



UNIVERSITY
of York

**Directorate of
Technology, Estates
and Facilities**

SPACE GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

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INTRODUCTION

The University of York estate is an important and expensive resource and therefore it is vital that we have an active strategy and the supporting processes to manage it effectively.

The University was designed as a campus University in 1963 with the estate planned to promote interaction between staff and students as a basis for the academic work of the University. The guidelines aim to promote a dynamic environment to continue this tradition.

The space guidelines and standards provide the framework for the management of all non-residential space operated by the University and inform the University community of the procedures in place to manage space allocation and guide development. A space guideline is commonly used within similar institutions and underpins changes to improve space efficiency and utilisation, supporting delivery of the estate strategy.

The standards highlight our collective responsibility for managing the estate effectively and also set out the expected space norms.

Improved space efficiency is also vital in achieving the University's carbon reduction targets; reducing the size of the estate will help to cut overall emissions and more open plan working will result in more effective use of resources. Shared open plan offices and more efficient use of space will facilitate a reduction in heating and lighting needs, helping to offset future increases in energy costs. Strategic projects described in the University's Integrated Infrastructure Plan (IIP) include a space consolidation,

mothballing and demolition programme, which is vital for disposing of buildings which are in a poor condition or no longer fit for purpose.

The guidance set out here is intended for new buildings but should be seen as applicable for the refurbishment of existing buildings going forward.

The guide sets out the following:

- general principles
- space allocations
- space standards
- configuration guidelines

Adoption of the space standards in the context of the estate principles will help the University of York to make the best use of resources whilst enhancing the campus experience for our students, staff and visitors in an inclusive and fair way.

The guidelines cover both the University of York, any of its subsidiaries and spin out companies.

It is important to note that the standards and recommendations within this document form a guide; if the constraints of a building don't allow, it may not be possible to meet them. In addition, specialist requirements will be captured and accounted for as part of a thorough consultation process with space users.



THE BASIS OF THESE GUIDELINES

The principles and standards in this document are in line with those promoted by the Association of University Directors of Estates (AUDE), the Higher Education Space Management Group (HESMG) and are also in line with other Russell Group institutions. They also conform to all HSE Workplace regulations.

AUDE guidelines

The Association of University Directors of Estates (AUDE) provides a set of Space Assessment Models and Space Profile guidance as part of the AUDE toolkit for a Sustainable Estate. The toolkit is a set of tools and guidance to help estate professionals make best use of the physical assets of their university. It was updated in 2017 to align with the national agenda to promote financial and economic sustainability.

The Space Assessment Models provide a benchmark and indicators for measuring and improving efficiency and effectiveness of space use, based on the academic and operational activities of the institution. All standards specified within this document are in line with these models and guidance.

All teaching and learning space standards have been taken from the UK Higher Education Learning Space Toolkit produced by AUDE, SCHOMS and ucisa

HESMG recommendations

The Higher Education Space Management Group was set up in 2002 to assist higher education institutions implement best practice in the management of space. An offshoot from AUDE, it is an officially recognised specialist forum with membership from over 70 UK universities including many Russell Group universities. HESMG advocates a space maturity model for effective implementation and measurement of space management practices. The maturity model states that for level 4 maturity, an institution requires

“comprehensive institutional space management policies, covering a wide range of space types in detail with clear alignment to the institutional strategy and goals. Regularly reviewed and applied consistently across the university.”

Comparisons of University of York proposed standards have been made with other HESMG member published policies and have found to be very much in line.

The Government design guidelines

The Government Workspace Design Guide is a suite of guidance documents and standards setting out the aspirations for all government work spaces. Whilst mandatory only for central government organisations, it still provides a best practice view for creating a positive work environment that complies with all UK health and safety regulations. It provides recommendations and standards for inclusive, flexible, modern and connected workspaces that promote “smarter spaces” for modern working; aspirations that are in line with those of the University of York. The guide can be found here:

[*Government Workspace Design Guide Accessible Draft v1.0*](#)

HSE guidance

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 are a set of legal requirements that aim to ensure a safe and healthy working environment for employees and visitors. The regulations cover a wide range of health, safety and welfare issues, including requirements for room dimensions, workstations, seating and facilities for rest and eating meals.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is the authority responsible for enforcing these regulations and provides a guide on how to comply with them. All University standards and space allowances have been checked against the recommendations for the amount of space per person (measured in cubic metres) and are compliant.

