

## Classroom Management: Teaching in Classrooms with Fixed Tables

Phillips 206, 208, 275, and 335; Murphey 202

The active learning classrooms listed above, sometimes referred to as studio classrooms, use fixed tables and moveable chairs. This format supports collaborative learning groups. Electrical power outlets and A/V connections at each table support the use of computers or laboratory equipment. The tables are wide enough to accommodate white boards for group work, and a ceiling-mounted document camera allows student work on these boards to be projected on the screens. This room is not designed for extensive lecturing; and there is no "front" of the room so that the focus is on the students and their learning activities rather than the instructor(s), who act as learning facilitators. However, it is possible to lecture in this room using the chalk board or screens as a visual focus for written material.

Faculty members who have taught in studio classrooms report that they enjoy a closer level of interaction with students and are better able to gauge student understanding of course concepts. Students also appreciate the ability to interact more closely with instructors and peers. More information on the University's use of and evaluation of these seats is available at: <http://cfe.unc.edu/studio-classrooms/>

The Center for Faculty Excellence is always available to discuss ideas for active learning techniques for your course that can help you make the most of this classroom.

### Guidelines for Success

You will want to interact directly with students when they are working in small groups. Keeping classroom floor space clear will help you avoid trip hazards while navigating the room.

- Have students keep book bags and personal items stored underneath the tables.
- Depending on the weight of book bags, hanging them on the back of a seat may also be an option.

Each of the tables in this classroom are built with a short pedestal in the center that houses the electrical and network outlets. These can be utilized for other purposes as well.

- Some faculty members use them for document distribution and pickup.
- They are a great place for student name tents that can help you and students quickly learn names. This may be especially effective if you are changing student seating assignments throughout the semester.

Your classroom may also feature additional white boards. Shared writing surfaces provide students with opportunities to visualize their understanding and to learn from one another. They can be used to facilitate a variety of easy-to-implement active learning techniques.

- Maintain access to the walls by encouraging students to plug laptops into power towers instead of wall outlets where available.
- Establish a routine of having students erase their work at the end of class.
- At the end of the week, consider using the provided cleanser to wipe down the boards (or ask your students to do so).
- Contact the ITS Classroom Hotline if you notice that there are no working dry erase markers or if the boards are dirty or broken.

Administering exams in a classroom designed to facilitate cooperative learning can be a challenge, especially when students are sitting at round tables and can easily see their peers' work. In addition to monitoring student behavior closely during an exam,

- Some instructors have avoided giving exams in these rooms (by scheduling exams in alternative classrooms).
- Others distribute multiple versions of an exam to reduce the possibility of cheating.
- If enrollment for your course is less than the classroom's capacity, you may also be able to simply spread student seats out a little more at each table.

Walking into a classroom where there is no clear front and back can be a little disorienting. Allow yourself several class periods to acclimate to the space.

On the first day of class, introduce students to the classroom and how it will support your learning goals for the course. If appropriate, encourage student buy-in by letting them help you craft the policies that will govern use of the classroom. Make your expectations clear on day one and take the time to enforce them the first week to help make class norms stick.

We welcome your own suggestions for teaching in this classroom as you gain experience.

### **Questions?**

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