Student Center at London School of Economics
O’Donnell+Tuomey Architects

The brief was to bring student facilities together under one roof.
The main-functional building includes a venue, pubs, learning café, media, prayer, offices, gym, careers, dance studio and social spaces.
The site lies within the Strand Conservation Area. The context was complex and the site was restricted by surrounding building lines.
Specifications were closely monitored by Westminster planners, who supported the ambition for a contemporary design integra-
ed with its setting. Throughout the building process, the planners maintained a commitment to the enduring quality of carefully crafted construction.
The site is located at the knuckle joint convergence of narrow streets that characterise the LSE city centre campus. The faceted façade operates with respect to the Rights of Light Envelope and is tailored to lines of sight, to be viewed from street corner perspectives and to make visual connections between internal and external circulation. The brick skin is out along fold lines to form
large area of glazing, framing views. Analysis of the context has influenced the first principles of a site-specific architectural design. The building is designed to embody the dynamic character of a contemporary Student Center. The complex geometries of the site provided a starting point for a lively arrangement of irregular floor plates, each particular to its function. Space flows freely in plan and section, with stair turning to create meeting places at every level.

London is a city of bricks. The building is clad with bricks, with each brick offset from the next in an open work pattern, creating deepened daylight inside and glowing like a lattice lantern at night. The building has the robust adaptability of a lived-in warehouse, with solid wooden floors underfoot. The structure is a combination of reinforced concrete and steelwork. Steel exterior or ribbed concrete slats span the big spaces. Circular steel columns prop office floors between the large span volumes and punctuate the open floor plan of the café. Concrete ceilings contribute thermal mass with acoustical clouds suspended to soften the sound. There are no closed-in corridors, every hallway has daylight and views in at least one direction. Every office workspace has views to the outside world. The basement venue is daylight from creviced windows.

The building is designed with accessibility and inclusive design as key considerations. Approaches are step free. Floor plates are flat without steps. Circulation routes are open and legible with clearly identifiable way-finding. Services are located at consistent locations. The central wide stair was carefully designed to comply with standards and details agreed with the approved inspector.