PRINCIPLES FOR MANAGING THE ESTATE

The Estate will be managed according to the following space principles agreed by the University Executive Board (UEB):

- 1.** We aim to provide a high quality physical environment to enable the work of the University in the context of hybrid working, whilst reducing environmental impact and improving access.
- 2.** We commit to engaging with the users of space to design configurations and patterns of usage that will provide an enabling physical environment, account for EDI considerations and increase levels of utilisation.
- 3.** We aim to raise the utilisation of our more modern, better condition buildings by closing or repurposing our poorer condition estate, contributing to reducing our carbon footprint / cost.
- 4.** Space management will be informed by anonymised building aggregated data, collected using wi-fi / sensors.
- 5.** Building opening hours / cleaning / maintenance will be adjusted to reflect space utilisation.
- 6.** All teaching space will be centrally-bookable unless specialist (e.g. specialist laboratories, observation rooms, medical training rooms etc).





Space - the future

As the University changes and updates spaces across the estate, it presents an opportunity to consider how spaces can best be designed and used, recognising that the physical environment informs how people work and feel. The best workplaces are designed around how people interact with each other, and how students interact with staff is an important part of their experience. A space can also support a sense of place and community. In recognition of this, as we move forward, we will work towards a shared model which will also ensure the most efficient use of campus facilities.

This includes offices, where multi occupancy offices and more open plan working can expect to increase with new projects and refurbishments. We will move towards having agile workplaces which enable smarter ways of working and provide an excellent user experience. Agile workplaces are work environments that are designed around complete flexibility. Unlike traditional offices, where employees are assigned a permanent desk, an agile space encourages people to move freely around to make best use of whichever space suits their objectives at the time. So the space suits the task in hand and is open to all.

Included in the University's world class facilities will be excellent study, collaboration and social space for students, again shared and open to all.

All spaces will fully support the University's strategic principles of

- equity, diversity and inclusion
- internationalism
- collaboration across multidisciplinary boundaries
- environmental sustainability

Therefore spaces will be accessible, will include neurodivergent spaces and clusters of facilities such as Changing Places toilets, faith rooms and breastfeeding rooms. These services will be spread across campus.

Where possible, spaces will include biophilic design (design that helps increase occupant connectivity to the natural environment through the use of direct nature, indirect nature, and space and place conditions.) Many features of such design are generally associated with physical and mental wellbeing and can also be beneficial to people who experience sensory difficulties.

To aid students and staff in their access to spaces we aim to make the best use of technology to provide real time status and route finding information via digital services.

We fully appreciate the desire of schools and departments to maintain a sense of identity and a "home" for their students. Whilst we endeavour to open up spaces, including teaching rooms, meeting rooms and study space, the University will strive to keep local identities through branding, the use of colour palettes to tie spaces together and overall professional interior design to maximise a space's positive impact on psychology. Students and staff will be encouraged to use all spaces within their faculty regardless of their particular department.

These changes will be an evolution and we will work closely with departments and students on creative solutions to fit their needs. All standards and guidelines within this document aim to help the University of York evolve towards its vision of space in the future.

STAFF ALLOCATIONS AND OFFICE SPACE STANDARDS

Space allocation model

The principles for space allocation are based on a 6 desks to 10 people model for all Professional Services, Support staff and PGR's (post Graduate Researchers). For academic and teaching staff, we will use the ratios below as a guideline, which include single office space allocations for 20% of staff and shared office space allocations for 80% of staff (this is a guideline for overall space allocation not a hard and fast target, and is very much aspirational at this time.)

Additional ancillary space allocations are then included to ensure sufficient space for meeting rooms, breakout spaces and social/kitchen areas. Research groups will be considered by department depending on what they need and any special requirements.

Resulting space allocations are a guideline for total space across a department. These guidelines will be used for new building projects and major refurbishments but

for existing buildings where no change is happening it will not be implemented. Detailed analysis of requirements for specialist spaces will be added to calculations. In addition, allocations will reflect the need to recognise disciplinary differences, as well as specialist space. Having an overall allocation without prescriptive rules gives the department a level of autonomy to consider how they wish to use space, incorporating special requirements or ways of working that are particular to them.

