

The Teaching & Learning Spaces Working Group

2013 – 2025



Prepared by the Centre for Teaching and Learning:

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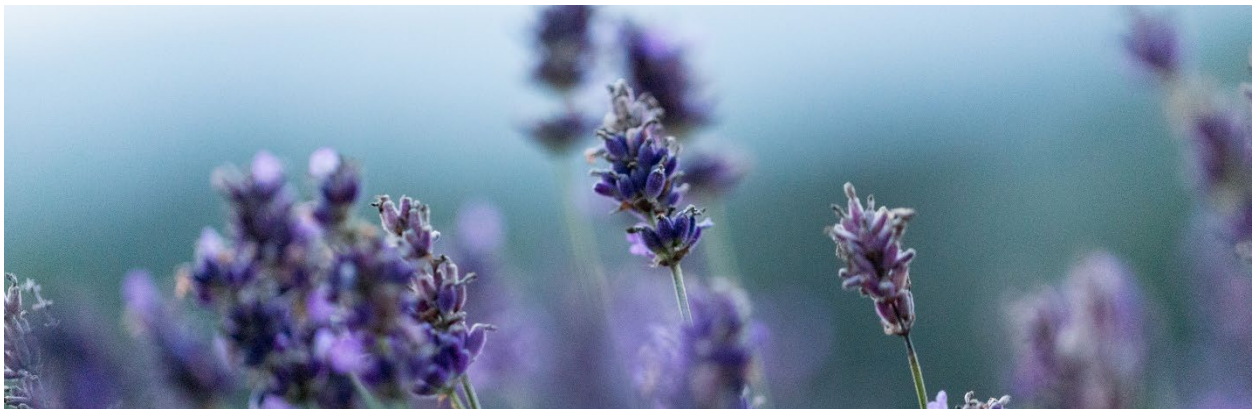
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Audience: Internal leadership, faculty, students, facilities, tech partners, and external stakeholders

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Queen's University is situated on the territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek.

*Ne Queen's University e'tho nón:we nikanónhsote tsi nón:we ne Haudenosaunee táhnon Anishinaabek
tehatihsnonhsáhere ne onhwéntsya.*

Gimaakwe Gchi-gkinoomaagegamig atemagad Naadowe miinwaa Anishinaabe aking.

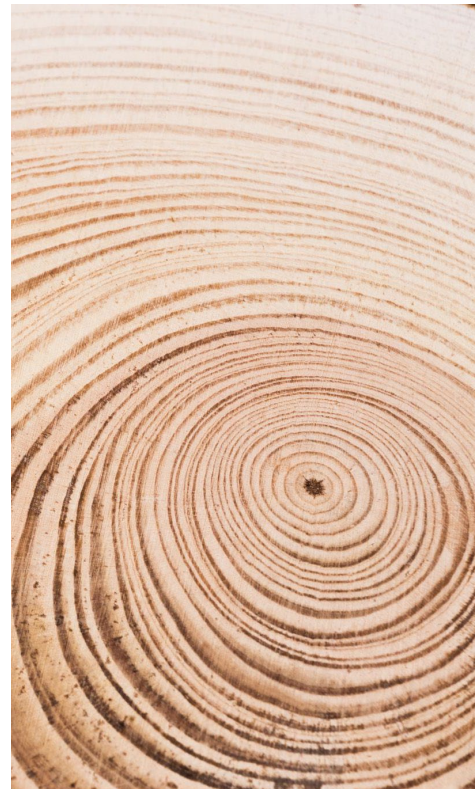
Executive Summary

This report provides a 12-year retrospective on the operational processes and successes of Queen’s University’s classroom transformation efforts, led by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and stewarded by the Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning (VPTL). In 2025, Queen’s reached a significant milestone with the opening of its 25th central Active Learning Classroom (ALC). This moment offers a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the scope, impact, and value of this long-running initiative and to recognize the foundational work that has taken place—much of it impactful yet often behind the scenes.

Key figures in the project’s early success —Dr. Andy Leger, Joanne Brett, and Steven Alexander—laid the groundwork not only for the physical transformation of classrooms, but for a broader institutional shift toward evidence-informed, student-centered learning environments. Their work catalyzed the creation of the Teaching and Learning Spaces Working Group, a cross-campus partnership that continues to bring together key partners across campus. An example of this transformation can be seen in the experience of faculty like Dr. Jonathan Rose, Director of Political Studies, who transitioned from traditional lectures to dynamic, student-centered teaching within ALCs. Stories like this illustrate not only the impact of these spaces on teaching practice but also the cultural shift toward more engaged, evidence-based approaches to learning at Queen’s.

