UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK

PROTOCOL AND PROCEDURES FOR SPACE MANAGEMENT

June 2025

1. GENERAL STATEMENT

1.1 The University of Limerick is committed to provide and maintain suitable space for students, academic, administrative and research staff and other members of the campus community in order that they can perform university-related activities. The Space Management Committee (SMC) will seek to represent the interests of all University Activities to ensure that valuable UL space is allocated in the best interests of the University as a whole.

1.2 Space is assigned to faculties, divisions, departments, research centres etc. based on the needs of the Unit and the availability of space. All space is the property of the University and at its discretion the University has the right to reclaim and reallocate space as necessary based on the needs and changing demands and priorities of the University.

1.3 In order to obtain optimum utilization of space, all University space must be used in a responsible manner and in accordance with the strategic interests of the University.

1.4 The University regards space as a critical asset and will continually monitor its utilisation against the strategic priorities of the University in order to maximise the use of all available space. This will encourage users to actively manage their space, minimise user demand and lead to the release of unneeded or under-utilised space.

1.5 It is intended that all Units will, where practicable, be assigned space which provides physical cohesion and avoids multi-location of offices and related facilities.

1.6 The SMC will oversee compliance with the principles of space provision and usage as set out in this Space Management Protocol.

1.7 The SMC is responsible for the development and approval of proposals for the provision, allocation, withdrawal and reallocation of accommodation in accordance with agreed strategic objectives. The SMC will principally aim to ensure that large tranches of vacant or under-utilised space are re-allocated based on the strategic priorities of the University as a whole.

1.8 The Buildings and Estates (B&E) Department is responsible for the day-to-day allocation of space and for the implementation of this Space Management Protocol.

2. SCOPE

2.1 Space **covered** by the protocol includes:

- Teaching space including lecture theatres, classrooms, laboratories and computer rooms.
- Office and related space (including open plan areas) for faculty, support staff, researchers and visitors.

- Research write-up stations. B&E will endeavour to provide sufficient research write-up space for research students while they are on campus. A desk booking system will be in place to enable students to book a suitably located desk for up to a week at a time. Spaces may be shared between multiple departments or even faculties. In certain circumstances and with the prior agreement of B&E, research students may be allocated a particular desk for a fixed period of time. B&E will work with relevant departments to ensure, where feasible, that laboratory-based students can book a desk in reasonable proximity to their lab.
- B&E will monitor the utilisation of all research write up spaces to ensure that they are being used in a productive way.
- Research laboratory areas including preparation and other associated space.
- All other UL space with the exception of those spaces mentioned below.

2.2 Space **not covered** by the protocol includes:

- SMC will not involve itself in the day-to-day allocation of offices. This matter will be reserved for B&E. SMC will only consider proposals when large tranches of office space become available.
- Student Residences
- Student courtyard and other commercial areas
- University Arena
- Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership, Roxboro, Limerick

2.3 Other:

In the case of the Park Point complex, whereas the property is managed by Park Point Management and owned by Plassey Campus Centre (PCC), the University will liaise with these entities with a view to the use and allocation of spaces there being so as to best suit the University exigencies. The SMC will determine what best suits the University.

3. IMPLEMENTATION AND PROCEDURES

3.1 The University will maintain a detailed space inventory of its facilities. In keeping with the guidelines set by the HEA, space will be categorised by allocation, room type, description, department/school, size etc. B&E will maintain and review protocols and procedures for updating this inventory and for disseminating this information to relevant parties at the University.

3.2 Requests for space will be facilitated in line with the protocol objectives in the General Statement (section 1 above).

4. SPACE DEVELOPMENT AND RECONFIGURATION

4.1 B&E is responsible for overseeing the building and renovation of all university space.

4.2 Proposals for any change of use, development or alteration must be initially discussed with B&E through the Minor Works process and no work should commence without the prior agreement of B&E. This will apply in all cases including proposed changes in use or occupancy within units, access to buildings and introduction of non-standard restricted security systems.

4.3 B&E will engage in continuous analysis and surveys to determine the optimum assignment of current space, plan for future space needs and identify and recommend solutions to space problems such as poor utilisation and the sharing of space to reduce duplication etc.

4.4 As a general rule B&E will, after appropriate consultation with interested parties, make decisions on space development, alteration and allocation. As noted in the Terms of Reference for the SMC, if circumstances arise where there is significant disagreement between B&E and a Faculty/Division concerning major developments, alterations or allocations, then the matter may be referred to the SMC. The decision of the SMC will be final.

