

Physical Teaching Space Standards

Section 1 - Background Information

(1) ACU recognises that effective teaching and learning spaces play an important role in students' achievement of learning outcomes.

(2) ACU recognises that students need to:

- a. think critically and reflectively;
- b. work both autonomously and collaboratively; and
- c. locate, organise, analyse, synthesise and evaluate information.

This is best achieved in an environment that will foster student-centred activities, collaboration and effective communication and will encourage creative problem solving and social networking.

(3) Physical Teaching Space Standards are guided by the [Learning and Teaching Policy](#).

Section 2 - Standards Statement

(4) ACU Physical Teaching Space Standards provides guidelines in the design and construction of new and refurbished teaching spaces across all areas of the University.

(5) ACU strives to promote a range of learning and teaching spaces to suit a variety of learning and teaching approaches; to ensure that academics and students who are using learning and teaching spaces can make effective use of them.

(6) These standards are to be used in conjunction with the [Facilities Planning, Design and Management Policy](#) and the [Work, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#).

Section 3 - Standards Purpose

(7) The purpose of these standards is to ensure that teaching staff and students of ACU have access to high quality and appropriately equipped learning environments across all campuses.

Section 4 - Application of Standards

(8) These standards apply to University-wide learning and teaching spaces, including learning spaces in all Faculties.

(9) It is a requirement that University-wide learning and teaching spaces, including technology standards will comply with the minimum standards provided in this document.

Section 5 - Principles

(10) At ACU all learning and teaching spaces should:

- a. be flexible to incorporate a range of uses including the adaptability to repurpose for future uses;
- b. have technology to support the relevant teaching functions with consistent user controls;
- c. have Wi-Fi availability for multiple student BYOD (Bring Your Own Devices);
- d. Be sized appropriately for the proposed use and required capacity of the room;
- e. have comfortable and flexible furniture appropriate for the use of the space;
- f. ensure sustainable use of resources and environmental conservation best practices;
- g. have appropriate lighting, temperature and air-flow control;
- h. comply with minimum line-of-sight guidelines (see Section 10 - Appendix 1);
- i. have consistent wall and floor finishes including appropriate writable and projection surfaces;
- j. have consistent room access provisions (i.e. lock cylinders or swipe card access);
- k. incorporate adjoining informal learning spaces to facilitate interaction and the impromptu formation of small learning groups;
- l. have wayfinding signage; and
- m. comply with accessibility requirements.

(11) All flat-floored spaces should be:

- a. correctly sized rooms allowing sufficient space for the lecturer to move around while interacting with students when room is at full capacity.

(12) The general ambience of formal and informal spaces should be of a comfortable and welcoming environment, which encourages a positive response from staff and students. Wherever possible, they should include natural light.

Section 6 - Technology in Learning and Teaching Spaces

(13) The technology in Learning and Teaching Spaces is specified in the [Audio Visual Standards](#). The Chief Information and Digital Officer is responsible for producing and maintaining the [Audio Visual Standards](#) in collaboration with Properties and Facilities, Campus Deans, Faculties and the Centre for Education and Innovation.

Section 7 - Learning and Teaching Physical Standards

(14) The University-wide learning and teaching physical spaces will be categorised into four groups:

- a. Tiered spaces;
- b. Flat-floor spaces;
- c. Specialised spaces; and
- d. Informal spaces.

Sub-categories of these groups will incorporate both minimum and ideal standards.

Part A - Tiered Spaces

(15) Tiered spaces (>100 students) are designed to support didactic approaches to teaching for large student cohorts, but flexible enough to accommodate a variety of different learning and teaching approaches.

Minimum Standards

(16) Physical:

- a. upholstered fixed seating with benches or tablet seats (ensure there are sufficient left-hand tablet tables);
- b. wheelchair access and seating room;
- c. writable surfaces;
- d. block-out blinds (where windows are present);
- e. heating ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC);
- f. lighting and acoustic treatment;
- g. signage;
- h. associated breakout space; and
- i. appropriate branding and religious icons.

Optional Standards:

(17) Mobile seats that allow interactive approaches to learning and teaching, improving engagement and attention.

(18) Two way benches and chairs that swivel around allowing opportunities to collaborate discuss and do project work.

(19) Harvard Style, U-shaped theatres to support student-student interactions.

Part B - Flat-floor Space

Large Learning Spaces

(20) In large learning spaces (>45 students), rooms can be configured to cater for traditional instructor-led lectures and discussions while integrating the ability to focus on group work and collaboration.

Minimum Standards

(21) Physical

- a. rooms allowing sufficient space for the lecturer to move around while interacting with students when room is at full capacity;
- b. comfortable, movable chairs and desks / tables - tablet chairs should be avoided as this discourages any form of learning other than a didactic lecture;
- c. wheelchair access and seating room, adjustable height table;
- d. writable surfaces;
- e. block-out blinds (where windows are present);
- f. heating ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC);
- g. lighting and acoustic treatment;
- h. signage;
- i. associated breakout space; and
- j. appropriate branding and religious icons.

Standard Learning Spaces

(22) Standard learning spaces (<45 students) are designed to support team teaching, active learning activities, case-study, group-based and project based learning.

(23) The ability to lecture is still there, but the furniture and setup will encourage and support students' group activities and collaboration. The use of movable furniture allows for flexibility in the creation of small or large groups of study.