During the Winter 2025 term, 160 faculty members are teaching 194 courses in ALCs—spanning nearly every discipline. Queen’s is now recognized as a national leader in active learning classroom design and innovation, with its model informing institutional initiatives across Canada.

This report serves to document and celebrate the people, partnerships, and progress that have shaped Queen’s classroom transformation. It reaffirms the university’s ongoing commitment to improving student learning experiences through research-informed design, collaborative practice, and a shared institutional vision for the future of teaching and learning.



Partnerships in Action: The Power of Collaboration

One of the greatest strengths of the Teaching and Learning Spaces Working Group (TLSWG) at Queen's University is its cross-unit composition, which brings together expertise from academic, operational, and support units across campus. This deliberate integration of roles enables the group to take a holistic, well-informed approach to the design, management, and renewal of centrally managed learning spaces.

Each unit brings a distinct perspective, grounded in their day-to-day operations and long-term strategic goals. Facilities staff understand the technical limitations and opportunities of buildings, while IT Services ensures that technology systems are not only functional but future-ready. The Registrar's Office brings essential insight into scheduling constraints and enrollment patterns, while Event Services helps balance academic needs with broader campus usage. Most importantly, the Centre for Teaching and Learning offers deep expertise in pedagogy, ensuring that decisions are grounded in research-informed teaching practices.

This breadth of knowledge allows the TLSWG to engage in collaborative problem-solving that anticipates both immediate operational issues and long-term educational goals. For example, when considering the renovation of a classroom, committee members can weigh technical feasibility, pedagogical best practices, accessibility standards, scheduling pressures, and student experience—all in a single conversation. This enables more balanced, practical, and innovative solutions that would be difficult to achieve within a single unit's silo.

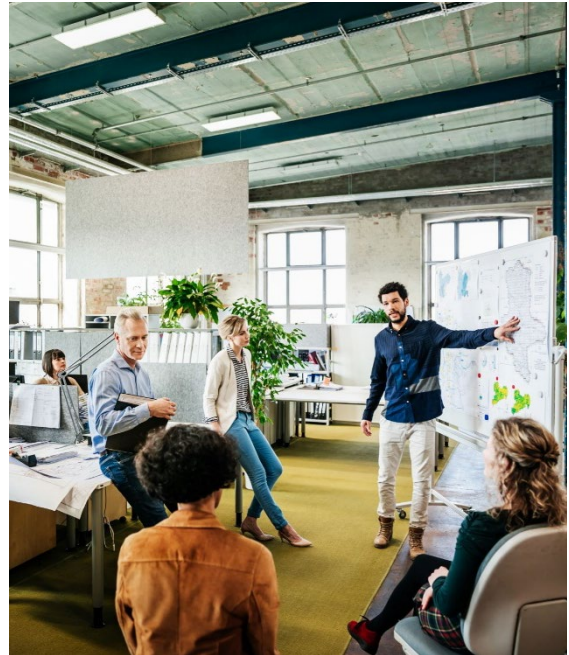
The committee's diverse membership also enhances responsiveness and agility. Because members hold mid- to upper-level decision-making roles within their units, they can act on issues quickly—whether it's submitting work orders, implementing policy adjustments, or revising course assignments based on construction timelines. This operational flexibility, combined with the committee's broad perspective, allows the TLSWG to stay nimble in the face of complex, campus-wide challenges, from pandemic-related room adjustments to managing overlapping renovation schedules.



Ultimately, the strength of the TLSWG lies not just in its structure, but in its culture of collaboration. By valuing each member's unique lens and fostering open dialogue across departments, the group has created a model for shared governance that supports evidence-based, student-centered learning space development. It's this cross-unit synergy that has enabled Queen's to build and sustain some of the most thoughtful, responsive, and forward-looking classroom environments in Canadian higher education.

Shared Governance, Clear Roles

The development of Active Learning Classrooms (ALCs) at Queen's University began as a bold experiment but quickly became a catalyst for broader change. The early success of the Ellis Hall renovation project, led by Dr. Andy Leger (CTL), Joanne Brett (Timetabling Office), and Steven Alexander (ITS), extended far beyond the transformation of physical spaces. These leaders recognized the need for coordinated, institution-wide support to ensure that pedagogical and technological innovation could be sustained, scaled, and embedded into the broader academic infrastructure. Their foundational work created the momentum and vision necessary to establish a new kind of institutional structure focused on learning space design and management.



