

PIAZZA LEARNING CENTRE, YORK  
3A COMPOSITES GmbH



With over 12,800 undergraduate and 4,000 postgraduate students, the University of York's parkland campus is on the outskirts of the city of York in the North of England.

The building, a joint venture between the University of York and Kaplan International Colleges, houses the University's International Pathway College which provides foundation courses for international students, to assist their transition onto the University's degree courses. Based at the heart of the campus, the facility provides an excellent opportunity for international students to integrate into campus life, alongside their academic study.

The new building includes a 350-seat auditorium, flexible learning spaces, a learning resource centre, 350 seat restaurant, administrative facilities for the International Pathway College and space for student societies and activities.

Situated within a picturesque lakeside setting, the Piazza Learning Centre is both sympathetic to the natural landscape while also being fully accessible to the University of York's student population. The new three-storey building was designed as crescent shape to wrap around a retained oak tree in the courtyard, located to the south of Langwith College on the University campus.



To give the building an aesthetically pleasing and sharp look, ALUCOBOND® PLUS terra Pyrite was used on the façade cladding, roof edges and fascia. ALUCOBOND® terra unites the typical crystalline surface and velvety feel found in natural stone with many of the advantages of ALUCOBOND® composite panels. Unlike most natural stone, ALUCOBOND® composite panels are both very thin and light, but offer at the same time a high level of flexural and tensile strength. Large format panels can be easily and accurately fabricated, processed, transported, installed, and, in addition, three-dimensionally shaped by using folding and roll bending techniques. Unlike many stone surfaces, ALUCOBOND® terra is also weather resistant and colour fast.

The superstructure of the main building is steel frame construction with overall lateral stability achieved by a combination of hidden vertical bracing. The floors to the teaching accommodation wings are precast concrete, designed to act compositely with the steel frame.



“We are thrilled to have completed our third scheme for the University of York, and our second for this client with Interserve,” said architect Dave Cottam. “Our design team worked closely with the University to develop the proposals, and the completed building is outstanding.”

Jon Greenwood, Director of Commercial Services at the University of York said, “The Piazza Building has offered our clients, staff and students a fantastic new space for integration, innovation and creativity. This building inspires activity by its very design; throughout the Piazza Building you can find breakout spaces designed specifically for engaging work while simultaneously offering a peaceful atmosphere to work in. After watching the construction work, it’s great to be so proud of the outcome. I’m looking forward to seeing what York Conferences’ clients think of the new venue”.

Project: Piazza Learning Centre  
Location: University of York, Heslington, York, UK  
Façade material: ALUCOBOND® PLUS terra Pyrite  
Construction system: Tray panels  
Building Owner: University of York  
Architects: Race Cottam / Interserve Construction Ltd  
Fabricator / Installer: AKV Architectural Facades Ltd / Chemplas Ltd  
Year of construction: 2017  
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