

18 August 2016

New Department Head Announced – Professor Asif Sohail Usmani

Professor Asif Sohail Usmani
Professor and Head
Department of Building Services Engineering



The Department of Building Services Engineering (BSE) celebrates the announcement that Professor Asif Sohail Usmani has been appointed the new Head of BSE, starting in mid-August 2016.

Prior to joining The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), Professor Usmani was Head of the Division of Civil Engineering at Brunel University London, UK. Before that, he was Head of the Research Institute for Infrastructure and Environment and Professor of Structural Engineering and Computational Mechanics at the University of Edinburgh, UK.

Following a first degree in Civil Engineering, a master's degree in Structural Engineering at Stanford University, USA, and four years of structural engineering design and construction in Saudi Arabia, Professor Usmani decided to pursue a research career. He developed finite element codes for the simulation of foundry casting processes at Swansea University, UK, for modelling of molten metal flow, heat transfer and solidification. His multidisciplinary background led him to develop structural fire safety engineering research at the University of Edinburgh following his appointment as Lecturer in 1995 and establish Edinburgh as an internationally leading research centre in this field.

His research focused on understanding the thermo-mechanical behaviour of structures in real fires using computational methods validated with experiments. Key achievements include: providing fresh insights to understand non-intuitive structural behaviour observed in fire; explaining the collapse of World Trade Centre Twin Towers; developing open-source software OpenSees for modelling structures in fire including multi-hazard response simulation. His research output consists of over 200 peer reviewed publications resulting from research funding in excess of seven million pounds sterling. This work will continue at PolyU with a renewed focus on real fires in tall buildings and resilience of communities in dense urban environments such as Hong Kong.