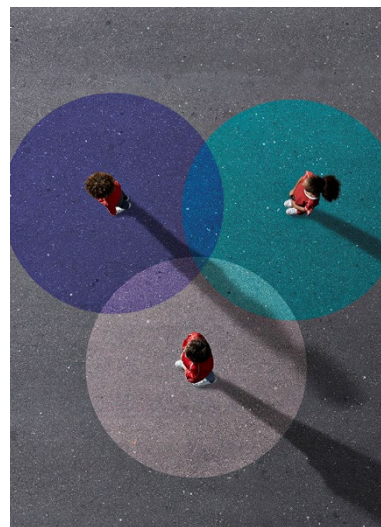
In response to this growing need, the Teaching and Learning Spaces Working Group (TLSWG) was formed. This cross-functional team brought together representatives from key operational and academic units, including the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), Information Technology Services (ITS), Facilities (Design and Construction, Custodial, and Fixit Operations), Event Services, the Timetabling/Registrar's Office, and Campus Planning and Real Estate. The group was created to bridge traditionally siloed areas of the university, ensuring that the design, operation, and continual evolution of teaching spaces could reflect both institutional priorities and on-the-ground teaching and learning realities, while maintaining communication and strategic alignment with the VPTL.

What sets the TLSWG apart is its balanced composition and workflow. Its members are primarily upper-middle managers with operational authority, allowing the group to be nimble and responsive without being hindered by the scheduling constraints often associated with more senior administrative committees. The group is chaired by an

educational developer from CTL, whose pedagogical expertise ensures that student and instructor needs remain at the forefront of decision-making. This structure fosters meaningful collaboration, with each member contributing domain-specific expertise to support shared objectives. The result is a model that is both strategically aligned and operationally effective.

Since its formation, the TLSWG has evolved into a central mechanism for managing the university's learning spaces. It oversees the planning and renovation of over 130 centrally-supported classrooms and has completed more than 16 full-scale classroom transitions. The group also addresses ongoing maintenance, room allocation, risk mitigation, and broader classroom strategy. Its proactive work has led to the creation of a robust classroom inventory system, a resource hub for instructors, and a framework for evaluating and prioritizing classroom upgrades. Importantly, the TLSWG's work extends beyond high-profile ALCs to include informal, outdoor, and traditional classroom spaces—ensuring that Queen's supports a diverse and inclusive learning environment.

The formation and sustained activity of the TLSWG reflects a recognition that institutional support is crucial to the success of innovative learning environments. While the scholarly literature often highlights the importance of such support, it rarely details how it is operationalized. The Queen's model offers a compelling case of how to organize cross-departmental expertise into a functional, responsive structure. As universities continue to invest in the physical and pedagogical transformation of their learning spaces, the TLSWG stands as a leading example of how institutional collaboration can underpin and accelerate educational innovation.



Reference Paper: A Committee to Manage Innovative Learning Spaces: Balancing Committee Size, Cross-Campus Representation, and Decision-Making Power by Andy Leger, Karalyn McRae, and Michael Murphy

From Siloes to Systems

Through a survey to the collaborating units and membership of the TLSWG, we collected testimony on the collaborations and work of the group. Across the feedback collected, members of the working group found that the breadth of connections across the campus enhanced the efficiency and communication across services. As a result, Joanne Brett (Timetabling) reflects, “We know who to talk to now and have developed processes to elevate and address everyday issues,” citing the regular meetings and open communication as actors that lead to the efficiency and effectiveness of the group. When reflecting on individual benefits to participating in the group, the survey found that membership found their participation useful in terms of making gaining new perspectives on management and planning and enhanced efficiency of communication across all user groups. Lastly, the membership was asked to reflect on the overall impact of the TLSWG on Queen’s as a whole. Members reported feeling the effects of the efficiency of the group and the ability to have a collective whose sole focus is teaching and learning spaces as a benefit to the Queen’s community. Steven Alexander (IT Services) responded, “collectively, the efforts of the team have transformed the central teaching spaces on campus and have brought a sense of direction, ownership, and oversight to our teaching spaces.” Similarly, Joanne Brett (Timetabling) emphasizes “informed decision making” when it comes to classroom renovations that the University “never had ... before.” Overall, the feedback from membership reveals the personal and institutional benefits from participation in the TLSWG and indicates a sense of operational efficiency and community building across campus services.

“We know who to talk to now and have developed processes to elevate and address everyday issues,”

-Jo Brett, Timetabling

“Collectively, the efforts of the team have transformed the central teaching spaces on campus and have brought a sense of direction, ownership, and oversight to our teaching spaces.”