Minimum Standards

(24) Physical:

- a. rooms allowing sufficient space for the lecturer to move around while interacting with students when room is at full capacity;
- b. every participant should be able to see every other participant in the room;
- c. comfortable, movable chairs and desks / tables - tablet chairs should be avoided as this discourages any form of learning other than a didactic lecture;
- d. wheelchair access and seating room, adjustable height table;
- e. writable surfaces;
- f. block-out blinds (where windows are present);
- g. heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC);
- h. lighting and acoustic treatment;
- i. signage; and
- j. appropriate branding and religious icons.

Active Learning Spaces

(25) Active learning spaces (<45 students) are designed to provide an environment focussed primarily on team work and collaboration. Students can work together intensively. They might share work and resources with each other via the flat-screen monitors and white boards provided at each table, and co-create documentation through collaborative software.

Minimum Standards

(26) Physical:

- a. rooms allowing sufficient space for the lecturer to move around while interacting with students when room is at full capacity;
- b. every participant should be able to see every other participant in the room;
- c. comfortable, movable chairs and table for 5-6 students (preferable irregular and round shapes tables);
- d. mobile whiteboard or writable wall adjacent to table;
- e. wheelchair access and seating room, adjustable height table;
- f. projection screens;
- g. writable surfaces;
- h. heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC);
- i. access control;
- j. signage;
- k. block-out blinds (where windows are present); and
- l. appropriate branding and religious icons.

Part C - Specialised Learning Spaces

(27) ACU recognises the existence of a variety of specialised learning spaces University-wide. Each space should contain the minimum technology suite and should adhere to the principles of all learning and teaching spaces.

(28) Experts in the specialised learning space areas must be engaged in the design and updating of these learning spaces at the start of the project. Section 11 – Appendix 1 of these Standards describes considerations that need to be taken into account when designing and updating specialised learning spaces.

Part D - Informal Learning Spaces

(29) Informal learning space areas should be developed to encourage break-out group work, and to allow spontaneous and planned student work outside of the standard teaching areas. Such spaces might include:

- a. tables and chairs with access to power, Wi-Fi and whiteboards;
- b. informal coffee table settings or equivalent;
- c. soft, comfortable furnishings;
- d. stand up milling space; and
- e. furnished eddy spaces to give the perception of private space.

(30) Away from the formal learning spaces, a variety of areas, such as corridors, cafeterias, entrances and outdoor areas should be developed to allow individual or group work and discussion. Comfortable tables and chairs and access to Wi-Fi and power are important. Ideally research work, local events, student work, art and notices are displayed on the walls.

(31) Informal learning spaces should provide a friendly atmosphere allowing students to feel comfortable meeting with their peers, enhancing their wellbeing, sense of community and belonging.

(32) Informal learning spaces will have a variety of sizes depending on the availability of designated areas.

(33) Informal learning spaces, when possible, will have small kitchenette facilities to enable students to make coffee and heat food during break sessions.

(34) Rubbish and recycling facilities need to be provided to ensure learning spaces remain clean and uncluttered.

Group Study Spaces

(35) Group study spaces (<8 students) should provide an environment focussed primarily on team work and collaboration, where students can work together intensively, outside of the classroom environment.

(36) Physical:

- a. moveable chairs and table for 2-8 students;
- b. mobile whiteboard or writable wall adjacent to table;
- c. wheelchair access and seating room, adjustable height table Physical Teaching Space Standards;
- d. signage; and
- e. block-out blinds (where windows are present).

Outdoor Learning Spaces

(37) Outdoor learning spaces should be equipped with Wi-Fi technology and safe outdoor power points where possible.

Section 8 - Compliance Issues and Special Requirements

(38) ACU places a high priority on full compliance with the following Acts:

- a. [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#);
- b. [Australian Human Rights Commission Guidelines](#); and
- c. [Safe Work Australia Act 2008 \(Cth\)](#).

(39) ACU provides an accessible learning environment for all students, as required in the [Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(Cth\)](#) and the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#).

(40) Suggested design solutions of the University-wide learning and teaching environment should comply with the minimum standards written in this document.

(41) Some suggested design solutions that go beyond the minimum include:

- a. instructor and student work stations designed to accommodate persons with disabilities but which are similar in function and appearance to conventional workstations;
- b. adjustable-height marker boards that can be raised so they can be easily seen from the rear of the room;
- c. projectors and screens designed to allow computer-generated media to be easily seen;
- d. audio systems that allow both the presented material and student responses to be clearly understood in all parts of the room, supplemented by portable amplifiers for students with unusual hearing problems.

Section 9 - Standards Review

(42) These Standards will be formally reviewed annually.

Section 10 - Appendix 1: Considerations in Specialised Spaces

(43) A number of standards exist for specialised spaces at ACU. It is essential that experts in the academic field are engaged from the beginning when planning for upgrading or building specialised spaces begins.

(44) Principles to be taken into account are:

- a. must ensure professional and accreditation body requirements are met;
- b. must adhere to ACU Standards where possible;
- c. must confirm consistency across campuses where relevant;
- d. must adhere to Campus Infrastructure development procedures.

(45) People and teams who should be consulted during the process include:

- a. Academic experts;
- b. Campus Deans;
- c. Infrastructure;
- d. Properties and Facilities;

- e. Planning and Sustainability;
- f. Information Technology;
- g. Centre for Education and Innovation (CEI);
- h. Academic representatives;
- i. Student representatives.

Section 11 - Associated Information

(46) For related legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines and any supporting resources, please refer to the Associated Information tab.

Status and Details

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Effective Date	26th November 2024
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Responsible Executive	Tania Broadley Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)
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