'Our UNSW Educational model will empower students to realise their potential through a personalised and flexible education. UNSW will influence the model of higher education worldwide and be a global leader in the use of educational technology. Our distinctive programs will blend the highest quality face-to-face and digital education …'

(UNSW 2025 Strategy)

Purpose

The UNSW Learning Environments Strategy is a key enabler of the University's commitment to providing all students with an exemplary education. This commitment will be achieved by integrating innovative developments in digital and face-to-face learning, thereby improving educational quality and the student experience.

The Learning Environments Strategy provides:

- objectives the University must meet to deliver student and staff requirements for learning spaces and support services

- strategies to be employed by the University as a whole to provide a world-class learning environment through its learning spaces and the services that support them

- examples of how strategies may be implemented and measured

The Strategy has been developed through an extensive consultation process across UNSW. Stakeholders will continue to be engaged throughout the implementation process.

Background

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

UNSW 2025 identifies themes that learning and teaching spaces and the services that support them must specifically contribute towards, including (extracts):

- **Theme A2**: Educational excellence – a distinctive UNSW model: 'Our UNSW Educational Model will empower students to realise their potential through a personalised and flexible education. UNSW will influence the model of higher education worldwide and be a global leader in the use of educational technology. Our distinctive programs will blend the highest quality face-to-face and digital education …'

- **Enabler D4**: A world-class environment: 'We will have an outstanding set of connected places, physical and digital, where students, staff, members of the local community and our diverse range of partners innovate, transform, learn and contribute to society.' 'To integrate our physical and digital campuses to provide a world class environment, flexible in adapting to changing circumstances' 'To provide a holistic, individualised experience utilising the physical and digital assets of UNSW and providing fully integrated services to students and staff.'

The concepts of personalised and blended learning are highlighted in UNSW 2025 as central to achieving academic excellence at UNSW. Other educational concepts identified in the *UNSW Beliefs About Learning and the Guidelines on Learning that Inform Teaching at UNSW* that also have implications for learning environments include:

- Active/activity-based learning, which refers learning by doing, rather than learning based on the 'taught' delivery of content by a single academic to a whole class
- Collaborative learning, which refers to learning by interaction within the group

The guidelines emphasise the need for active learning and activity-based learning to engage students and to be contextualised and inclusive; 'active learning approaches allow students to become creators of knowledge rather than passive recipients of information.' All of these educational intentions have implications for the design and development of learning environments.

A set of recommendations were developed from a user-centric point of view, taking into account a wide range of inputs and including those listed above. The recommendations were grouped into five categories:

1. **Access to an appropriate space**, which includes engaging staff and students in scheduled sessions of course delivery; students accessing space to study alone or in a group; and staff and students wanting to use spaces for events, including venue hire and engaging the wider community with the University.

2. **Support for academic staff**, which includes supporting academics to enhance their teaching capabilities; curriculum design and development; the use of learning and teaching technologies; and the piloting of new pedagogical approaches.

3. **Access to support services (technical and physical)** in a way that provides fully integrated services to students and staff.

4. **Enabling learning anywhere, anytime** through blending the highest quality face-to face and digital education with technology-enabled solutions, thereby delivering personalised and flexible learning opportunities.

5. **Governance for planning and delivery of integrated learning environments**, to ensure planning is driven by UNSW's overall strategic vision and that governance structures and planning frameworks support the planning process, and deliver environments that will support the organisation's strategic goals.

These recommendations form the basis of the UNSW Learning Environments objectives and strategies.

UNSW Learning Environments and Support Services – Objectives and Strategies

Enable the seamless integration of the physical and digital campus	Integrate technology into teaching to support active, collaborative and blended learning	Provide easily accessible and appropriate spaces to support the UNSW Scientia Educational Experience	Support services that are fully integrated from a user's viewpoint for the flexible use of learning spaces and integrated technology	Governance and planning that enables Learning Environments and Support Services objectives to be met
Strategy 1:1: Ensure the appropriate technology is embedded within the learning and teaching environments, and ensure teachers and students can get assistance	**Strategy 2:1**: Develop the capability of teachers and students to use new learning environments and technology	**Strategy 3:1**: Implement systems and processes to make the availability of appropriate spaces visible to students, teachers and staff		**Strategy 5:1**: Ensure current UNSW planning and decision-making structures and processes integrate faculty needs and viewpoints with central portfolio needs
Strategy 1:2: Enable blended learning to offer students more flexibility and modes of learning	**Strategy 2:2**: Evolve the use of learning analytics to tailor academic programs to individual student needs	**Strategy 3:2**: Improve the availability of appropriate spaces at appropriate times	**Strategy 4:1**: Establish an integrated service delivery model for the services that support learning environments including digital technologies, AV, scheduling and facilities	**Strategy 5:2**: Engage with the local and global stakeholders to maintain a customer centric and world-leading approach to learning environments and support services
Strategy 1:3: Make learning resources accessible and interoperable across multiple devices, including for students with disabilities	**Strategy 2:3**: Align the capacity of professional and technical development services with current and future needs of teachers	**Strategy 3:3**: Align the supply of learning environments with demand of teachers and students		**Strategy 5:3**: Demonstrate a culture that rewards collaboration, innovation and risk taking