Staff to be allocated	Office space type	Ratio / allocation guideline	Area per person (m ²)	Desk ratio to staff
Academic staff (including teaching and staff researchers)	Single occupancy cellular office	20% of total academic/teaching staff FTE	9 to 11 sq m* 0.5 sq m of ancillary space pp	1:1
Academic staff (including teaching and staff researchers)	Shared offices	80% of total academic/teaching FTE	4.5 to 5.5 sq m*** 0.5 sq m of ancillary space pp	2:1 (timeshare) OR 1:1 (shared office)
Professional Services, support staff and technicians**	Open plan / shared offices	6 desks to 10 FTE	4.5 sq m per workstation*** 2.7 sq ancillary space per workstation	6:10
Postgraduate researchers / PhD	Open plan / shared offices	6 desks to 10 FTE	4.5 sq per workstation*** 1.6 sq m ancillary space per workstation	6:10

* dependent on building – new build to be at the lower end.

** where roles are not office based, the office allocation can be used against specialist storage/workshop style areas required for the role. For technical staff with equipment, individual needs will be assessed on a case by case basis.

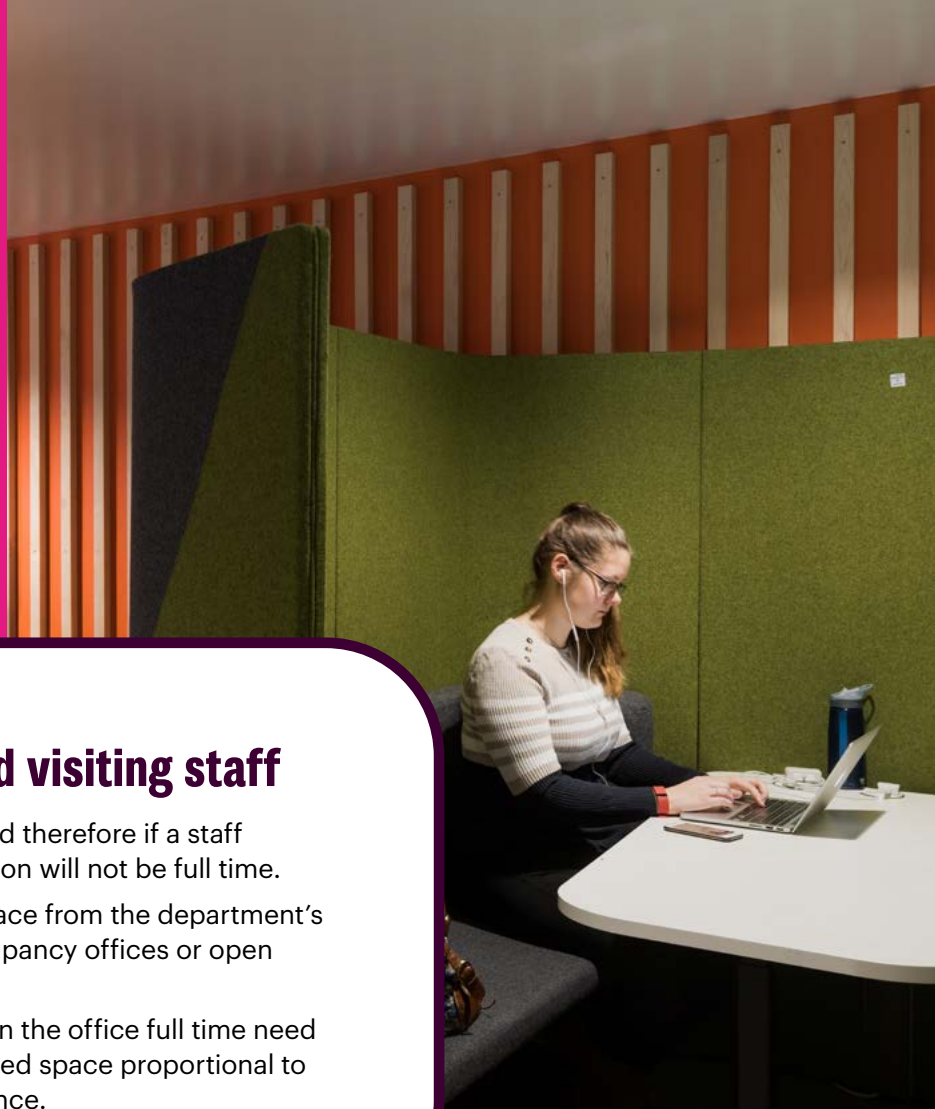
*** HSE guidance suggests a workstation should be a minimum of 11 cubic metres per person. Most University of York ceilings are 2.5 m high and therefore our standards exceed this.