-Steven Alexander,
IT Services

[We have] “informed decision making” [when it comes to classroom renovations that the University] “never had ... before.”

-Jo Brett, Timetabling

Contributors to the Teaching and Learning Spaces Working Group

Membership brings together the cross-functional expertise needed to support the design, operation, and ongoing management of teaching spaces.

Core members include representatives from:

- Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) (Chair and administrative support)
- Digital Classrooms Team, Information Technology Services (ITS)
- Facilities (Design & Construction, Operations, Project Management)
- Campus Planning and Real Estate
- Office of the University Registrar / Timetabling
- Event Services

Members are generally mid- to senior-level managers with the authority to make operational decisions, which helps the group address issues efficiently and move solutions forward within their areas.

Additional members or subject matter experts may be brought in as needed to support specific initiatives or provide additional administrative support.

Current Membership

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Membership</i>
<i>Steven Alexander</i>	Manager of Digital Classrooms/AV Technology	Information Technology Services	2013 – present
<i>Joanne Brett</i>	Manager, Timetabling	Office of the University Registrar, Student Information Systems	2013 – present
<i>Tony Gkotsis</i>	Director, Campus Planning and Real Estate	Facilities, Campus Planning and Real Estate	2017 – present
<i>Todd Hartrick</i>	Manager, Operations Client Services	Facilities	2021 – present
<i>Kaitlin McDonald</i>	Administrative Coordinator	Centre for Teaching and Learning	2020 – present
<i>Darcy McNinch</i>	Functional Space Planning Analyst	Facilities, Campus Planning and Real Estate	2025 – present

<i>Katherine Newstead</i>	Operations Manager	Event Services	2017 – present
<i>Rebecca Sweetman</i>	Associate Director, Learning Environments (Digital & Physical)	Centre for Teaching and Learning	Chair 2024 – present
<i>Zack Tefoglou</i>	Director, Project Management	Facilities, Project Management	2025 – present

Past Members

<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Membership</i>
<i>Andy Leger</i>	Educational Developer	Centre for Teaching and Learning	2013 – 2024 Chair 2017 - 2024
<i>Andrea Phillipson</i>	Educational Development Fellow	Centre for Teaching and Learning	2016 – 2018
<i>Karalyn McRae</i>	Educational Developer	Centre for Teaching and Learning	2018 – 2024 Chair 2024
<i>Nadia Jager</i>	Financial Director	Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic)	2019 - 2024
<i>Isabelle Nault</i>	Project Manager	Facilities, Project Management	2013 – 2019 Chair 2014 - 2017
<i>Abhishek (AK) Sharma</i>	Project Manager	Facilities, Project Management	2019-2020
<i>Olusola Ashcroft</i>	Project Manager	Facilities, Project Management	2020-2021
<i>Michelle Weir</i>	Project Manager	Facilities, Project Management	2020 – 2021
<i>Erik Harmsen</i>	Project Manager	Facilities, Project Management	2021 - 2024
<i>Cheyenne Deschamplain</i>	Project Assistant	Facilities, Project Management	2020 – 2022
<i>Kate Brothers</i>	Project Assistant	Facilities, Project Management	2022 – 2024
<i>Jamie Thompson</i>	Senior Project Manager	Facilities, Project Management	2024 – 2025
<i>Rick Stratton</i>	Associate University Registrar	Office of the University Registrar, Student Information Systems	2024 – 2025

<i>Paul Pearsall</i>	Assistant University Registrar	Office of the University Registrar	2021 – 2025
<i>Annie Riel</i>	Student	Centre for Teaching and Learning	2013
<i>Adam Grotzky</i>	Student	Centre for Teaching and Learning	2013-2015
<i>Victoria Chen</i>	Student	Centre for Teaching and Learning	2014 – 2016
<i>Andrew Crawford</i>	Student	Centre for Teaching and Learning	Summer 2020
<i>Reimy Mulligan</i>	Student	Centre for Teaching and Learning	Summer 2021
<i>Bronwyn Faulkner</i>	Student	Centre for Teaching and Learning	2023
<i>Cathleen O'Brien</i>	Student	Centre for Teaching and Learning	Fall 2024

External Partnerships and Sector Influence

Additional Support from:

- Andrea Brown, Designer, Facilities
- Lindsay Down, Designer, Facilities
- Maridee Osolinsky, Planner/Accessibility
- Stephanie Wardman, Designer, Facilities

