VU standards for the design of formal learning spaces

The VU standards for the design of formal learning spaces provide a suite of guidelines regarding the design and fitout of formal learning environments at VU, including lecture theatres, classrooms and tutorial rooms. It does not apply to the design of informal or social learning spaces, although these may also be informed by the standards.

The standards apply to all *new* refurbishments or *new* builds of learning spaces from 2016. The standards should also inform the more detailed Facilities and IT/AV standards in relation to learning spaces.

Note: these standards are supplementary to relevant occupational health and safety and disability access legislation.

Images are provided for guidance only. These are not intended to provide a prescriptive design brief but to provide indicative information and examples of fit out, particularly furniture selection.

Also to be considered:

- Audio and video recording capacity
- Space type information and instructions to be made available to staff either via a website or through provision at the room.
- Prioritisation of space refurbishment should include recourse to the learning environments working group or other means of staff consultation in addition to strategic needs consideration

Standards

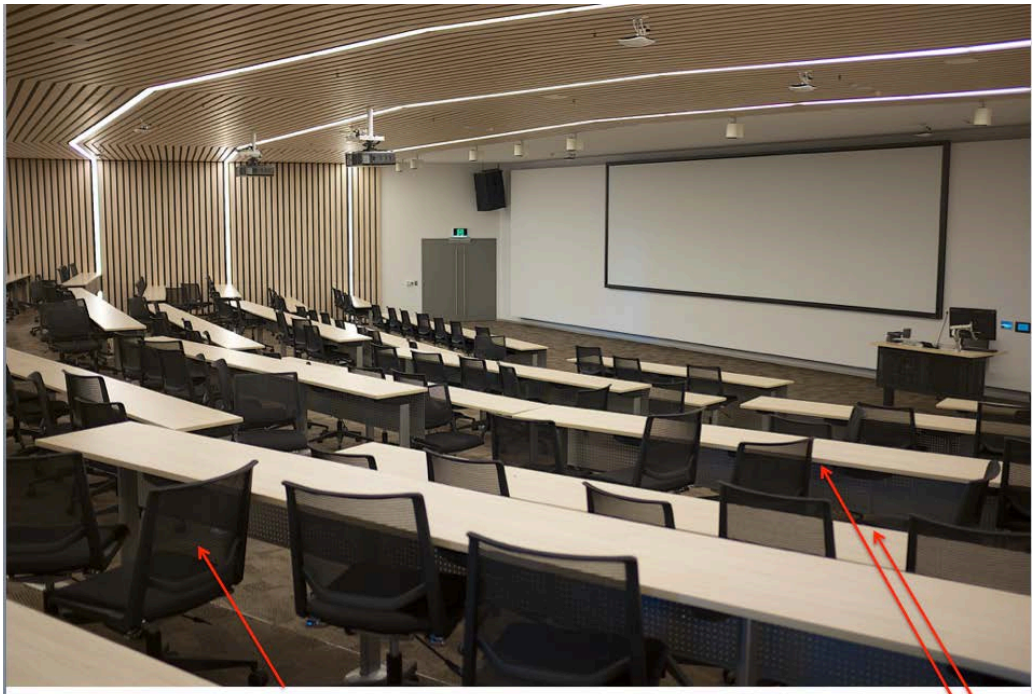
All formal learning spaces

- Natural light with blinds to moderate
- Natural materials wherever possible
- Light coloured walls, darker carpet
- “Pops” of colour (e.g. through furniture)
- Instructor PC that meets ITS PC Standards (max age of 4 years). PC to be placed in a rack, screen on a pole to maximize desk space and network enabled
- Laptop loom for instructor (VGA + HDMI)
- Program audio playback system
- Extra powerpoints that are convenient for students to charge devices
- Ample WiFi connectivity (catering for >1 device/student)
- VOIP phone
- IP camera (to assist with remote support)
- Access to help and classroom support resources

Lecture theatres

- Minimum size = 60 students
- Touchscreen control panel with a standard VU interface
- Ceiling/wall mounted projection screen (widescreen)*
- Document Camera
- Wireless Projection
- ReVU
- Microphones (desk and lapel)
- Hearing Loop
- Tiered, collaborative seating (e.g. 2 rows/tier with chairs that can swivel around so students in the row in front can turn to work with students in the row behind) – 1.7-2.0m^2/student
- Presenter station containing user-facing AV equipment located to the side
- Large, fixed/panel whiteboards (not to be used for projection)

Example:

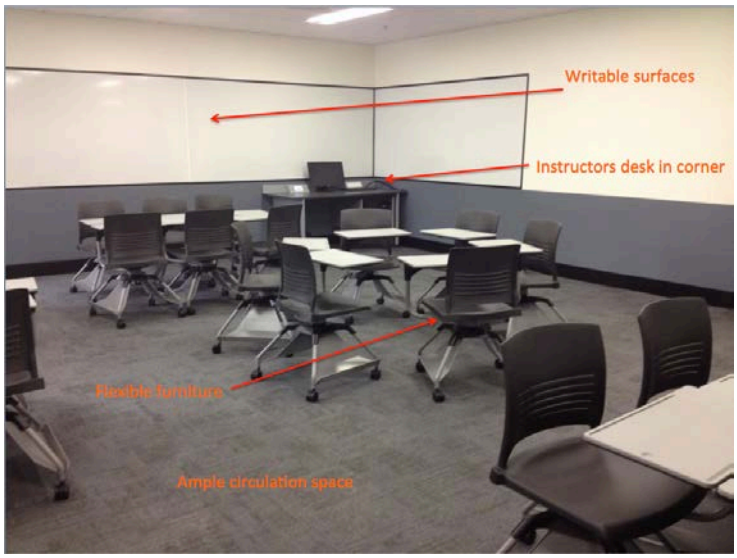


* dual projection may be required in some lecture theatres dependent on configuration and sightlines

General purpose learning spaces

- Minimum size = 30 students
- Plenty of circulation space (students should be able to move freely around the room, the room should encourage movement) – 2.2-2.5m^2/student
- Simple button control panel (similar to what currently exists)
- Single main projection point onto wall
- Fixed presenter station in corner flush against wall containing user-facing AV equipment
- Writable surfaces covering as much space as possible with cleaning fluid and paper towel dispensers
- Collaborative furniture (tables and chairs) on castors suitable to size of the space

Examples:



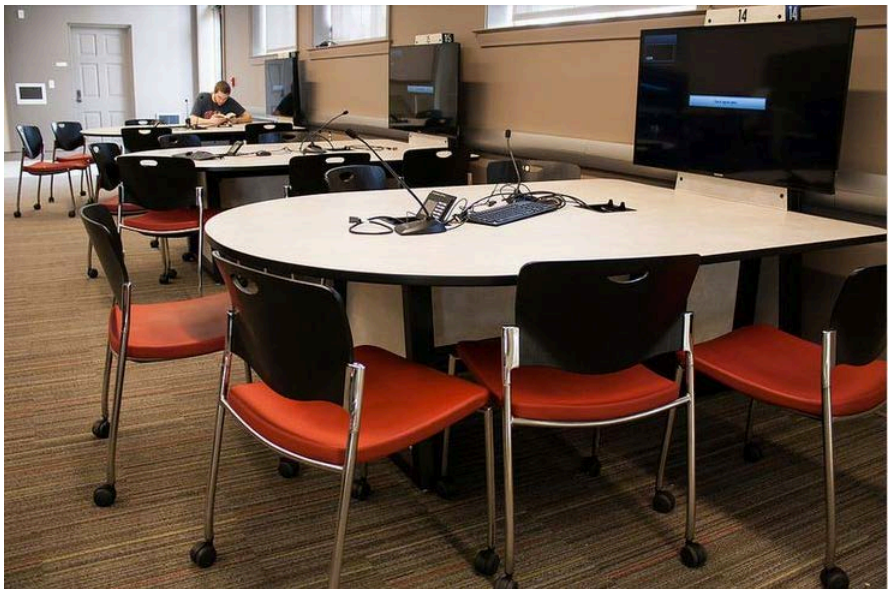
Small classroom with SEBEL Learn2 chairs enabling collaboration. This room has more writable surfaces along 2 of the walls that are not visible here.

Large classroom with collaborative tables. These chairs would be replaced by ones on castors. This room has more writable surfaces along 2 of the walls that are not visible here.