These guidelines may be superseded at any time by reasonable adjustments made for individuals with disabilities or other occupational health needs and all reasonable steps will be taken to make accommodations for these individuals.

Ancillary space is included in allocations to allow for:

- kitchens
- staff social spaces / common rooms
- meeting rooms
- breakout spaces
- Zoom pods
- storage space

Departments can choose how best to allocate this to fit with their requirements and ways of working.



Allocations for part time and visiting staff

- Space allocations will be based on FTE and therefore if a staff member is not full time, the space allocation will not be full time.
- Full time visiting staff can be allocated space from the department's existing and ancillary space, in multi-occupancy offices or open plan space.
- Visiting staff who are not expected to be in the office full time need to use agile working facilities or be allocated space proportional to hours worked as per part time staff guidance.

Recommended department principles for allocating offices

We recommend that departments allocating office space consider the following:

- All options for offices should all be considered, which include:
 - bookable offices
 - shared occupancy with two/multiple desks
 - single office shared between two/multiple on a rota (formal or informal) basis
- Need not grade – prioritise the allocation of individual offices for roles that include a high likelihood of confidential meetings that cannot always be planned in advance or for a specific occupational health reason.

- Sharing of spaces – all allocated offices that are not in use should be made available (see above) and offices should be bookable by others when not in use.

Use the official desk booking system (deskbooking.york.ac.uk) This is the desk booking system that is supported by IT and will be rolled out across all professional hub spaces and departments. You can request an upload spreadsheet from space-planning@york.ac.uk to get specific desks and teams onto this system.

- Be mindful of Equality, Diversity and Inclusiveness (EDI) policies and ensure all allocations are fair, supportive and inclusive.

- Departments should leave a small number of offices unallocated. These unallocated offices should be bookable by anyone in the faculty, in order to ensure rooms are available across campus for all faculty staff.
- Departments should also give consideration to whether space could be repurposed for student social and study space, which should be prioritised; every office allocated results in less student space.
- When new academic staff start, unless significant in number, departments must utilise their current footprint.



OTHER SPACE STANDARDS

The following space norms should be followed for both new build and refurbished spaces.

Teaching space

The University of York will seek to bring all generic spaces within all buildings into the central room booking pool to ensure that the space is available to all. Therefore all seminar, tutorial, lecture and IT rooms will be made available for central timetabling. There are a limited number of demonstrable exceptions to this within the *Bookable Space Policy*. These exceptions are for small bespoke, specialist spaces only.

All new and refurbished learning spaces will be classed as centrally timetabled from the offset.

Teaching requirements can vary and therefore it is difficult to set a standard for space. Space Services will work with the University's Timetabling team to analyse demand and create central rooms that meet that demand but some general guidelines can be found below. All teaching and learning



space standards have been taken from the UK Higher Education Learning Space Toolkit produced by AUDE, SCHOMS and ucisa Any specialist teaching spaces that

exceed the guidelines should have a sound business case to do so and be assessed on a case by case basis.

All teaching space has a standard layout and if changes are made to central spaces they must be returned to their default layout by the user.

Please note, pens etc were removed from lecture theatres some time ago to manage resources. Please ensure you bring your own stationary.

Department or personal items should not be left in bookable spaces unless otherwise agreed by the Room Bookings team and appropriate storage provided.

Type of Teaching Space	Recommended size per person
Group work layout, IT classroom, boardroom OR specialist*	2.5 to 2.75 sq m
Tiered lecture*	1.1 to 1.25 sq m
Flat lecture*	1.5 sq m
For new or substantially refurbished space	Teaching zone for the presenter to include appropriate DDA access, generally 2 m width across the presenting wall.
Standard seminar room	2.2 to 2.5 sq m

* Meeting or exceeding the *International Well Building Institute Guidelines*.

Meeting spaces

Where meeting spaces have been developed as part of your office/hybrid working footprint, these will be bookable by all staff to encourage in person meetings and collaboration.

Additional meeting spaces for specific one off events can be booked through [Room Bookings](#).

Demand on central meeting and teaching space is reviewed bi-annually along with utilisation data to inform the development of central spaces.