Looking Ahead: Designing the Next Generation of Learning Spaces

Upcoming Projects

Fall 2026

- Etherington Hall Auditorium

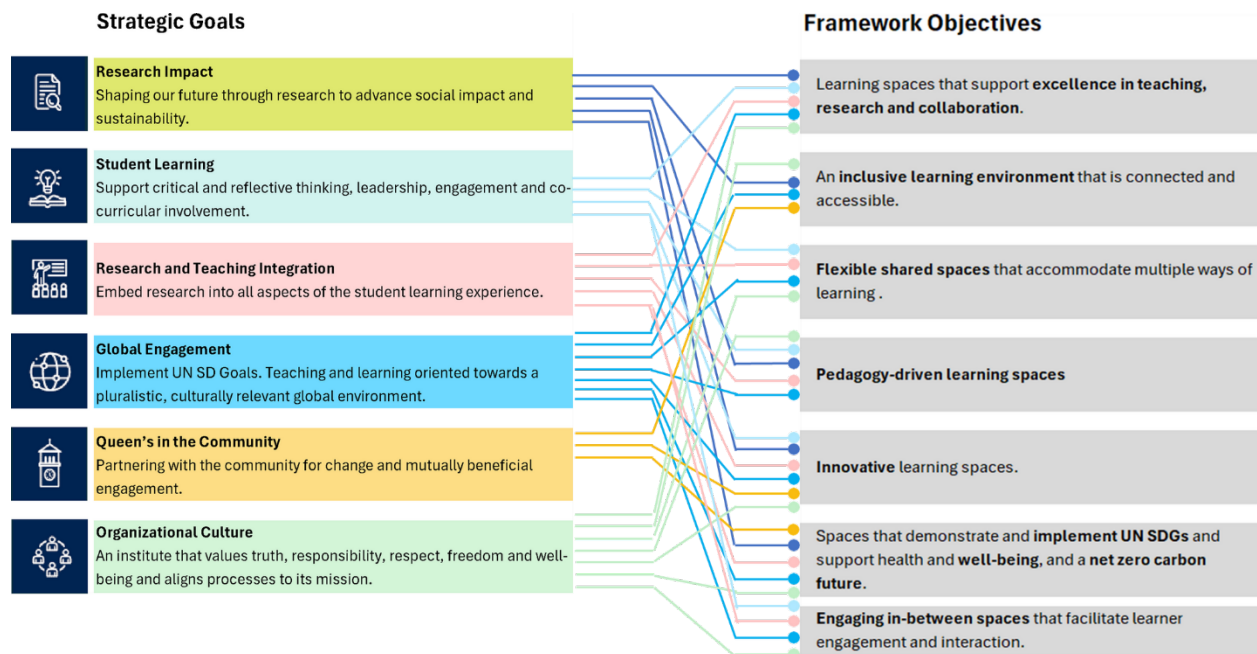
Summer 2026

- Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality (AR/VR) Classrooms
 - Kingston 100 and 112
 - To be completed by August 2026

- Flexible design high tech active learning, furniture can be moved out for AR/VR use of room (5 students in experience at a time per room; classrooms will accommodate 40 students in their active learning configuration)

Strategic Directions

The strategic directions for Active Learning Space development at Queen’s is informed by The Queen’s University Teaching and Learning Space Framework (The Framework). The Framework is a roadmap for future ACLs, focusing on integrating the university’s strategic goals as a foundation for its objectives.



The development of this framework involved a comprehensive review of current design strategies in post-secondary educational facilities and active engagement with faculty, staff, and students. The Framework aligns with Queen’s Strategic Goals and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as well as promotes inclusive, accessible, and flexible learning environments to support diverse learners and teaching approaches.

Data collected in The Framework report reveals a surplus of smaller spaces and a need for larger spaces for teaching and learning. Adding larger classrooms would accommodate future enrollment growth and the surplus of smaller spaces creates opportunities to repurpose and renovate select spaces for better utilization. By operationalizing this framework in decision-making, the TLSWG considers the demand for Active Learning classrooms as well as the enrollment needs in high-demand courses. Where there is a surplus or shortage of classrooms, there is opportunity for transformation of new spaces

across campus. The future strategic directions of the group are informed by The Framework and its research-based objectives.

See [the full breakdown of The Framework](#) for more details.

Conclusion

This report has highlighted the unique and collaborative operational processes of the Teaching and Learning Spaces Working Group towards transforming spaces across campus into Active Learning Classrooms. The working group has been able to collaborative address ongoing maintenance, room allocation, risk mitigation and broader classroom strategy in the effort towards Active Learning transformations. The group has, to date, completed more than 16 full-scale classroom transitions to ALCs. This report celebrates and provides insights into the strategic importance and impact of the group, as well as the critical operational processes of this collaborative structure.