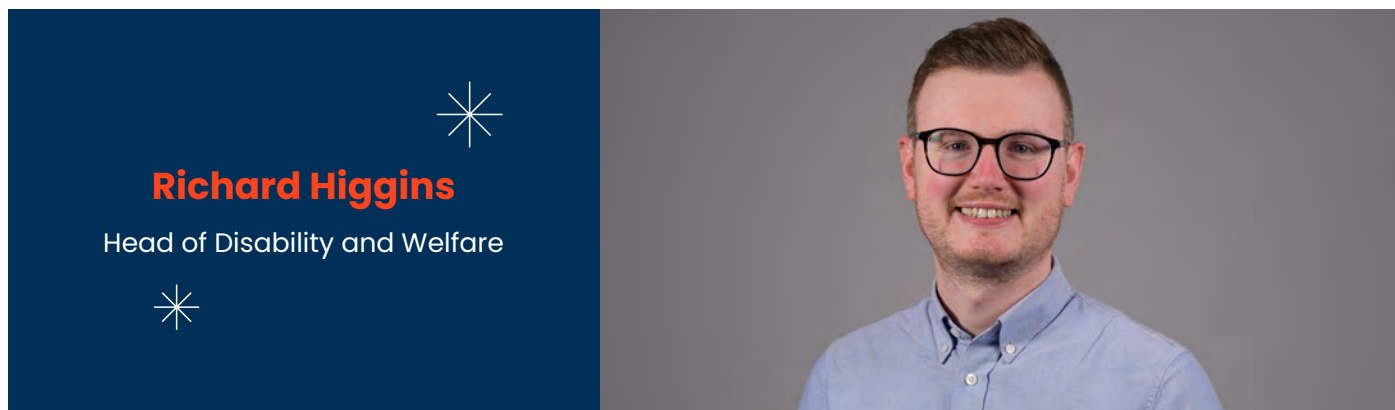


Ashley being awarded his CABE honorary Fellowship



Jane Fawkes with her fellow Kindness and Leadership nominees (middle row, centre)

Meet the University's team



Richard Higgins

Head of Disability and Welfare

Richard heads up the Disability and Welfare Team at the University and is responsible for ensuring all our students receive whatever support they need in order to be successful in their studies with us.

What is your role at University of the Built Environment?

I am the Head of Disability and Welfare at the University. I lead a team that is passionate about supporting students to navigate any challenges they are experiencing. The team's work covers two main areas: Disability Support and Safeguarding and Welfare. Whether a student is contacting the team about reasonable adjustments for a disability, they are stressed at work, or are experiencing a serious safeguarding issue they will receive holistic student-centred support from the team to help them achieve their goals.

How long have you worked for the University?

I have worked at the University for coming up to 10 years.

How did you come to be in this role and why did you join the institution?

When I joined the University as an administrator in 2016, I knew I wanted to be in a role that worked with people and could make a tangible difference. I never expected that I would be here nearly 10 years later but have been provided with some

great opportunities to develop and progress my career.

What is your favourite part of your job and what motivates you every day?

We work with students who are experiencing some of the most challenging circumstances, hearing about their lives, their goals, and their will to succeed is incredibly motivating. My work now has less direct contact with students, but I still enjoy supporting the Team to develop their skills and to provide students with the best possible service.

What is your greatest professional achievement at the University so far?

Probably growing the service into what it is today. When I joined there was one advisor and an administrator working with approximately 150 disabled students. We now have around 700 disabled students supported by a team of 3 advisors and an administrator. We also have a dedicated Safeguarding and Welfare Team that can support students with a wide range of different issues that regularly receives great feedback from students.



What do you find challenging about your work?

Both the best and most challenging part of working in Disability and Welfare is working with people. You never know what circumstances will be shared with the team and you need to be able to react quickly, calmly, and empathetically to whatever it may be. Setting boundaries and not taking on too much is always difficult, but the team provide each other with fantastic support to help each other balance the demands of the role.

What's one thing that has surprised you about working for the University?

The drive to improve, and grow, and to be the best at what it does. When I talk to colleagues working across the sector I am always amazed by how ambitious and positive the University is at a time that is so challenging for the sector.

What's next for you /your team at University of the Built Environment?

We are always looking to improve and to develop the service. We have recently invested in some assistive technology licences we will be sharing with students and will be supporting our students to utilise these. We will be looking at ways we can build self-advocacy into our service to support students to have ownership of their own support. We will also look at how we share good practice and develop the skills of the wider organisation in addressing disability and welfare-related needs.

What three words sum up the University for you?

Ambitious, Supportive, Progressive.

Tell us a surprising or fun fact about you!

