THE RICS SKA RATING SCHEME IN HE

SUMMARY

The Ska Rating scheme has been developed by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) to assess the environmental impact of refurbishments (particularly small scale projects) and fitouts and is therefore complementary to BREEAM.

Most use to date has been for offices and retail but UCL and City University have used it on a number of projects and found it to be effective but also simple and low cost and therefore recommend it to other universities.

The Ska framework (which has 104 measures in its Office version) can be used for self-assessment without cost, but UCL and City have sent internal staff on RICS training courses to become accredited assessors. Neither has applied for Ska certification. Hence, staff time is the main expense for both.

Neither City nor UCL feel that Ska has added capital cost and both believe that it has encouraged operating savings. It can also be an effective means of educating suppliers on university requirements.

UCL is also piloting a ‘mini Ska’ checklist for very small scale refurbishments and a prototype ‘Ska-Labs’, with the latter being based on best practice guidance from S-Lab and a framework supplier.

There is scope for HE/education specific Ska measures, but these would require some funding for RICS.

INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the presentations (from RICS, City University and UCL) at an AUDE Sustainability Group discussion about RICS’s Ska Rating scheme held on 6/2/2013. It was organised with assistance from S-Lab, and included 12 university representatives. The meeting presentations can be viewed via the Past Presentations section of www.goodcampus.org.

1. WHAT IS SKA RATING?

Tim Robinson, RICS Director of Information Products, explained that Ska differs from BREEAM in that it does not address building shell or core issues but is solely focused on refurbishments and new or existing building fit outs. It therefore has similarities with the LEED Commercial Interiors scheme in the US and the proposed BREEAM Non-Domestic Refurbishment scheme in the UK. There are two Ska schemes, for Offices and Administrative spaces (with 104 measures) and Retail and Restaurant spaces (with 112), covering energy and carbon; materials; pollution; transport; waste; water and well being. Users select which measures are relevant to their project and can then achieve Gold (75% of relevant
measures achieved), Silver (50%) or Bronze (25%). To date over 3000 people have signed up to use it, 500 projects have been registered, 200 assessors have been trained, and 64 projects have been certified. City and UCL are the only universities to have done multiple Ska assessments but Liverpool is currently undertaking a pilot and others are interested.

Both Ska Office and Retail are freely available online at www.rics.org/ska and there is an interactive assessment tool https://ska-tool.rics.org so that it is possible to use the framework for internal self-assessment without any extra cost other than staff time. However, City and UCL have chosen to train staff as Ska Assessors. This requires two days of training – a one day face-to-face Ska Foundation course (£395 for RICS members, £495 for non-members) and follow-on online Office or Retail Assessor modules which are delivered online, have the same cost and take a day in total (including an exam). RICS charges £250+ (depending on project scale) if users want certification. Neither City nor UCL has gone for certification to date but UCL is planning to make this routine in future. Some commercial organisations have paid consultancies to undertake their Ska assessments for them. RICS believes that the scheme leads to many benefits, e.g. Nationwide Building Society has reduced electricity consumption by 40% in refurbished branches that have used Ska.

2. UCL

Beverley Cook, Sustainability Advisor at University College, London explained that UCL has applied or is applying Ska Office to 10 refurbishments, and is also using tailored ‘mini Ska’ checklists for 7 other projects, and a prototype ‘Ska-Labs’ for a laboratory refurbishment. It currently has four trained Ska Assessors, although currently only 2 are actively involved with projects. The time costs of a full Ska are estimated at:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ska session</th>
<th>No of hours</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial scoping meeting</td>
<td>12 (6 x 2)</td>
<td>Full design team + Ska Assessor (QS, Mech, Elec, Architect, PM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interim review</td>
<td>6 (6 x 1)</td>
<td>Full design team + SA (Sustainability Advisor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-tender review</td>
<td>9 (6 x 1.5)</td>
<td>Full design team + SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sourcing of Ska compliant materials (approx.)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Architect, M&amp;E &amp; Environment team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handover scoping</td>
<td>7.5 (5 x 1.5)</td>
<td>PM, SA &amp; build team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-tender review</td>
<td>6 (4 x 1.5)</td>
<td>SA, M&amp;E &amp; Architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desk top audit design</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplier management for Ska compliant materials (approx.)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Contractor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desk top audit handover</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site audit/interim review</td>
<td>4 (2 x 2)</td>
<td>SA &amp; contractor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total hours 86.5 hours**
UCL has also developed ‘mini Ska’ for small scale projects such as corridor or single room refurbishments or engineering maintenance works. Mini-Ska involves scoping the project activities from 18 topics chosen from the broader Ska menu, including lighting efficiency; provision of a sub-meter; materials specification; waste handling; water saving; daylighting and commissioning. All ‘mini Skas’ are handled by the project manager, rather than that Sustainability Advisor (as is the case with full Skas).

