LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS STRATEGY AND DESIGN POLICY

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1 PURPOSE

1.1 This document establishes overarching principles that inform the strategy and design of CQUniversity's learning environments.

2 SCOPE

2.1 This policy applies to the strategy and design of the learning environments across all CQUniversity's education, research and training operations.

3 POLICY STATEMENT

Engaged education

3.1 CQUniversity adopts an overarching philosophy of engaged education based on the principles of 'engaged design' and 'engaging delivery' to guide development and delivery of courses and units:

- **engaged design** is a curriculum design and development process that is informed by engagement with employers and other external stakeholders

- **engaging delivery** is a style of unit and course delivery that encourages students to become self-motivated learners through active engagement with their learning materials, with staff, and with other students.

3.2 Learning environment strategy and design at CQUniversity will support this overarching philosophy and be applied to meet the requirements of tertiary education regulators and CQUniversity.

Learning environment challenges

3.3   With many 'on-campus' students choosing an increasing mix of online and on-campus delivery:

- **virtual learning spaces** (related to online units) are an important part of the overall delivery model, and consideration of learning design must include virtual learning spaces and how they extend and connect to physical learning environments

- **small group collaborative spaces** (face-to-face and online learning) must facilitate a teaching and learning model that supports students in their transition to the professional context.

3.4   CQUniversity's learning environment strategy and design will aim to address the following key challenges:

- learning and teaching in the context of decreasing on-campus class sizes, an increasingly geographically-distributed student cohort, and delivery to a combination of on-campus and online students

- CQUniversity's significantly wide geographic distribution compared to most Australian universities – rich connectivity across and between campuses is therefore critically and increasingly important

- continuous change in delivery requirements and learning and teaching practice is a reality of contemporary education that requires learning spaces, furniture and technology to be flexible, relocatable and able to be repurposed

- significant increase in demand for access to videoconferencing and online video recording – technologies that are critical to CQUniversity's delivery model

- CQUniversity's 'Lean' ICT support model, which requires teaching staff to be able to utilise technology without needing substantial ICT support

- support for 'bring your own device' (BYOD) is essential as students are now predominantly using their own devices to access online learning systems and content, and to communicate and collaborate with other students.

Learning environment strategy

3.5   To address these requirements and challenges, and in line with global trends in tertiary education, future learning environment investment will be in physical learning spaces and ICT technologies that support:

- integrated multi-campus and online class delivery

- academic interactions between students outside of the formal teaching environment

- increased student and staff engagement

- increased real-time connectivity across campuses

- increased flexibility in delivery style, participation and access, and

- academic interactions, including shared instruction and learning, at third-party sites.

3.6   CQUniversity will continue to investigate and pilot online technologies to facilitate staff-to-student and student-to-student collaboration. Specifically:

1) **The CQUniversity videoconference system will continue to be a critical communication and delivery mechanism**:

- more videoconference-enabled learning spaces will be implemented with an emphasis on spaces catering for smaller class sizes, flexible use and online connectivity, and

- the videoconferencing network will be extended across all campuses and study hubs to support geographically distributed tutorial sessions and small group pedagogies such as problem and project-based learning (PBL).

2) **Technologies are being implemented to provide online communication and collaboration between students and staff, and between students, including group collaboration**: Technologies will be implemented to provide real-time connectivity between online and on-campus students with an aim to mainstream this functionality. These technologies include Zoom videoconferencing and virtual learning environments.

3) **Online delivery technologies will be integrated with Moodle**: Wherever possible, technologies such as video recordings, student collaboration tools and virtual live classroom will be integrated with the Moodle learning management system. This will provide a single place from where students access course content and online collaboration tools.

4) **Online video and lecture recording will continue to be a critical delivery mechanism**:

   - online video (e.g. lecture recordings) is a critical delivery system for CQUniversity – investment will continue to support the maintenance and enhancement of existing functionality, and

   - spaces and technologies will be implemented to allow staff to easily develop video content for online delivery.

