

Centre for Student Life, Cardiff

Case Study

Project data

Project: Centre for Student Life, Cardiff University

Project outline: The new Centre for Student Life will offer students additional social study spaces, a 550-seat auditorium and quiet contemplation spaces.

Value: £50m

Architect: IBI Group and Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios

Main Contractor: BAM Construction

Subcontractor: Korbuild Ltd

Products: Knauf Curvex

Summary: Cardiff University is undergoing its biggest campus upgrade in a generation with a new Centre for Student Life at its heart. This iconic building uses Knauf Curvex to help bring the architect's vision to life. The Centre for Student Life will provide a focal point for the campus and a new home for student support services.





Centre for Student Life

Case Study March 2021

Knauf gets ahead of the curve at The Centre for Student Life, Cardiff University

The building features a 20 metre high atrium topped with four large roof lights. Separating each roof light is a seven metre long curved bulkhead. These bulkheads are key features in the atrium's design and are constructed using Knauf Curvex.



Knauf Curvex is a factory manufactured curved panel produced from 6mm thick gypsum board, and is used to form clean arcs or elliptical shapes.

A minimum of two boards is usually used with additional layers added for specific fire or acoustic requirements. The bulkheads in this project are made with five layers of boards.

The subcontractor on the project, Korbuild worked closely with Knauf and the architect, Antony Picton, IBI Group to achieve the vision for the Centre's atrium.

Neil Evans, Operations Director, Korbuild explains, "I have a good working relationship with Knauf and had used Curvex on previous projects so knew we would be able to find a solution when contacting Knauf. Using the architect's drawings, Knauf produced a design using Curvex to create the curved bulkheads the architect had envisioned.

"A lot of planning went into the final design as the Curvex had to be installed 20m in the air and access was difficult. Knauf allowed this by designing each bulkhead in three manageable sections, with a plan for fitting them together in situ."

The installation of the Knauf Curvex on site is underway with three of the four bulkheads now in place. The subcontractors used a bird cage scaffold with a platform three metres below the atrium's roof level to install the Curvex panels.





Knauf Curvex saves a lot of time and is easy to work with.

Paul Dyer, Construction Manager, Korbuild has been working with the panels on site. It's the first time he has used the product and he's been struck by how easy it's been to work with, and how much time has been saved by using the prefabricated curved panels.

He comments, "Usually we curve boards ourselves on site but the curve on this bulkhead design is so tight that even if we could have done it, it would have taken a very long time. Using Knauf Curvex has allowed us to bring the architect's design to life in a much easier way, saving us a lot of time on site in the process.

"I'm really impressed with Knauf Curvex. It's good quality and has been easy to work with from the moment it arrived on site. The installation has gone really well, and Knauf's design work really paid off as it's been straight forward to join the different sections together. I'd definitely recommend Curvex for any curved ceilings or walls."

The Centre for Student Life is due to be completed in 2021 and will offer students additional social study spaces, a 550-seat auditorium and quiet contemplation spaces.



Note: Images courtesy of Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios.



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