Figure 1: UNSW Learning Environments Objectives and Strategies

Objective 1
Enable the seamless integration of the physical and digital campus

We will base the design of our physical learning environments on accepted design principles and standards, creating learning and teaching spaces that seamlessly integrate with the digital campus and that are flexible enough to accommodate rapid changes in staff and student expectations.

Strategy 1.1: Ensure the appropriate technology is embedded within the learning and teaching environments, and ensure that technical support is easily accessible for users of the space.

Examples of this strategy being implemented might include:

- technology in learning and teaching spaces that supports and promotes educational principles, including collaborative and active learning

- technology that facilitates live streaming and capture of learning materials during scheduled classes; for example, all presentations, boards, student interactions, generated documents and video capture. Students have the option to bring their own devices for use in class

- the provision of contact information for technical assistance and instructions to facilitate the effective use of digital technology in learning environments on campus, both online and in each space

Strategy 1.2: Enable blended learning to offer students more flexibility in modes of learning

Examples of this strategy being implemented might include:

- easy access to digital technology that enables blended learning and the services that support for teachers and staff from all faculties

- a range of opportunities for students to access learning materials on and off campus

- an operating model (policy, process and technology) that makes learning materials available prior to and during scheduled classes, and that also provides access to materials created during class

Strategy 1.3: Make learning resources accessible and interoperable across multiple devices, including for students with disabilities

Examples of this strategy being implemented might include:

- organisational culture, infrastructure and capabilities that are aligned to identify, test and implement the best technology-enhanced learning solutions while simultaneously discontinuing those that are less effective

- on-campus, multi-device access to course computer programs for students

Example KPIs for Objective 1:

- A number and percentage increase of courses that are totally online, and the quantified ability of students to access them either remotely or on campus

- Increased (quantified) use of online resources and class materials

Objective 2
Integrate technology into teaching to support active, collaborative and blended learning

We will optimise the benefits that can be realised our learning environments by supporting teachers to continuously improve their approach to student learning, pedagogy and use of technology. This will enable active, blended and collaborative learning.

Strategy 2.1: Develop the capability of teachers and students to use new learning spaces and technology.

Examples of this strategy being implemented might include:

- an increasing number of teachers with contemporary skills who are able to develop and deliver more engaging courses; for example, an increasing number of teachers who mix online and face-to-face modes to offer students multimodal forms of learning, thereby reducing reliance of passive delivery of content through lectures

- training programs that are established for teachers, enabling them to use, modify or change both the development of material and its delivery in line with contemporary pedagogies within flexible learning spaces

- safe spaces that promote co-design and safe experimentation within an overall mechanism of institutional support (e.g. performance management, rewards and recognition)

Strategy 2.2: Evolve the use of learning analytics to tailor academic programs to individual student needs.

Examples of this strategy being implemented might include:

- the use of data analytics to measure student performance and customise the student experience

- the use of learning analytics to measure and evaluate the outcomes of new pedagogical approaches, including space efficiency, learning outcomes, class attendance and student/teacher satisfaction. Trends will be monitored and benchmarked against other institutions

Strategy 2.3: Align the capacity of professional and technical development services with current and future needs of teachers.

Examples of this strategy being implemented might include:

- service capacity (i.e. number of people) and resources (e.g. online tools and materials) that meet the needs of teachers

- a restructure of existing services, supporting active and blended learning, both centrally and within faculties, including media resources support

- multi-disciplinary teams and resources that supply an increasing demand for services in course content and class delivery (including innovative materials, approaches and use of technology)

- resourcing, governance and processes that are designed to facilitate and support active and collaborative learning

Example KPIs for Objective 2:

- A percentage increase of academics participating in training programs

- A percentage increase of staff who express confidence in their ability to develop and deliver courses that use IT-enabled resources

- A percentage increase of courses taught using blended learning

- Learning analytics data are used to make timely decisions about the quality of student experience and learning outcomes

Objective 3
Provide easily accessible and appropriate spaces to support the UNSW Scientia Educational Experience

We will improve teacher and student access to space for scheduled classes and study by making spaces more visible, available to be booked, accessible and appropriately configurable for learning activities.

