Purpose

The purpose of this document is to:

- act as a guiding reference for the design of UNSW learning environments
- ensure that future investment in learning environments supports and aligns with UNSW 2025 Strategy
- be inclusive and accessible to multiple audiences

Background

As part of the UNSW 2025 Strategy, UNSW is committed to providing an exemplary education for every student.

This will involve delivering physical and virtual learning environments that are aligned to pedagogical, staff and student needs, and that are supported by the effective use of current technologies. These learning environments include the scheduled classroom and student-directed spaces for learning, and the use of integrated technologies that enhance the learning experience.

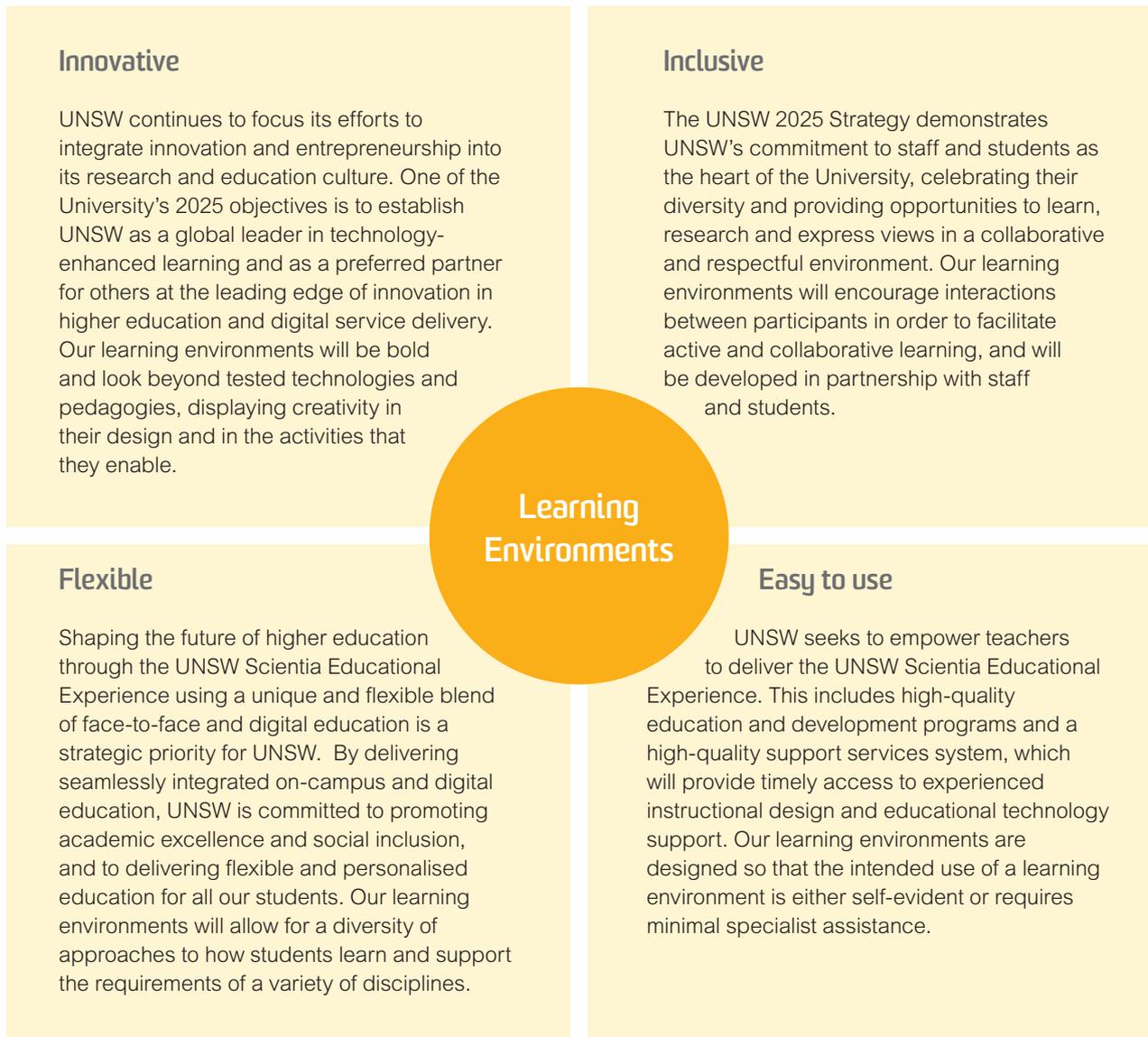In 2014, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) sponsored the Learning Spaces Project to:

- identify and categorise a set of high level requirements for learning and teaching spaces and support services at the University, as identified by students and staff collectively through extensive consultation
- provide a set of recommendations that draw upon those requirements and other examples of contemporary practice, and also align with the aspirations of UNSW 2025 Strategy Our Strategic Priorities and Themes (UNSW 2025)

For information on this project please see https://www.learningenvironments.unsw.edu.au/content/lsproject

Based on the information gathered in the Project, and refined through focus groups with academic and professional staff of the University, a series of design principles that respond to the physical and virtual learning and teaching needs at UNSW have now been developed.

Design Principles for Learning Environments at UNSW

The Principles ensure that stakeholders from across the University have a shared view of, and common language to describe, the requirements for effective learning environment design. The Principles have been grouped according to four key themes, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Innovative

UNSW continues to focus its efforts to integrate innovation and entrepreneurship into its research and education culture. One of the University's 2025 objectives is to establish UNSW as a global leader in technology-enhanced learning and as a preferred partner for others at the leading edge of innovation in higher education and digital service delivery. Our learning environments will be bold and look beyond tested technologies and pedagogies, displaying creativity in their design and in the activities that they enable.

Inclusive

The UNSW 2025 Strategy demonstrates UNSW's commitment to staff and students as the heart of the University, celebrating their diversity and providing opportunities to learn, research and express views in a collaborative and respectful environment. Our learning environments will encourage interactions between participants in order to facilitate active and collaborative learning, and will be developed in partnership with staff and students.

Learning Environments

Flexible

Shaping the future of higher education through the UNSW Scientia Educational Experience using a unique and flexible blend of face-to-face and digital education is a strategic priority for UNSW. By delivering seamlessly integrated on-campus and digital education, UNSW is committed to promoting academic excellence and social inclusion, and to delivering flexible and personalised education for all our students. Our learning environments will allow for a diversity of approaches to how students learn and support the requirements of a variety of disciplines.

Easy to use

UNSW seeks to empower teachers to deliver the UNSW Scientia Educational Experience. This includes high-quality education and development programs and a high-quality support services system, which will provide timely access to experienced instructional design and educational technology support. Our learning environments are designed so that the intended use of a learning environment is either self-evident or requires minimal specialist assistance.

Each design theme and principle is underpinned by:

- **Sustainability** – all learning environments and relevant support services should be created and maintained in a way that is financially, environmentally and socially responsible

- **Standards** – all learning environments should be regularly monitored and maintained to align with standards

- **Performance** – all learning environments should be evaluated regularly to assess patterns of usage, user satisfaction, and other goals relating to efficiency and learning outcomes; this information will be used to make informed decisions regarding future initiatives

THEME 1: INNOVATIVE

Key words: creativity, bold, experimentation, risk-taking

Principle 1:   Learning environments should aim, as simply and cost effectively as possible, to provide maximum opportunities for creative and innovative teaching and learning practices.

Principle 2:   Learning environments should be designed to give users maximum control of the environment to facilitate and encourage experimentation and risk-taking.

THEME 2: INCLUSIVE

Key words: people, diversity, interactive, collaborative, respectful

Principle 3:   Learning environments should encourage interactions between participants to facilitate active and collaborative learning.

Principle 4:   Learning environments should be co-designed to recognise and facilitate diversity of learning styles and abilities and difference in teaching approaches and discipline requirements.

Principle 5:   Learning environments should be designed to maximise all students' use of, and sense of connection with, formal and informal, virtual and physical learning and teaching spaces across the University.

THEME 3: FLEXIBLE

Key words: unique, personalised, changing

Principle 6:   Learning environments should support and serve a range of different activities and functions, forming an integrated portfolio of learning and teaching services, technologies and spaces across the University.

Principle 7:   Learning environments should be designed for flexibility and equipped to encourage multi-modal delivery and a blended learning experience.

THEME 4: EASY TO USE

Key words: empower, support services, access, self-evident use

Principle 8:   Learning environments should enable easy visibility, access and use by all students and staff.

Principle 9:   Learning environments should provide simple, consistent interfaces and technologies, together with clear and consistent guides for their use.