Meeting space design and allocations will match those of teaching spaces.

Type of teaching space	Recommended size per person
Meeting room	2.5 to 2.75 sq m



Shared open plan work spaces

The University of York promotes the adoption of shared workplaces as far as possible, and where the building layout allows. Shared spaces should be adopted particularly for professional services, administrative staff and postgraduate research students.

Open plan shared workspaces will be supported by a variety of different formal and informal meeting spaces to facilitate agile working.

Ancillary space for open plan spaces is much higher than for single occupancy offices because all types of supporting space must be catered for such as one to one meeting and storage space that is not required in one or two person offices.

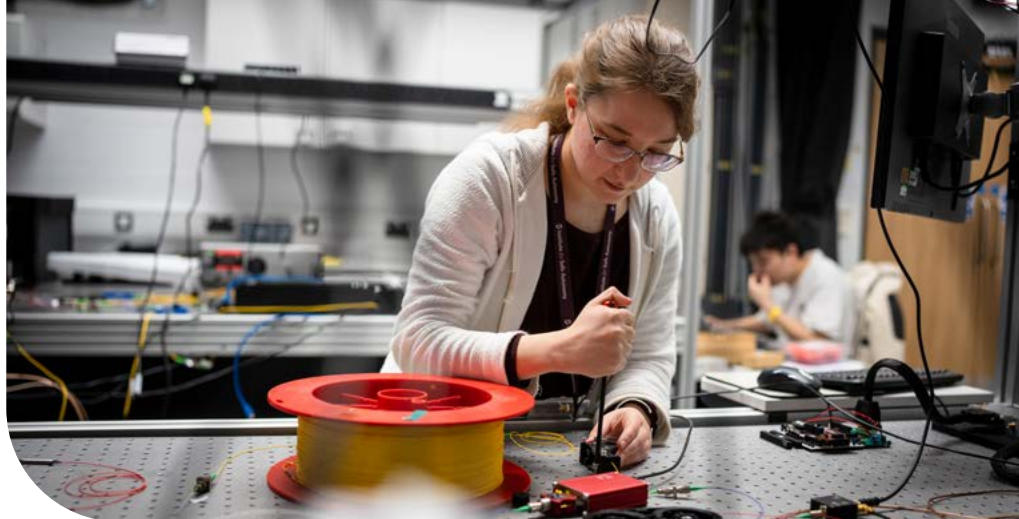
In time, new and refurbished space will be designed on an activity based approach, supporting new ways of working. For shared open plan areas we will look to include varying space types where possible, ideally including quiet areas, drop down areas, bookable desks, team and collaboration spaces, small meeting spaces or zoom pods; this is to support the move to creating fully agile workplaces. For specific space allocations, please see the Space Allocation Model above.

Laboratories

Laboratories make up a large proportion of the University of York estate, second only to offices. Labs are difficult to set specific standards for as requirements can vary significantly between teaching and research and also between disciplines; for this reason only general space standards are given for guidance at this time. New space should adopt a shared communal model where multiple groups carrying out similar activities can share lab – this will allow for flexibility as teams scale up and down. The allowance allows for ancillary supporting space such as storage and write up space. Design of new lab space must show considerations of the following:

- student numbers and hours of instruction
- the precise purpose of the lab
- the size of equipment / apparatus or requirement to be highly specialist
- size of any external or research funding

Requirements will then be reviewed on a case by case basis by the University of York's Estate Utilisation Group.



Departments should take into account the need for office space for those staff who are predominantly lab based and may not therefore require office space regularly. The same principles of utilisation monitoring and the re-use of existing space first, will apply to any cases for new laboratories and research facilities.

For future development of laboratory space, consideration should be given to shared labs – these are lab and workshop spaces that could be utilised by multiple departments or faculties as the lab supports teaching across multiple disciplines. Shared labs can have various benefits, such as reducing costs, increasing collaboration and providing access to specialised equipment and facilities. Where at all possible, Departments are

encouraged to share generic laboratory space.

The following table lists the generic guidelines for space allowance for these areas.

Laboratory space guideline	Area per user (m ²)
Laboratory space (wet/dry)	12 sq m
Office write up/ shared (to be included in total 12 sq m allocation above)	4 sq m

Cellular write up space should come from the overall departmental staff allocation and may reduce the standard office allocation if the department requires these within the facility.