Technology-enhanced learning spaces

- Minimum size = 40-60 students
- Plenty of circulation space (students should be able to move freely around the room, the room should encourage movement) – 2.5m^2/student
- Touchscreen control panel that follows a VU standard
- Single main projection point onto wall (for focusing whole-of-class attention)
- Minimal presenter station in middle of the room containing user-facing AV equipment
- 1 electronic display panel per table
- 1 Desktop PC per table connected to display
- Switching system so student work can quickly be put up on projection point for whole-of-class discussion
- Writable surfaces covering as much space as possible with cleaning fluid and paper towel dispensers (each group should have a writable surface at least)
- Collaborative furniture (shaped tables with chairs on castors) as free as possible of computing equipment
- Maximum of 6 students per table

Example:

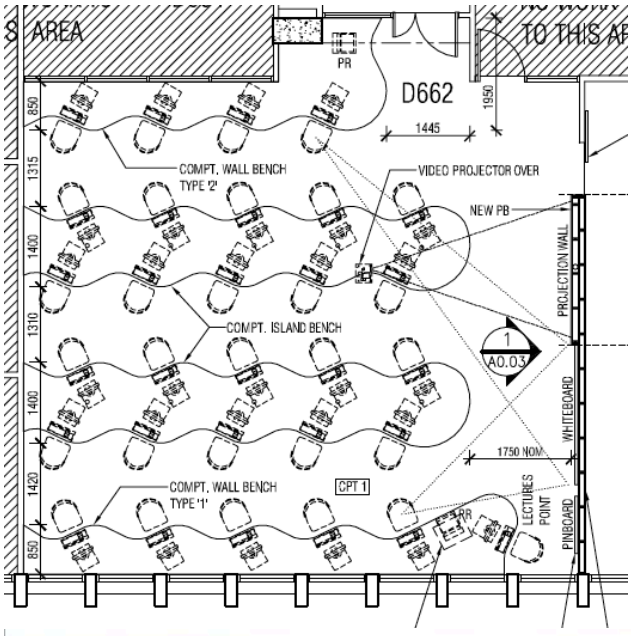


Single whole-of-class projection point for the space. Writable surfaces near each group station

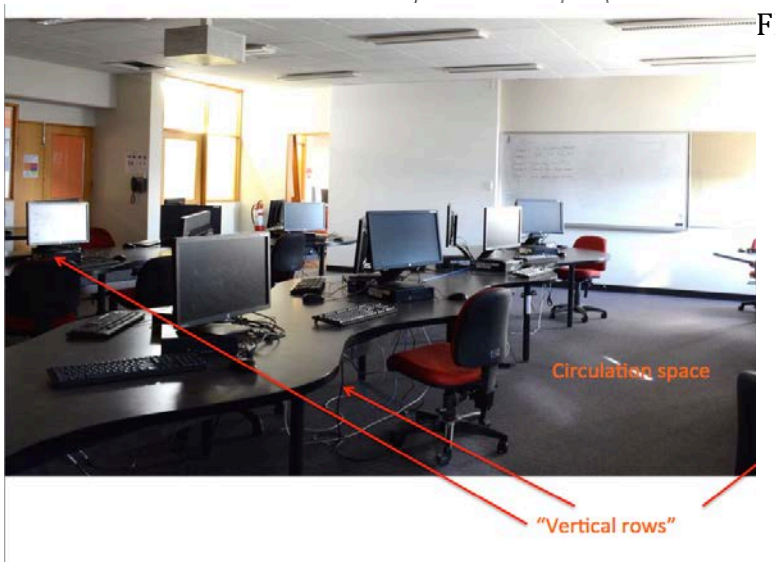
Computer labs

- Simple button control panel (same as is used in General Purpose Learning Spaces)
- Single main projection point onto wall
- Presenter station on the end of one row containing user-facing AV equipment
- Writable surfaces for presenter
- Rows of desks for students perpendicular to front of room
- Student PCs/Macs with cables managed in a neat way under the desk so as to keep the work spaces for each student as clear as possible and ample circulation space to facilitate instructor access to all students – 3.5m^2/student
- Proximity to network printing for staff and students (network printer in corridor on the same level of the same building)

Examples:



A single whole-of-class projection point for the space, student desks perpendicular to front of the room.



FP D662

Sandpit spaces

VU has several of what would be termed “Sandpit Spaces” – spaces designed to test new ideas and ways of working to determine whether they should be rolled out more broadly. These are: FP P228, FP D661, FP D531, FN D322, FN Terrain Room.

- There must be a business case submitted if a request for a sandpit space is made. This must include a clear pedagogical rationale for the space and its design, underpinned by evidence that the proposed design will enhance student learning.
- The touchscreen control panel must be based on a standard VU touchscreen control panel layout
- Standard VU AV equipment must be used wherever possible, unless there is a specific case for trialling a new technology. This must be justified.
- Furniture appropriate to the activities for which the space is designed must be fitted