Prior to working at the university, I used to lead wine tastings. It would always amuse me how much more ambitious guests got with their descriptions the later in the tasting we got!

The University online

Catch up on these key stories and events if you missed them



Built Environment Award Luncheon

9 October 2025

We were delighted to award this year's Built Environment Award (formerly the Property Award) to Samantha McClary, CEO of the British Council for Officer. Alongside this we presented the Alumni Award to Sarah Hayford and the Student Academic Excellence Award to William Norton.

[Read more about the awards luncheon >](#)



Samer Bagaeen as next RTPI VP

University of the Built Environment's Professor Samer Bagaeen, Head of School of Town Planning, will be the next Vice President of the RTPI after a period as an RTPI Trustee. He is a passionate advocate for transformative planning.

[Read more about Samer Bagaeen >](#)



Launch of the Built Environment Futures Assembly

The University launched a new forum designed to break down silos and foster collaboration across the sector.

[Read about Built Environment Futures Assembly >](#)



New Head of School appointed

The London School of Architecture

The University appointed critically acclaimed architect and academic Lee Ivett as its new Head of School at London School of Architecture. Lee started in post in November 2025 and will champion an inclusive and innovative approach.

[Read the LSA article >](#)

For other news articles from the University, see [whats-happening/news](#)

For other interesting and thought provoking articles on built environment themes, such as climate change and the future of architecture, see our content corner at [Articles - University of the Built Environment\(ube.ac.uk\)](#).

Getting to know the Honorary Community



Richard receiving his Honorary Fellowship in 2025 with the then Chair of the Board, Peter McCrea OBE

Richard Kauntze BSc (Hons)

How were you connected to University of the Built Environment?

I first came across the University (or the College of Estate Management, as it was then) in 1999 when I was appointed as Chief Executive of the British Council for Offices (BCO). The BCO was born out of the College in 1990, and the College provided the initial secretariat support. That continued for my first few months (when I was based in Reading) before I relocated the BCO to London as the next step in its development.

What are you doing now?

I stood down as Chief Executive in the Spring of 2025 (twenty-five years at the helm felt long enough!). More seriously, it was a very difficult decision (I have a great affection for the organisation) but it was time for a change, and I was delighted to be able to step away with the BCO being in rude health. Notionally, I have retired, but it feels more like a sabbatical. We will see.

What's the biggest challenge you faced in your career?

There have been quite a few, but the Covid pandemic tops the list. From a commercial perspective, the business came under huge stress when physical events (which provided a very big proportion of the BCO's income) disappeared. This was most starkly illustrated by the (first postponement to 2021, and then cancellation in 2022) of our planned conference in Toronto in 2020. Coupled with this, there was, of course, almost endless comment that 'nobody will want an office anymore' (which I always maintained was complete nonsense). Anyway, we remodelled the business (almost overnight) in the Spring of 2020, built an on-line events offer and, when the pandemic eased, worked to restore our physical events and our reserves.

What is your greatest professional achievement?

I have been very lucky to have had a wonderful career, starting at the RICS, and then moving to the BPF, but turning the BCO into what it has become undoubtedly tops the list.

What is your best memory of the University?

If it's not cheating, I have two. First, the exceptionally kind and generous welcome I received from the late Peter Goodacre, then the Principal of the CEM, when I arrived in Reading in the Autumn of 1999. Secondly, I was thrilled to be awarded my Honorary Fellowship, presented to me by Ashley Wheaton, the Vice Chancellor of the University, at the summer graduation ceremony in 2025.

What three words sum up University of the Built Environment for you?

Excellence, Enthusiasm and Community.

If you could have done any other job for just one day, what would it have been?

A fighter pilot (ideally flying a F-14 Tomcat off an aircraft carrier!).

If you could meet anyone in the world, dead or alive who would it be and why?

John F Kennedy. A deeply flawed individual, in many ways, but of huge consequence, and a life cut tragically short which reads like a thriller. One of the most significant figures of the last century, never afraid to surround himself with the best - a sign of true leadership.

What is the first thing you would buy if you won the lottery?

An Aston Martin - irresistible!

Forthcoming occasions and events



Winter Graduation ceremonies

Thursday 29 and Friday 30 January 2026

Town Hall, Reading



Built Environment Apprenticeship Awards

12 February 2026

Central London



Honorary Community Luncheon 2026

To be confirmed

Central London – look out for invites to follow in January.



Built Environment Award Luncheon 2026

Thursday 8 October 2026

The Institute of Directors in Central London – save the date now, invites to follow in early summer.

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If you have any suggestions for the Honorary Community newsletter, or would like to contribute, please email Lyndsay Hughes at l.hughes@ube.ac.uk.