IT classrooms

All IT Classrooms on campus should be shared and operationally managed by IT Services. They are centrally timetabled and available for ad-hoc study when not in use.

New IT classrooms should be designed as flexible multi-use space. Moving forward, designs may incorporate flexible workstations and laptop lockers.

Space type	Recommended size per person
IT classroom	2.5 to 2.75 sq m

Shared social spaces and common rooms

Every member of staff will have reasonable access to a kitchen and common room or social space, but this may not be exclusively for the department/research group/team.

With any new projects or substantial moves this will be worked into your overall office area allocation as part of your ancillary space.



Student study spaces

Where utilisation data has been collated, study spaces are some of our most used areas and it is key to provide a variety of these spaces to all students. The University is committed to providing enriching study spaces in the most effective locations. With ever growing cohorts and departments rarely teaching solely in their own building, these spaces will be open to all students and will not be limited to particular groups, unless it falls into one of the Bookable Room Policy exceptions i.e. specific funding for a specific purpose of study.

The University is piloting new study spaces and final space guidelines will be issued once these pilot spaces have been fully assessed.

Currently we are working towards ensuring that 25% of students can be accommodated in some sort of study area (formal or informal) at any one time. A substantial amount of this is in the central library but other high traffic study areas are also required. When looking at localised study areas outside of the Library we will consider the student footfall and building utilisation and the space will be open to all.

Space type	Recommended size per person
Student study spaces	1.5 to 2 sq m

Toilets

The University of York has a mixed estate in terms of the age and quality of its buildings, including toilets. It is recognised that we do not yet offer the suite of choices that should be available to all individuals, and this will be addressed as new builds and refurbishment takes place.

From the 1st October 2024 an amendment to the The Building (England) Regulations 2024 (SI 2024/645 states there is a requirement to have male and female single-sex toilets in buildings other than dwellings. Universal toilets may be provided in addition to single-sex toilets or where space limits single-sex

toilets. The requirements do not apply where a building notice has been given before 1st October 2024 and the work has either started by that day or is due to start in the 6 months following.

- Therefore all new builds should have a suite of toilets which includes:
 - male
 - female
 - all gender
 - accessible
 - welfare space for breastfeeding / family change
- Any refurbishment of a toilet or nearby area should consider if that toilet should become

an All Gender toilet or can be reconfigured to provide a suite of toilets.

- Putting All Gender toilet signs on existing toilets or accessible toilets does not meet the All Gender requirement. All Gender toilets must be designed to correct specifications including floor to ceiling cubicles.
- Where space does not allow for such a suite of choice then the focus will be on ensuring the The Buildings Regulation Act requirements are met.
- For new builds, the University will work towards digital signage via the student app, to indicate the locations of toilets.

Storage

The storage of large amounts of material on site is discouraged. Each individual should have access to a small amount of personal storage space in the form of a personal pedestal or a locker in open/agile working spaces. Space for the storage of personal belongings and team paperwork has been accounted for in the ancillary office space allocation. The storage of books associated with an individual's role will be accommodated.

For larger items there are several options depending on the type of items and frequency of access required. Storage spaces are classified as:

- **Departmental storage** – small localised storage areas, not greater than 8 square metres in size
- **Central on-campus storage** – storage space managed by Space Planning and subject to the on-campus storage process and policy
- **Off-site storage** – space procured from an independent third party vendor, at cost, to store University property
- **Digital** – various storage services for files and data, including research data

For full details of the storage policy and how to request storage, please see the [University of York Storage Policy – Google Docs](#).





UTILISATION MONITORING

Anonymous data on the occupancy of spaces will be collected. This will be used in conjunction with capacity data to understand space utilisation rates over time, allowing informed decisions to be taken. This is now common practice across Russell Group universities. All new buildings and major refurbishments will build in the capability to actively monitor the utilisation of space.

Utilisation targets

Utilisation is a Space Planning metric which is a combination of Occupancy (the number of people in the room over capacity) by Frequency (the number of timeslots the space was in use out of timetabled hours).

In order to rationalise the estate and ensure we can deliver a growth in teaching requirements, Space Planning is aiming for both teaching spaces, offices and meeting rooms to be used to 65% of their capacity, 65% of the time. This will give us a target utilisation figure of 42.25%.

Performance against these targets will be reviewed for existing spaces and also to monitor improvements as new spaces come on stream. The University will close, demolish or repurpose underutilised buildings to reduce running costs and support our net-zero ambitions.