The prototype ‘Ska-Labs’ has 34 criteria covering fume cupboards and extract; ducting and air handling units; ventilation settings; equipment heat loads; lighting and building air tightness and insulation. It is currently being piloted in a Physics lab refurbishment. The criteria are being taken from S-Lab best practice guidance, and work by a UCL M&E supplier, Couch Perry Wilkes.

The lessons learned include:

- The need to be pragmatic as some targeted measures will always be lost – which is also an argument for aiming high at the start through a standard requirement for Gold.
- The importance of discussing Ska requirements with full design & construction teams at an early stage – this helps to achieve buy in and ownership, and also as a means of educating framework suppliers.
- The need for interim reviews to ensure that projects are on track.
- Design teams tend to embrace the challenge and welcome clarity on sustainability requirements.
- The need to influence suppliers so that product development takes account of Ska compliance – a process that may take 1-2 years but can provide ongoing benefits to the industry.

In conclusion, Beverley felt that Ska was very useful for its simplicity and structured approach (‘very black and white’); low cost; ability to engage design teams; facilitation of tracking and ownership of key issues; and provision of data to demonstrate that UCL is meeting its sustainability requirements. There has been no extra project cost, and it should save money in many cases, e.g. the pilot Ska highlighted the potential for thermostatic valves on radiators and these have now been routine for all refurbishments. The challenges are that there is potential to focus on ‘easy points’ and ignoring difficult ones, once the gateway measures are achieved; the need to make informed trade-offs; the potential for demotivation in areas that are consistently difficult to achieve, e.g. obtaining 100% FSC certified timber for some purposes; and possible extension of lead times for procurement and related programme risk.
3. CITY UNIVERSITY

Jason Clarke, City University’s Energy and Environment Manager, explained that environmental improvement is achieved through an a BREEAM Excellent requirement for new build, ISO14001 system, energy standards for projects, an annual Sustainability Report and Carbon Management Plan, and (unusually) having a 2:1 or better in the People & Planet Green League as a KPI. There are also planning requirements for its £14.6m Northampton Square redevelopment, which includes numerous individual refurbishments and Cat B projects. These are tightly scheduled to avoid disrupting teaching and so there was a risk of environmental performance being sacrificed, e.g. by not considering future requirements, non energy issues or because project value was too low for mechanisms such as Site Waste Management Plans. Ska Office has provided ideal as a quick, light touch but effective method of avoiding this (on 4 refurbishments and 1 Cat B fit out to date). It is supported by:

- A standardised sustainability register (a live document containing construction and operational objectives, targets and expected measures for each identified environmental assessment) and
- A project specific briefing (which identifies all relevant environmental aspects and the internal or external requirements for them).

Jason has an initial meeting with the project design team to explain the requirements and they have generally welcomed its simplicity and clarity. The target in all cases is Ska Gold. City have had some issues with certification of the projects and so are currently using Ska as a self-assessment tool. This could change if an HE specific scheme was developed.

4. DISCUSSION POINTS

The default Ska ordering of criteria on the online tool does not match the way that issues are discussed with project teams, meaning that the same criteria can be discussed several times in different contexts – UCL has rejigged the Ska format to deal with this.

There is potential to develop a HE specific Ska scheme – this would be based on offices but could include extra criteria for labs, lecture theatres, libraries and other HE-specific criteria. However, RICS would require (modest) funding to develop this and is actively seeking development partners including funding bodies, education associations, consultancies and contractors.

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