5. TEACHING SPACE

5.1 New programme proposals and modifications to existing programmes must specify teaching space requirements in documentation presented to the Academic Programme Review Committee and should be discussed in advance with Academic Registry Scheduling and Exams to note requirements. Information on new academic programmes and departments and the retiring of programmes should be forwarded to B&E for assessment of space implications.

5.2 A database of space available for central scheduling will be maintained and reviewed annually with Academic Registry. SMC in conjunction with the Provost will determine, in consultation with interested parties, whether additional space should be made available to central scheduling. Space will not be removed from central scheduling's pool of rooms without the agreement of the Provost.

5.3 The Provost will be consulted when additional teaching space is being provided in new or refurbished space. The Provost will agree on the optimal use of this space. Proposals for new buildings or reconfiguration of existing space will give consideration to teaching space capacities in order to optimise the potential for scheduling purposes.

5.4 Units must adopt a flexible approach to the use of potential teaching space. In particular, consideration must be given to minimising the amount of laboratory areas which are considered 'dedicated' rather than multi-functional.

5.5 Academic departments must ensure that systems are in place to ensure accuracy when submitting teaching space requests to Academic Registry. Specifically, faculty should specify if a room is required for only a limited number of weeks in semester and requirements should be assessed for each semester rather than relying on information from previous years. This will capture any changes which have been made to module delivery modes and will identify the consequences this might have on the availability of teaching rooms, laboratories and associated space.

5.6 Audits will be carried out at least annually to determine undergraduate classroom and laboratory usage during semesters. The audits will also compare utilisation rates for centrally and locally scheduled teaching spaces. B&E will make recommendations as appropriate to the SMC based on the audit results.

5.7 To enable effective use of campus facilities during the summer vacation for conference and events, PCC will manage the use of all classroom and lecture theatre space for this period. Campus community requirements for these facilities during this period should be requested through the PCC office. In addition, B&E may require access to teaching facilities between semesters and during the summer break to facilitate planned maintenance and upgrading. This will be planned in conjunction with PCC for the summer period, and with the relevant Faculties, Departments and other units for periods outside the teaching semester and summer vacation period.

6. OFFICE SPACE

6.1 B&E will endeavour to find appropriate office space for faculty and staff. In order to optimise office usage, it is necessary to maintain accurate records and projections of office occupancy and availability. Units are required to forward information on recruitment, sabbatical leave, retirements, long term sick leave etc. to B&E.

6.2 In order to facilitate physical proximity and minimise multi-location, priority will be given to the allocation of vacated offices to faculty/staff in adjacent units.

6.3 Refurbishment works to office spaces are carried out as necessary. Occupants may be required to temporarily vacate to an alternative office location to facilitate these works. Staff may even be required to work from home for periods during refurbishments. When office space is refurbished, standard office furniture, fittings, decor etc. will be provided by prior agreement with B&E. Faculty and staff are not permitted to refurbish offices without prior approval from B&E via the Minor Works process. Approval for such work is at the discretion of the Director of Buildings and Estates.

6.4 Offices assigned to faculty/staff who are on long-term sick leave may be utilised by B&E for other faculty/staff where the need arises. Once notification is received that the original occupant of the office is returning to work, then the office will be vacated by the temporary occupant.

6.5 HR will provide information on retirees, and in instances where contracts have terminated, to B&E. Offices or desk space occupied by faculty and staff who retire or whose employment has terminated will revert to B&E not later than 5 working days following retirement/contract end date. Retirees and former employees have no entitlement to office or desk space save in exceptional circumstances where approved by B&E.

6.6 HR will notify B&E when faculty/staff are going on sabbatical or other long-term leave. The utilisation of the office during the period of absence will be agreed between the unit manager and B&E. If agreement is not possible, B&E will decide on the appropriate use. Offices cannot be left vacant while faculty/staff are on such leave.

6.7 Staff who avail of research leave will not have an automatic right to maintain their office or desk while on said research leave unless otherwise agreed with B&E.

6.8 Staff who avail of the blended working policy may be required to vacate or share their existing office/desk. They may be required to move to a smaller office. They may also be required to work within a hot desking system if one is introduced within their unit.

7 RESEARCH SPACE

7.1 B&E will allocate and monitor the utilisation of all research space.

7.2 Where the University is submitting research funding applications or undertaking new research initiatives that will have significant space implications, the Office of the Vice President Research and Innovation will flag these to B&E at the earliest opportunity, to facilitate early planning.