
ACTIVE LEARNING CLASSROOM (ALC) GUIDELINES

WHY USE ACTIVE LEARNING CLASSROOMS?

Physical spaces impact teaching and learning. The new Active Learning Classroom in the Pearson Library promotes the use of active learning techniques that can aid the student's mastery of course material, encourage community in the classroom, and increase engagement, self-esteem, and positive attitudes towards learning. Students learn best when they take responsibility for their own learning, and when they actively manipulate the material in multiple ways to try solving authentic problems. Using the ALC in a student centered way will promote deep thinking about the material as well as the learning process itself. If you primarily lecture in class, or have the students work alone on computers, this room is NOT a good fit for your class. Only book the room if you use collaborative active learning in your class regularly.

SHIFTING ROLES

Active learning shifts the role of the teacher from the "sage on the stage" to "guide on the side". That means the instructor is no longer the *sole* leader, expert, or authority figure in the class. Instead of the instructor having all the knowledge and giving it to the students, the students are expected to take an active role in their education. Instructors build the infrastructure of the process (though planned activities such as discussions, debates, group work), and provide feedback and guidance to make sure the student is on the right track. This may be a new experience for the student; they have to actively manipulate the material, sometimes struggling and making mistakes before they can solve the problem. That may lead students to view the behavior of the teacher as failing to carry out their responsibilities. Therefore, it is vital that you explicitly discuss with your students why you are making them carry more of the burden of their own learning; because that is the way people learn the best.

LOGISTICS

- Someone from the Center of Teaching and Learning will contact you when you book the classroom, so that you have access to all the support you need. If you need further technical or pedagogical training, please submit a [helpdesk](#) ticket.
- The Active Learning Classroom will be locked when not in use; the instructor will need to checkout a key, using a CLU ID card, at the library front desk each time they teach, and return the key back to the front desk when they are finished.
- It is the instructor's responsibility (not the library's) to configure the room the way they want and then return it the way they found it.
- Booking will be done through [Astra](#) regardless if it is for a class (registrar) or an event (Conferences and Events). If it is for a class, your department dean will need to approve the request. Instructors should discuss the class with their deans to let them know why their class would be a good fit for the ALC.
- Please do not eat or drink in the room.
- There will be a PC laptop cart in the room; the code to unlock it is _____. You will be responsible for handing out laptops to students and making sure all the laptops are back in the cart and charging at the end of class. If you would prefer Macs, there is also a Mac cart available, but you would have to submit a request to Media Services ahead of time to get it moved into the room.
- Students can utilize their own devices, but if they are using Macs, they will also have to bring their own dongles to connect with the classroom monitors.
- Before the first class, make sure you go to the classroom to familiarize yourself with its layout and use. This can be done as part of your training by the CTL.

BEST PRACTICES FOR USING ACTIVE LEARNING CLASSROOM

Adapted from [Washington](#)

- During the first week of class
 - Explicitly talk to them about what active learning is, why you are using it, and how they will have to behave differently to succeed in the class.
 - Create fun ice breakers and low stakes activities to orient the students to the different uses of the classroom.
 - Encourage students to move their chairs, move around the room, etc.
 - Students might need practice connecting their devices to the group screens; create low stakes activities where they have to take turns sharing their desktops.
- Classroom configurations
 - You can have six separate tables for group work, and push them into one or two large tables in the center for class-wide discussions and meetings.
 - Get your students used to setting up the room the way you want it, then resetting it at the end of class. Put an image of the configuration you want on the overhead showing them how you want it set up. Time them to see how fast they can do it.
- Group work
 - Use Bb to randomly assign students to a group, or to let them choose groups based on a problem or project that group wants to investigate.
 - Change the groups at least once, though not too frequently.
 - Ask students if they like group work, or do not like it. Put all the students who don't like it (lone wolves) in a group together ([source: Faculty Focus report](#)).

STUDENT-CENTERED TEACHING

Adapted from [UCF](#)

- Assess where your students are; what do they know and what misconceptions do they have about the course topics that you will need to address *before* replacing them with better models of understanding.
- Both students and the professor are responsible for motivation and coming to class prepared.
- Students are treated with dignity and respect; their individual and diverse perspectives and experiences are valuable voices that should be heard in the classroom.
- Goals are selected by both the professor and the student.
- Students are active creators of knowledge, not passive receivers of information.
- Problems should not have one “right” answer, but have multiple answers.
- Emphasis is on deeper levels of thinking (application, analysis, evaluation, creation).
- Professor teaches disciplinary methods the students then use to uncover the answers for themselves.
- Students are allowed flexibility in sequencing of activities, direction of projects, etc.
- Professor emphasizes and teaches metacognition throughout and encourages student reflection on why they are making the choices they are making.

SAMPLE ACTIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES

Adapted from [UCF](#)

Think-Pair-Share

Students take a few minutes to write potential answers, they then pair up and discuss what they each put, altering, combining, or synthesizing both contributions into one answer. Student can then share those answers to larger groups; a few can share them with entire class.

Role-Playing/Debate

Students role-play different figures and interact based on those roles. Several students are the main debaters, while the rest of the class is the jury deciding who “won” the debate and why.

Fishbowls

A small number of students must respond to questions distributed in a previous class session. These students then teach the rest of the class on that topic. Afterward, the entire class reflects on what the fishbowl students did and how successful it was.

Case Study

An open ended story or case study provides a vehicle for analysis, criticism, and reaching conclusions.

Reciprocal Peer Questioning

Students prepare questions on a lecture, reading, experiment, etc. that they share with a group and discuss to answer with supporting evidence. Each group chooses one question to share with the large group as a discussion starter.

Group Work

Students have a long term or signature assignment they work with a consistent group of students on. Class time is used for active research and collaboration on the final product.

Group Quizzes

Students answer several questions on their own, submit them through Blackboard, then can get into groups and discuss their answers. They can then retake the exam to get back partial or full credit for any corrections.

Concept Mapping

Students in a group use whiteboards to create detailed concept maps on an issue. Groups can each map the same concept or different ones.

Games

Have students play games or simulations, such as [Patterns II](#) for learning inductive reasoning or the [Ethics Game](#) for ethical decision making.