THE FUTURE
OF LEARNING
ENVIRONMENTS

# LEARNING-SPACE COMPASS FRAMEWORK

HEDQF

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**This document is authored by Hiral Patel. Many thanks to Caroline Paradise for her valuable feedback and constructive discussions throughout the project.**

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The Higher Education Design Quality Forum is an independent organisation which exists to promote high quality design quality across university campuses, buildings and facilities, in the knowledge that this enhances teaching, learning, research and public engagement.

Research is a core component of the charity's activities, supporting the higher education sector to create, maintain and deliver high quality environments through greater understanding and knowledge of how they affect the people that use them. Supporting early career researchers within institutions across UK & Europe to deliver research projects that address relevant issues relating to design of the built environment within the sector is an important component part of our long term strategy.

This study is a part of an ongoing exploration of the design and impact of learning environments within the Higher Education sector, focusing on the connection between curriculum and the physical learning space. Working with Hiral Patel from University of Reading/Exigo Consultancy has allowed us to examine this relationship from the perspective of the different stakeholders and we look forward to seeing how this project develops as we work through a series of pilot studies. Many thanks to Hiral and the wider HEDQF Research Group for the effort and enthusiasm for this project.

**Dr Caroline Paradise**
*Co-chair HEDQF Research Group*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The HEDQF 'The future of learning environments' project identified six key themes for research into future learning environments in university estates.**

The topics are connected by a fundamental, and overarching, theme of articulating the relationship between learning activities and learning spaces.

The 'learning-space compass' framework and toolkit has been devised to articulate those links and help diverse stakeholders understand and discuss learning needs. This report describes the framework and provides guidance on how to integrate it into the different stages of a learning space project.

## LEARNING-SPACE COMPASS OVERVIEW

The 'learning-space compass' consists of a framework and toolkit which:

- maps different typologies of learning and assessment to identify their spatial characteristics;
- develops a vocabulary to express modes of learning to a range of stakeholders;
- connects planning, design and management of learning spaces to learning outcomes;
- encompasses the diversity of disciplines and learners;
- aims to reconceptualise how learning spaces are valued in relation to learning outcomes;
- offers guidance on how and when to engage stakeholders with the framework to inform a learning space project.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Learning space needs to be viewed as an interaction of physical, digital and human elements.

The curriculum for a given subject is not a fixed entity. A particular set of learning outcomes can be delivered and experienced in many different ways.

We need to understand more about curriculum patterns relating to disciplines and levels of study and their space implications. We also need to understand the relationship between the curriculum as designed and the curriculum as experienced and the role that space plays in this.

## BENEFITS

Initial testing has shown the 'learning-space compass' to be a useful tool to generate a common understanding and facilitate dialogue between different stakeholders.

Used throughout the project life-cycle, it could also be a useful change management tool both by raising academics' awareness of the role of space in curriculum design and delivery and by helping frame the criteria for post-occupancy evaluation in relation to desired learning outcomes.

## NEXT STEPS

We are seeking pilot projects to test out the 'learning-space compass'. Lessons learned from the pilots will be fed back into the development of the framework/toolkit as part of a continuous learning process. We will organise an annual learning event to share findings from pilot projects and scope themes for further research.

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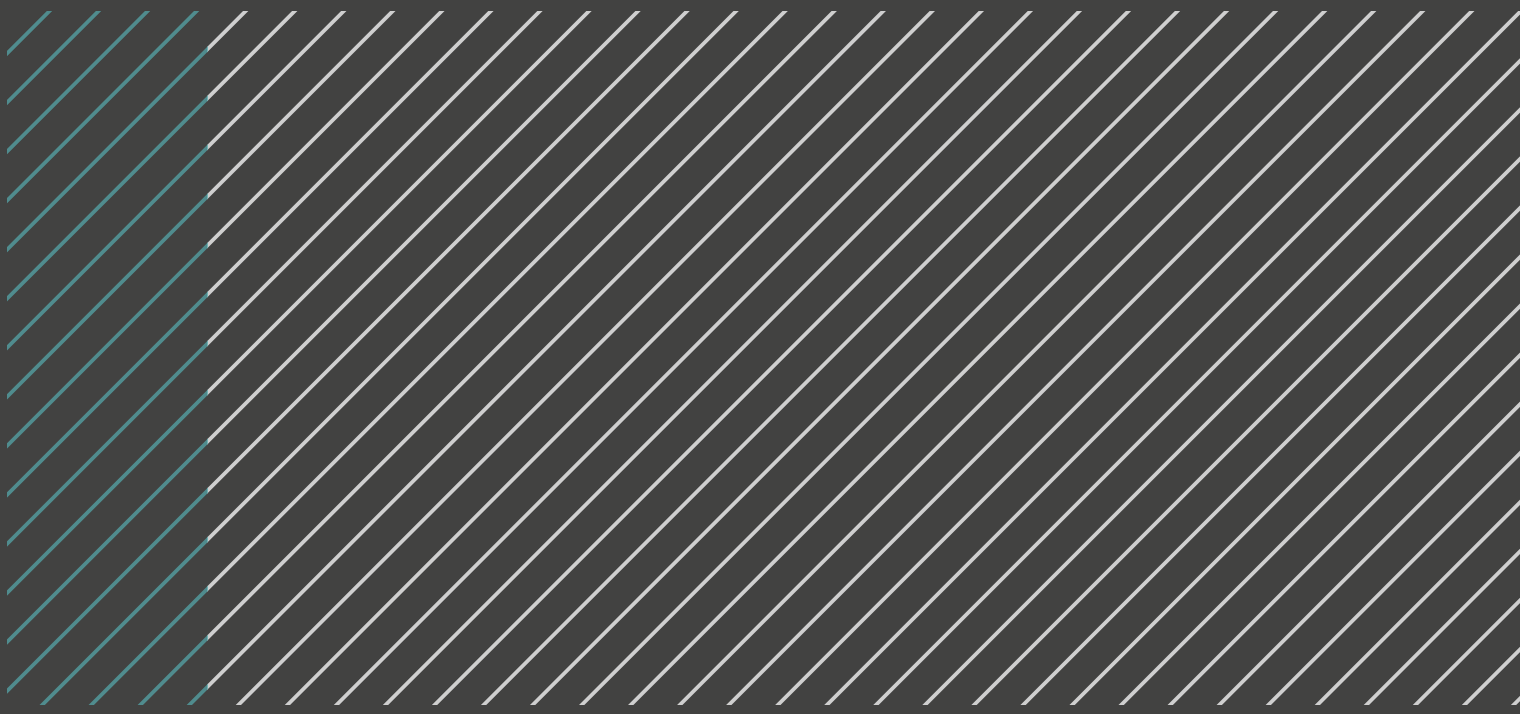

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