



Case Study · Education & Research Signage

The Global Health Building

Sector

Education & Research

Discipline

Exterior, Interior &
Wayfinding

Materials

Built-up Letters, Acrylic,
Aluminium

Location

Old Road Campus,
Oxford

The Client.

xsign worked with main contractor Morgan Sindall Construction and Associated Architects to design, manufacture and install the complete signage package for the Global Health Building at the University of Oxford's Old Road Campus, one of the University's first Passivhaus buildings, bringing together the Centre for Global Health Research and Oxford Population Health.

The exterior scheme is led by aluminium built-up lettering fixed to the building's GRC rainscreen façade, giving the entrance a strong, understated identity. Internally, xsign supplied a coordinated family of wayfinding, directory, room and statutory signage, built around a restrained monochrome palette to complement the building's concrete, timber and glass interior.

Working closely with the project team, xsign delivered a scheme that balances clarity, durability and quiet good manners, with an interchangeable panel system that lets the wayfinding adapt as the research community inside the building grows and changes.



The Challenge.

The brief asked for signage that would feel as quiet and considered as the architecture: a minimal, near-monochrome interior of exposed concrete, warm timber and glass, where anything loud or generic would have jarred. The signage had to guide several hundred people through a new, multi-level building while almost disappearing into it.

The exterior identity posed the harder technical problem. The **THE GLOBAL HEALTH BUILDING** lettering had to sit on a GRC rainscreen cladding system, with panels hung on brackets and open 10mm joints between them. The sign was light enough to fix to the cladding itself rather than penetrate the airtight Passivhaus build-up behind it, so the challenge was one of precision: every fixing had to be set out to the panel grid so the aluminium spacers all sat at the correct length and the lettering read true across the façade.

Internally, a research building like this is constantly re-organised as departments, teams and room uses change. The wayfinding therefore could not be fixed and final; it had to be **updatable in place**, so that room names and directory listings could change over the building's life without replacing whole signs.



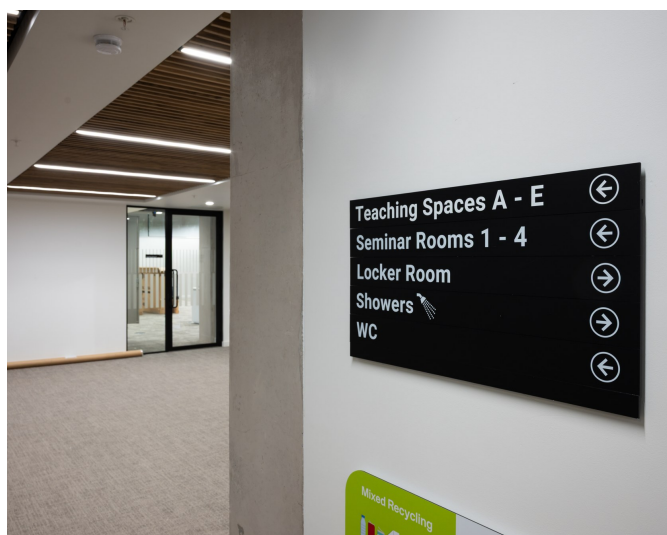
The Solution.

xsign delivered the scheme around a single, disciplined palette: black acrylic faces with high-polished edges, crisp white lettering set in **Roboto Bold**, and matt near-black built-up letters outside. Restraint does the heavy lifting; the signage reads clearly against concrete, timber and glass alike without ever competing with them.

Building identity. The entrance lettering is formed from aluminium built-up letters with 50mm deep returns, non-illuminated, carried on a bespoke aluminium fixing channel with welded end caps. The letters define the building by day and cast a clean shadow line across the pale cladding, giving the entrance real presence with no applied ornament.

Interior wayfinding. A coordinated family of signs runs throughout: floor directories, projecting and suspended directional signs, lift and stair directories, floor-level indicators, and pictogram door signs for WCs, showers, lockers and accessible facilities. Most are cut from 3mm acrylic with high-polished edges and reverse-detailed graphics; the suspended directional signs are double-sided and hang on hidden stainless steel rods dropped directly from the ceiling for a clean, floating line.

