

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 the 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 support the UNSW Scientia Education Model and that are designed in partnership with students and staff. These learning environments include the scheduled classroom, student-led learning spaces and the use of integrated technologies that enhance the learning experience.

In 2015, 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)

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

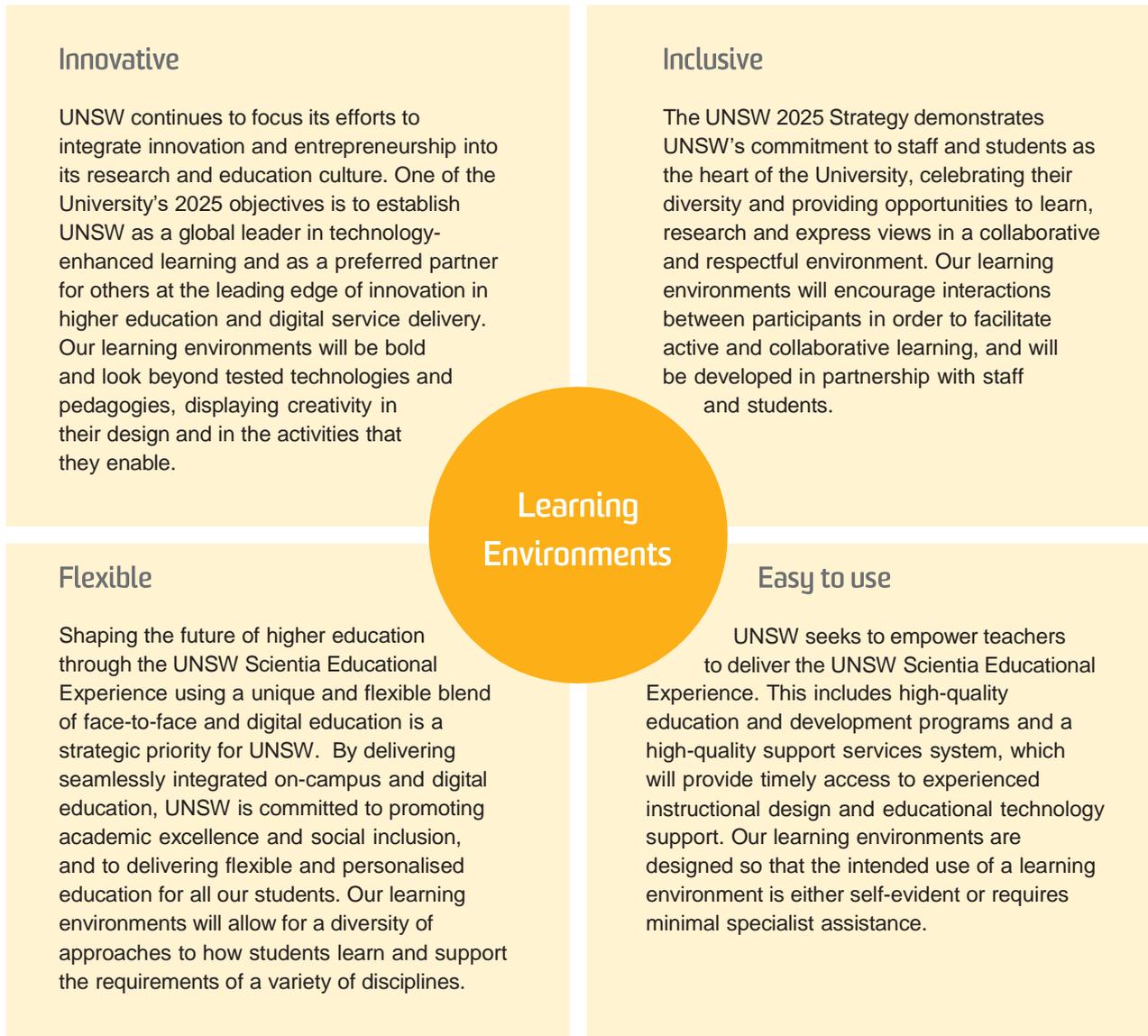
In 2016, as part of ongoing UNSW learning environments developments, a Student-Led Spaces Project translated the generic design principles (2015) to more specifically underpin the different types of spaces being designed and implemented:

- student-led spaces
- active and collaborative learning classrooms
- experimental and innovation spaces

Design principles for the first of these, student-led spaces, are described from page 4.