Strategy 3.1: Implement systems and processes to make the availability of appropriate spaces visible to students, teachers and staff.

Examples of this strategy being implemented might include:

- making all available spaces, their attributes and features (e.g. furniture, room layout, AV equipment) visible to teaching staff, enabling them to better plan their classes based on the layout potential, technology and furniture of the space

- making all available spaces visible to students, and ensuring they can book and access appropriate spaces on campus before and after class

Strategy 3.2: Improve the availability of appropriate spaces at appropriate times.

Examples of this strategy being implemented might include:

- making more learning environments available to students and teachers (including those with disabilities) for scheduled classes and study. For scheduled classes, this means an increased number of spaces that can be centrally allocated based on the size of the class and pedagogical needs

- flexible spaces and support services that are developed (based on demand) for active, collaborative and blended learning, thereby increasing the amount, quality and effectiveness of these modes of delivery

- planning, development and implementation of the trimester academic year that enables personalisation and improves flexibility and life-study balance

- increased student access to a variety of faculty and campus spaces at a variety of times, including quiet space access, 24/7 access, access to rooms that are not scheduled for classes, and access to multi-modal rooms for both independent and group study

Strategy 3.3: Align the supply of learning spaces with the demand of teachers and students.

Examples of this strategy being implemented might include:

- current and future space demand that is modelled (including demand for specific layouts and furniture configurations) to meet the expectations of teachers and students and the application of UNSW's Educational Principles. For example, modelling that is undertaken to meet campus demand for 'flipped classrooms' and 'super-labs' for learning that is centered on group collaboration, independent and group study facilities

- opportunities for increased collaboration in large lecture theatres that is created through re-configuration and/or educational technologies

- active/blended learning along with a carefully planned trimester academic year that has the potential to ease overall pressures on space

- flexible spaces and services that help accommodate rapid changes while supporting the overarching strategy of blended learning

Example KPIs for Objective 3:

- A percentage decrease in scheduling services failures to meet demand for particular space types

- A percentage increase in space utilisation

- A quantified improvement of user experience

Objective 4
Support services that are fully integrated from a user's viewpoint for the flexible use of learning spaces and integrated technology

Regardless of who is providing a service, we will create a one-stop shop user experience with seamless support across all learning environments, and develop support services that meet the varying needs of academics and students.

Strategy 4.1: Establish an integrated service delivery model for the services that support learning environments including digital technologies, AV, scheduling and facilities.

Examples of this strategy being implemented might include:

- the development of a service catalogue, service level agreements and target operating model (people, process, technology) that deliver seamless integrated support services to learning spaces, and the provision of assistance through a single point of contact to coordinate these services

Example KPIs for Objective 4:

- A percentage increase of staff, including casual staff, who express confidence and satisfaction in the support and services they receive during university opening hours

Objective 5
Governance and planning that enables Learning Environments and Support Services objectives to be met

Good practice in planning and delivery of spaces should be led by the organisation's overall strategic vision. This requires a governance structure and planning framework that will drive the planning process and deliver spaces that meet organisational goals. Leadership and vision must support and enable all steps of this process.

Strategy 5.1: Ensure current UNSW planning and decision-making structures and processes integrate faculty needs and viewpoints with central portfolio needs.

Examples of this strategy being implemented might include:

- the composition of cross-disciplinary and inclusive committees involved in planning and governance of learning spaces and support services, their terms of reference and membership, thereby ensuring a whole-of-university approach
- priority-setting for capital development that takes a whole-of-university approach

Strategy 5.2: Engage with local and global stakeholders to maintain a customer centric and world-leading approach to Learning Environments and Support Services

Examples of this strategy being implemented might include:

- learning environments and supporting services that remain at the forefront of contemporary practice, underpinned by innovative concepts and approaches to achieving the UNSW strategies and principles
- engagement across all sectors of the University, the broader education community and industry that results in good research and development, data intelligence and ongoing evaluation of courses
- feedback that is incorporated into decision-making processes

Strategy 5.3: Demonstrate a culture that rewards collaboration, innovation and risk-taking.

Examples of this strategy being implemented might include:

- the development of spaces, policies and resources that enable the development of innovative ideas
- rewards for employees who take risks, innovate and share their experiences to provide tangible examples of the ideal behaviours

Example KPIs for Objective 5:

- Processes and governance that are established to capture and incorporate feedback into decision making processes
- Risk-taking and innovation that is promoted through performance management, rewards and recognition