Requests for additional space will not be approved until utilisation data is available on how existing space is being efficiently used.



CONFIGURATION GUIDELINES

There is not one layout that will be perfect for all teams, however the general principles outlined below will be incorporated into each area even though overall layouts may differ.

The campus needs to be responsive to the changing demands of the learning and social environment, and so wherever possible space will be designed so it can be used flexibly.



Furniture

Wherever possible we will reuse existing University of York furniture, or use recycled furniture to meet all requirements. We encourage all involved to upload any unwanted items to [Warp It](#) and check this in the first instance for unwanted furniture you can claim from other departments.

If there are no remaining solutions

for additional requirements, then please approach your authorised departmental furniture ordering contact (or Deputy Head of Faculty) to place an order.

For large projects, Space Planning will advise and procure furniture to ensure consistency across environments and flexibility in movement between spaces; this

will be specified during the project design phase.

As a principle the University of York is moving away from larger desks towards more unique drop down furniture to support hybrid and agile working spaces.

Furniture standards can be found below:

Space type	Furniture standard
Single occupancy office	1400mm x 800mm desks as standard but 1600mm desks will be re-used for sustainability in appropriate spaces (e.g. single use offices). Desks will be min 1400mm. 1 x under desk pedestal as standard but desk height pedestals will be re-used for sustainability in appropriate spaces. Chair (standard operator chair)
Open plan office	1400mm x 800mm desk Chair (standard operator chair) 1x under desk pedestal or locker if agile working space
Postgraduate research space	1400mm x 800mm desks as standard but 1200mm or 1600mm desks will be re-used for sustainability in appropriate spaces.





Layout and configuration

The following guidelines all apply:

- The construction of barriers in open plan spaces shall be kept to a minimum.
- Open plan areas shall have desks arranged in clusters (usually of 6-8) to facilitate team work.
- Zoning areas in both offices and study spaces can make hybrid/agile working more effective. i.e. 'quiet zones,' for focused work, 'studious

buzz zones' for teams, non-private zoom and phone calls and 'activity' zones for more collaborative work.

Based on the space standards laid out in this document, teams will be given a quota of space based on their headcount and specific requirements. If departments choose to allocate this space differently from the guidance it is at their discretion and additional space will not be provided.

Sustainability

Management of space is a key factor in achieving the University's sustainability goals. All work undertaken will be in accordance with the University of York's sustainability policy, found here: [Sustainability – About the University, University of York](#)

GOVERNANCE AND PROCESS

Space data

The Space Planning team in the Directorate of Estates, Facilities and Technology (DTEF) are responsible for keeping space data up to date. This is not only important to monitor space standards and proposed improvements, but also to provide legal returns such as HESA and TRAC. DTEF commits to ensuring all data held about spaces is correct and easily accessible to support digital services and University decision making.

If you believe we have outdated data, please email space-planning@york.ac.uk with details.

Governance for space allocation and changes

Space Planning is responsible for day to day assistance on space matters and will advise on space optimisation and existing utilisation to develop creative solutions when looking to make changes within an existing footprint.

For small-scale moving of people and furniture within existing capacities and layouts, please contact room-set-up@york.ac.uk and the Rapid Response team will assist you. If the proposal is larger than this please raise a Planon job and this will be assessed by Space Planning or Space Request Group if appropriate.

Decisions relating to assignment or reallocation of space including requests for more space will be made by the Estate Utilisation Group reporting to the Integrated Infrastructure Board or reallocation

of space including requests for more space will be made by the Estate Utilisation Group.

Space Planning will work closely with departments where spaces are vacant or not used effectively to make changes and achieve high utilisations of spaces. Where there are several demands on one space, options will be passed to the Estate Utilisation Group for a decision.

Space management activity and decisions with respect to the allocation and functionality of space will comply with all the University's environmental, fire safety, disability, access and equality policies.

The above space standards provide a guide for departmental and team space allocation. The University of York wants to provide

exceptional spaces that can be accessed by staff and students to further develop research and teaching; if an area's utilisation is unusually low or high, then deviation from the above standards can be authorised by the Estate Utilisation Group

Review of space guidelines

The Space Standards and Guidelines will be reviewed at least biennially by the Estate Utilisation Group with comments sought from the faculties.





york.ac.uk/space-planning

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