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 and management. The Principles have been grouped according to four key themes, as illustrated in Figure 1.



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

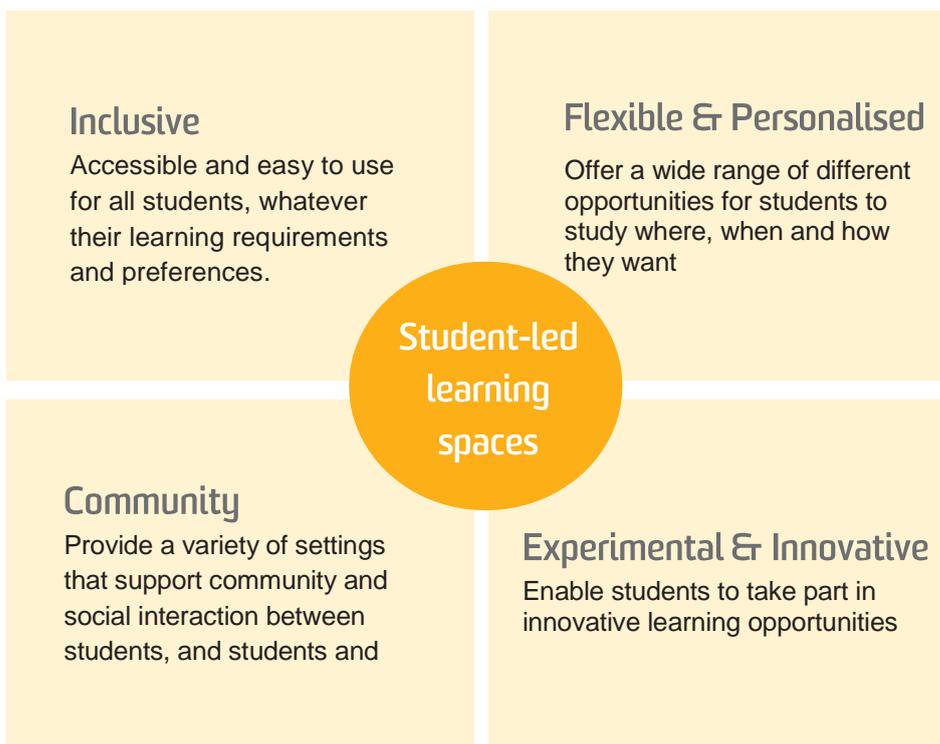
Key words: empower, support services, access, self-evident use

- 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.

Design Principles for Student-Led Spaces

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 and management. For student-led spaces these are underpinned by an over-arching objective:

To ensure that all students have an equivalence of access to a rich variety of high quality self-directed learning spaces which meet their diverse learning requirements and preferences, by providing a network of appropriate student-led study and social opportunities across campus.



INCLUSION

- Principle 1:** Accessible and easy to find and use for all students, including those with disabilities.
- Principle 2:** Provides a safe and welcoming environment.
- Principle 3:** Offers diverse learning and social settings, appropriate for a variety of learning needs and preferences.
- Principle 4:** Involve students as partners in development and improvement processes.

FLEXIBLE & PERSONALISED

- Principle 5:** Offers choice over where, when and how to study on campus, including 24/7 opportunities.
- Principle 6:** Incorporates information-sharing to help students find out about, and select, spaces best suited to their learning needs at different times.
- Principle 7:** Provides appropriate technologies for online and on-campus independent and collaborative learning.
- Principle 8:** Creates appropriate clustering and adjacencies of student-led spaces to enhance flexibility of use.

COMMUNITY

- Principle 9:** Supports the creation of a network of ground level public and outwards facing activity hubs.
- Principle 10:** Enables a variety of opportunities for students to belong, and contribute to, communities consisting of scholars, learners, global contacts, industry and alumni.
- Principle 11:** Creates informal student-led community hubs that offer diverse opportunities for social interaction.

EXPERIMENTATION & INNOVATION

- Principle 12:** Provides opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge.
- Principle 13:** Enables engagement with new technologies, relevant to students' own learning, personal and career development.
- Principle 14:** Offers opportunities for students to take part in innovative learning and teaching developments.

Student-Led Spaces Typology: visual matrix, with axes of private-to-public and individual-to-group, as a pictorial guide to student-led space variations



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