Built to be changed. Directories, directional signs and stair signs use the modular Jigsaw™ interchangeable panel system, with concealed lockable rails, while the office and seminar door signs use the frosted-acrylic Puzzle™ holder with a secure, swappable insert. Room names and listings can be updated in seconds, by hand, without tools or replacement, so the wayfinding keeps pace with a building designed to be re-configured.



The Installation.

Installation was sequenced around a live Passivhaus fit-out, with the interior signage set out to align precisely with the concrete, joinery, glazing and lighting already in place. The exterior lettering was the most demanding element: each letter was fixed to the GRC cladding on aluminium spacers, so the real care was in the setting-out. Every fixing position was marked precisely against the cladding panels so the spacers were all the correct length and the whole name sat flush and true across the façade.

The finished scheme gives the Global Health Building a confident, understated identity at the entrance and calm, legible navigation inside: signage that respects the architecture and the building's low-energy ambitions, and that can adapt as the research community within it grows and changes.

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“The signage had to be almost invisible, guiding people without ever competing with the concrete, timber and light. xsign understood that restraint completely, and solved the harder problem of fixing our identity to a Passivhaus façade without compromising it.”

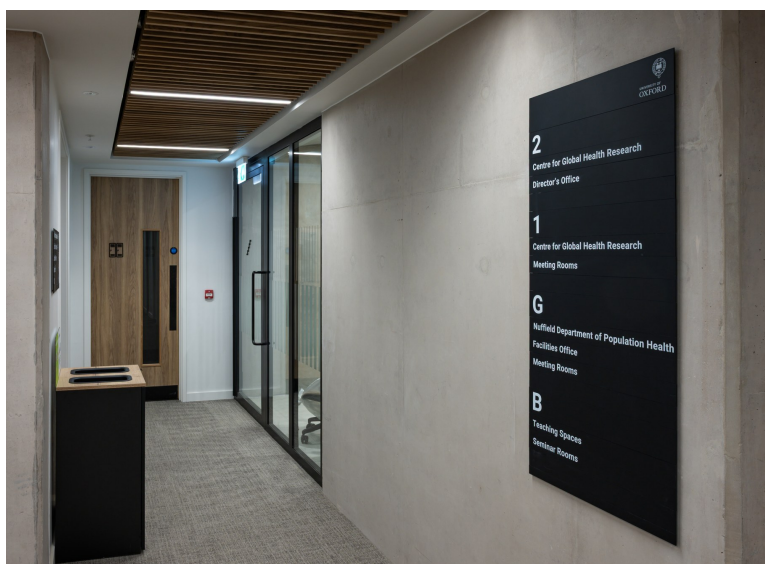
Project Architect, Associated Architects

Placeholder quote, replace or approve

Project Detail.



Aluminium built-up letters with 50mm deep returns spell out THE GLOBAL HEALTH BUILDING across the pale GRC cladding. Non-illuminated and finished in a deep matt near-black, the lettering is carried on a bespoke welded aluminium channel and casts a crisp shadow line that gives the entrance presence by day.



Floor directories are formed from black acrylic panels with high-polished edges and reverse-detailed white lettering in Roboto Bold. Mounted on exposed concrete, they read cleanly against the raw finish while keeping the palette calm and consistent.



Wall-mounted directional signs use a modular interchangeable panel system with concealed lockable rails, so destinations can be updated by hand as room uses change, with clear arrow-led wayfinding that keeps pace with a building designed to be re-configured.



Projecting office and seminar signs are double-sided for legibility along the glazed corridors. The frosted acrylic holders take a secure, swappable insert, allowing room names and numbers to be changed in seconds without replacing the sign.



Stencil-cut acrylic pictograms and built-up characters identify WCs, showers, lockers and stairs. Applied to timber and concrete throughout, they hold the same monochrome language across every sign type in the building.