5) **Teaching spaces will be designed to enable flexible use across a range of traditional and contemporary approaches to delivery**: Multi-purpose spaces will continue to be implemented, including the existing 'Flexible Collaborative Learning Spaces Design'.

6) **Student study space will be included**: Student study spaces will be fitted out with wireless, power and technology/furniture to support group collaborative work.

7) **Systems will be designed to accommodate student-owned devices (BYOD)**: Spaces will provide support for student-owned devices (BYOD) including wireless coverage, access to power, and appropriate furniture.

8) **Outdoor space will be provided**: Attractive outdoor space will be used by providing wireless coverage, furniture and, where practical, access to power.

Space selection and access

3.7 Selection and location of physical learning spaces will be based on:

- **the organisation's overall needs**, including:
  - current and projected enrolment data
  - space utilisation data, and
  - course delivery requirements

- **campus master plans and adjacencies**, and

- maximisation of use and return on investment so that learning spaces will, as a general rule, be **centrally bookable** (apart from 'specialist' spaces such as laboratories or discipline-specific simulation rooms).

Standardisation

3.8 To deliver reliable, well-designed, fit-for-purpose, cost-effective learning spaces, CQUniversity will continue to develop and maintain standard designs for learning spaces.

3.9 All learning space implementation will align with the existing CQUniversity Learning Spaces and Meeting Rooms Design Catalogue. This standard will be updated on a regular basis with feedback from the CQUniversity community.

3.10 The CQUniversity Library and Study Space Standard Designs Catalogue will be used to ensure that all library/student study space designs are consistent, fit-for-purpose, meet student requirements, and align with the principles outlined in this document.

Innovation and technology development

3.11 CQUniversity will continue to investigate, pilot and develop technologies and learning space designs via formal cross-departmental pilot projects.

Management

3.12 To inform planning and measure return on investment, all learning space implementation will include 'people counting' technology to automatically provide accurate and up-to-date information on space utilisation across all CQUniversity locations.

Learning environment design principles

Design principles – Overview

3.13 Learning environment design will be guided by five overarching principles:

1) **Utility – fit for purpose**
   - meeting campus and enterprise needs
   - enabling engagement, interaction, collaboration and greater use of video
   - reflecting changing enrolments and technology usage
   - recognising the importance of informal and virtual learning spaces
   - supporting high quality simulation for authentic learning.

2) **Simplicity – ease of use over 'bells and whistles'**
   - developing intuitive, user-informed design that requires minimal training and support
   - providing support to 'get started', including self-help materials
   - enabling self-service.

3) **Generality – power through simplicity, simplicity through generality**
   - implementing standard designs
   - prioritising centrally bookable spaces
   - choosing open standards over proprietary solutions.

4) **Flexibility – in delivery, participation, access, and space utilisation**
   - supporting traditional and contemporary delivery models
   - offering class participation and access device choices (BYOD), including mobile devices
   - providing spaces that can serve more than one role.

5) **Sustainability – the capacity to endure**
   - selecting proven, robust designs
   - reducing operational costs
   - using technology and spaces that can be repurposed.

Design principles – Details and rationale

3.14 The rationale underpinning CQUniversity's learning environment's design principles and their details are set out below:

Principle 1: Utility – fit for purpose

- **Meeting campus and enterprise needs**: Learning space investment must meet campus needs guided by strategic enterprise intent. Strategic imperatives include operational and academic unification of CQUniversity's VET and higher education, and the learning and teaching philosophy of engaged education.

- **Enabling engagement, interaction, collaboration and greater use of video**: Project goals include support for: (1) increased capacity for student and staff engagement and interaction; (2) integrated multi-campus and online class delivery; (3) increased use of video for asynchronous learning; (4) more engaging delivery models; and (5) increasing campus bandwidth infrastructure to support resource demand.

- **Reflecting changing enrolments and technology usage**: Class sizes are shrinking. CQUniversity has more large lecture theatres than it needs, with residual demand largely a consequence of the host technology. Good wireless coverage and support for bring-your-own-devices are essential. Under-utilised spaces can be repurposed.

