



# Collaborative Space Guidelines

Approved by the Director of Capital and Space Management; June 9, 2026

## Intent

As higher education shifts to an environment of peer-centric and collaborative learning, informal learning spaces are needed outside the traditional classroom setting. Collaborative spaces support and encourage more peer-group study and project team activities, interdisciplinary and informal student interactions, and emulate workspaces of innovative companies.

Collaborative spaces also allow for people to gather before or after a class or meeting (also helping preserve primary circulation routes) and allow students a comfortable place to work or relax between scheduled activities.

There are opportunities to incorporate collaborative spaces at various scales, in projects ranging from minor renovations to the creation of new academic buildings and exterior landscapes.

These guidelines were developed to inform all units of the University, exclusive of Weill Cornell Medicine. For renovations and new construction projects, project managers in Facilities and Campus Services and the units will refer to this document when working with project stakeholders and architects during the design phase.

## Collaborative Space Recommendations

**Location.** Collaborative spaces should be located on a universally accessible route and not interfere with required egress routes. Ideally, these spaces should be located on student active floors near classroom, seminar, and conference rooms. Consideration should be given to existing adjacent spaces and minimize visual or audible distractions (e.g., not placed in a quiet faculty office zone). Many successful collaborative spaces are near a café or dining facility. Regardless of food availability, these spaces should be designed to allow for food and drink. Spaces should be in an area of the building open to everyone during normal building hours. Usage should be on a first-come, first-serve basis with no reservation systems.

**Furniture.** Provide furniture that supports a number of scenarios, from groups sitting at worktables, relaxed and casual seating with coffee tables, to armchairs with swinging table arms and spaces for individual study. Mobile and easy to re-arrange furniture will allow groups to customize space for their needs. Consider durability and avoid wood veneered edges and surfaces/fabrics that can degrade or look worn quickly, and select table and chair legs that can endure re-arrangement and daily custodial care, etc.

**Amenities.** Collaborative spaces shall have wireless access and plenty of electrical outlets and USB-charging stations convenient to users. While outlets in tabletops and coffee tables make for easy connections, the inclusion of these solutions needs to be balanced with the ability to re-arrange the furniture. Spaces should be well illuminated and task lighting may be appropriate for flexibility. Daylighting is very conducive to learning environments and improves use of these collaborative areas. White boards and large computer monitors facilitate group work. Exterior spaces are typically limited to outdoor furniture and wireless, however power could be incorporated into the design.

**Appearance.** Areas designed for collaboration should be integrated into the building aesthetic or exterior landscape. There is a need to create a comfortable warm environment with good acoustics that fosters use. These spaces provide opportunities to incorporate artwork and Unit displays highlighting their activities.

## CONTACT

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