



NEWS RELEASE

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## **Designed to inspire change: the new Blavatnik School of Government building**

Specifically designed to support the School's mission of inspiring and promoting better government around the world, the Blavatnik School of Government's brand new building in Oxford provides a purpose-built home for a vibrant academic community.

Designed by Swiss-based architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron, the building has been hailed as a stunning new addition to Oxford's historic skyline, and most of all through its design represents the values of openness, collaboration and transparency that are key to the School's overall mission of improving public policy.

### **Ngairé Woods, Dean of the Blavatnik School of Government, says:**

"From the very beginning, we worked with the architects to ensure that our new home reflected our values. The building is designed to foster collaboration and interaction among students, faculty and guests. Research, teaching and engagement are made easier by the light, collaborative spaces that both inspire and enable conversations and connections. It is a welcoming home to students, academics and policy-makers from across the world who share our desire to improve government."

The building is developed from the inside: the forum, at the heart of the building, represents the values of openness, communication and transparency and brings all the levels together.

The forum's hollow also defines the exterior appearance of the School. The building's circular shape is akin to government buildings around the world and at the same time resonates with some of Oxford's most iconic buildings, such as the Radcliffe Camera and the Sheldonian Theatre.

### **Jacques Herzog, Herzog & de Meuron, says:**

"Oxford is an almost sacred territory for world class education in literally any of its many famous colleges. Its architectural heritage is equally impressive – apart from most of those buildings that have been added since modernity has taken command of its urban development. We saw the Blavatnik School of Government as an opportunity to connect back to the traditional building typologies, such as the interior courtyard and the stack of different volumes such as the circle and the horseshoe. These different volumes provide a

sense of scale and proportion and thus help integrate the building within its delicate historic context. The interior courtyard – so specific and unique in historic colleges – has become an internal forum inspired by parliamentary and governmental spaces. It is made to stimulate communication and informal exchange between students, scholars and visitors from all over the world.”

**Ascan Mergenthaler, Senior Partner at Herzog & de Meuron, says:**

“Together with the School we developed a diversity of spaces offering a multitude of settings and conditions for studying, learning, exchanging, teaching and working – ranging from private and acoustically sealed to open and casual – yet they all share the visual and physical connection to the central forum; this creates a sense of community and intimacy that is fundamental to a school of government.”

The detailing of the exterior of the building presents subtle nods to Oxford’s traditional architecture. For example, the slender vertical glass panels echo the proportions of the panelled frontage of the Bodleian Library’s Divinity School and the moulded frames in which the panels sit are an abstract version of the typical stone architraves found on many historic buildings around Oxford.

The Blavatnik School of Government is the newest department in the University of Oxford. It offers postgraduate programmes, including a Master of Public Policy and a Doctorate in Public Policy, and a suite of executive courses. Founded in 2010, it accepted the first students in 2012 and its global outlook means that 88 countries and territories in the world – from Haiti to Nepal, from China to Uganda – have been represented in the student body so far.

Students moved in last December, and the building has been in use since then, with an official opening event planned for Spring 2016.

The new building features two lecture theatres (respectively seating 160 and 80 people) flexible seminar rooms for teaching, and a range of working rooms, research and study areas. A café for student and staff use is located on the ground floor, and a terrace offering unique and stunning views of Oxford can be found on Level 4.

**Key facts and figures:**

- Construction started in September 2013; completed in November 2015
- Capacity to host up to more than 550 students, faculty, staff and guests
- The building has a first floor “window to the world”: at 10.5m x 3.2m, it is the largest double glazed single pane of glass in Europe

- Access to natural light and air everywhere in the building
- Supersedes guidelines for accessibility: 12 wheelchair users can be accommodated in the building at any one time
- The building is expected to consume 49% less energy in comparison to existing UK buildings of the same size and use.
- BREEAM Excellent (pending final certification); with A Rated Energy Performance
- The building is heated and cooled by a ground source heat pump system
- 107 photovoltaic panels
- 500m<sup>2</sup> green roof

**/Ends.**

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**Notes to editors**

**About the Blavatnik School of Government**

Founded at the University of Oxford in 2010, the Blavatnik School of Government exists to inspire and support better government and public policy around the world. We teach current and future public leaders through innovative programmes, conduct deep research into pressing issues facing policy makers around the world, and convene leaders and experts to foster better public policy. With a strong global outlook, we combine insights from a range of academic disciplines and derive lessons from the public, private and third sectors. The School was made possible through a £75 million donation to the University of Oxford by American philanthropist Leonard Blavatnik.

[www.bsg.ox.ac.uk](http://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk)

## **About Herzog & de Meuron**

Established in 1978 by Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, Herzog & de Meuron is now a partnership led by five Senior Partners – Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, Christine Binswanger, Ascan Mergenthaler and Stefan Marbach – with an international team of seven Partners, 40 Associates and about 380 collaborators. Herzog & de Meuron are working on projects across Europe, the Americas and Asia. The firm's main office is in Basel, Switzerland, with additional offices in Hamburg, London, Madrid, New York City, and Hong Kong. Herzog & de Meuron have designed a wide range of projects from the small scale of a private home to the large scale of urban design. While many of their projects are highly recognized public facilities, such as their stadiums and museums, they have also completed several distinguished private projects including apartment buildings, offices, and factories. The practice has been awarded numerous prizes including The Pritzker Architecture Prize (USA) in 2001, the RIBA Royal Gold Medal (UK) and the Praemium Imperiale (Japan), both in 2007. In 2014, Herzog & de Meuron were awarded the Mies Crown Hall Americas Prize (MCHAP).

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