- **Recognising the importance of informal and virtual learning spaces**: Informal and virtual learning spaces are important to enable more engaging delivery models and support increasing numbers of distance students.

- **Supporting high quality simulation for authentic learning**: Reflecting CQUniversity's commitment to engaged learning and increasing student demand for work-integrated learning experiences, learning space investment must include environments capable of supporting high quality simulation of workplace conditions, informed by consultation with industry stakeholders.

Principle 2: Simplicity – ease of use over 'bells and whistles'

- **Developing intuitive, user-informed designs that require minimal training and support**: The priority for investment must be in technologies and designs that are easy to use. Early-adopters can manage a level of complexity beyond the reach of most academics. Technologies that can be used comfortably by a majority of academic staff are needed, with user input during the design phase to ensure that systems are intuitive.

- **Providing support to 'get started'**: Online resources, including videos, are required to help users get started with new technologies. Resources must be easy to use and find. Self-help groups like communities of practice will help staff make better use of video and develop more engaging delivery models.

- **Enabling self-service**: Technologies that enable the majority of staff to initiate and manage video conferences and recordings are required.

Principle 3: Generality – power through simplicity, simplicity through generality

- **Implementing standard designs**: Standard designs for different room types will be developed as part of the project. These standards will apply to learning space investments beyond the project.

- **Prioritising centrally-bookable spaces**: To maximise utilisation and return on investment, investments will prioritise centrally-bookable learning spaces. The project scope does not include specialist spaces.

- **Choosing open standards over proprietary solutions**: To future-proof investments, open standards will be adopted over proprietary technologies. Connection and engagement from all popular devices is a priority.

Principle 4: Flexibility – in delivery, participation, access, and space utilisation

- **Supporting traditional and contemporary delivery models**: New learning spaces must provide a platform for new engaging delivery models. During transition to new delivery models, learning spaces must also support traditional methods of delivery – requiring a 'front-of-class' for new formal learning spaces.

- **Offering class participation and access device choices**: With over 60% of domestic students studying in online mode, class participation options must include: (1) a physical learning space (possibly remote); (2) video conference; and (3) video broadcast and social media. Mobile option choices also need to be included.

- **Providing spaces that can serve more than one role**: Small video-enabled spaces can support: (1) collaboration between VET and higher education staff; (2) participation in classes with local and remote delivery; (3) video recording; (4) informal student group learning.

Principle 5: Sustainability – the capacity to endure

- **Selecting proven, robust designs**: With 22 campuses using standard designs, CQUniversity needs designs 'that work'. Designs with wide adoption and a proven history of use will be employed. This will also mean that users do not have to re-learn different systems for different locations.

- **Reducing operational costs**: Technologies with low operational costs will be employed, possibly precluding cheapest available offerings. Consideration will be given to sustainability factors such as power consumption.

- **Using technology and spaces that can be repurposed**: Where feasible, technologies, furniture and fittings that can easily be moved to new locations will be used.

4   RESPONSIBILITIES

Compliance, monitoring and review

4.1   The Chief Information and Digital Officer, Information and Technology Directorate is responsible for policy implementation and compliance.

4.2   The Director, Learning Design and Innovation, in consultation with the Chief Information and Digital Officer, is responsible for monitoring and reviewing this policy to ensure it is effective and achieving its purpose.

Reporting

4.3   No additional reporting is required.

Records management

4.4   Staff must maintain all records relevant to administering this policy in a recognised University recordkeeping system.

5   DEFINITIONS

5.1   Terms not defined in this document may be in the University glossary.

6   RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015

Learning Spaces and Meeting Rooms Design Catalogue, CQUniversity Information and Technology Directorate

Library and Study Space Standard Designs Catalogue, CQUniversity Information and Technology Directorate

National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students (National Code) 2017

National Standards for ELICOS Providers and Courses (National ELICOS Standards) 2011

Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015

7   FEEDBACK

7.1   Feedback about this document can be emailed to policy@cqu.edu.au.

8   APPROVAL AND REVIEW DETAILS

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