25 Years Anniversary

Trinity disAbility Hub

disAbility Service
2000 - 2025

TCD Sense
Think Sense,Think Sensory...

TCD Sense
Guidelines

Foreword

TCD Sense began with a simple idea: that our campus should feel welcoming, calming, and intuitive for everyone who studies, works, or visits here. Over the past five years, this idea has evolved into a practical framework that helps us understand how sound, light, colour, and space shape the way we think, feel, and connect.

These Guidelines bring together learning from students, staff, and services across Trinity—linking design, wellbeing, and accessibility through a shared vision of inclusion. They are grounded in evidence but driven by lived experience. From the first sensory audits to the co-design of new spaces, the process has shown how collaboration and creativity can turn good intentions into meaningful change.

TCD Sense is more than a design guide; it is a statement of culture. It reflects Trinity's commitment to building a campus that listens to its community, responds to diverse sensory needs, and evolves with feedback. Every project, whether a quiet corner or a new building, is part of this continuous journey toward belonging.

We invite all colleagues and students to use these Guidelines—to see, hear, and feel our spaces in new ways—and to join us in shaping a campus that supports everyone to thrive.

Kieran Lewis
Mental Health & Wellbeing Manager, disAbility Service

Declan Treanor
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Executive Summary

TCD Sense is Trinity College Dublin's framework for creating sensory-inclusive spaces across campus. It guides how we design, retrofit, and manage our physical environment so that everyone—students, staff, and visitors—can participate fully in college life. Rooted in Universal Design and informed by lived experience, the Guidelines show how simple, evidence-based changes to lighting, sound, layout, and signage can transform how people experience Trinity. They move beyond accessibility compliance to promote comfort, belonging, and wellbeing for all.

Our vision is a campus where sensory inclusion is part of every space, from libraries and lecture halls to courtyards and cafés—a connected network of environments that are intuitive, flexible, and welcoming.

TCD Sense was developed through collaboration between the disAbility Service, Estates & Facilities, Occupational Therapy, the Library, and student partners. It is aligned with the University's Strategic Plan 2025–2030 under the pillars of People, Place, and Purpose, and contributes to the disAbility Service: Ability, Inclusion & Belonging Action Plan 2025–2030 and the Five-Year Accessibility Enhancement Plan.

The Guidelines cover six parts:

1. Introduction and Strategic Alignment – why sensory inclusion matters and how it supports Trinity's mission.
2. Sensory Evaluation & Audit – tools and methods for understanding how spaces feel and function.
3. Space and Sensory Environment Design – practical design guidance for Respite, Quiet, Study, Social, and Outdoor spaces.
4. Retrofit / New-Build Process Flow – a step-by-step pathway from audit to implementation.
5. Navigation and Coherence – ensuring spaces are easy to find and form a connected sensory network through the TCD Sense Map.
6. Evaluation and Strategic Embedding – how sensory inclusion is measured, maintained, and embedded in Trinity's planning and culture.

Through TCD Sense, Trinity leads in developing a campus that listens, learns, and adapts—where design excellence and inclusion go hand in hand.

Part 1

Introduction and Strategic Alignment

Purpose of the Guidelines

TCD Sense provides a practical framework for designing, adapting, and maintaining sensory-aware environments across Trinity College Dublin.These Guidelines bring together evidence-based design, student and staff experience, and universal-design thinking to ensure that every campus space supports wellbeing, participation, and belonging.

They outline how sensory considerations can be built into new and existing spaces—from classrooms and libraries to social and outdoor areas—so that the physical environment actively enhances learning and community life. The approach emphasises small, achievable improvements that collectively transform how people experience campus life.

Strategic Alignment

TCD Sense directly supports the goals of Trinity's Strategic Plan 2025–2030 by promoting an inclusive, people-centred campus under the pillars of People, Place and Purpose. It also implements commitments within:

- Trinity disAbility Service: Ability, Inclusion & Belonging Action Plan 2025–2030, embedding sensory inclusion into daily university practice.
- Trinity Sustainability and Wellbeing Agendas, recognising that sensory wellbeing and environmental sustainability are interdependent.
- National Access Plan 2022–2028, ensuring equitable access and participation for disabled and neurodivergent students.
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Articles 9 & 24), supporting accessible learning environments and participation in higher education.

By aligning these frameworks, TCD Sense translates policy into practical, lived change across campus design and management.

Principles and Frameworks

TCD Sense is grounded in established models of inclusive and sensory design:

- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** promotes multiple means of engagement and access, ensuring all students can participate fully in academic and social life.
- **Dunn's Sensory Processing Framework:** recognises individual differences in sensory regulation and response to stimuli.
- **Person–Environment–Occupation (PEO) Model:** emphasises the dynamic relationship between people, their activities, and the environments in which they occur.
- **TCD Sense Map & Co-Creation Feedback:** captures lived experience across campus, ensuring that students and staff guide continuous improvement.

Core Practice

The following core practices underpin every sensory design decision at Trinity:

1. Diverse Experiences

Different people experience the same environment in different ways. No single space suits everyone; therefore, the campus must provide a balanced network of calm, quiet, active, and social spaces. All should be open to everyone, creating a shared culture of inclusion.

2. Holistic Integration

Sensory design is not an add-on but a natural part of learning, working, and social life. Incremental, thoughtful adjustments across many settings create a collectively more accessible campus.

3. Adaptive and Evolving

Spaces must evolve as people's needs and uses change. Continuous feedback and periodic review ensure that environments remain relevant, safe, and effective.

4. Education and Awareness

Staff and students need to understand how sensory environments affect wellbeing and productivity. Awareness campaigns, training, and signage empower everyone to use and respect sensory spaces confidently.

Co-Production and Feedback

Sensory inclusion thrives when it is co-produced. TCD Sense is built through partnership among students, staff, Estates & Facilities, Student Services, the Library, the disAbility Service, and academic schools. Each group contributes unique expertise—lived experience, professional insight, or operational knowledge—that shapes how spaces are designed and maintained.

The TCD Sense Map, feedback surveys, and student-intern reflections create a continuous learning loop. This participatory approach ensures that sensory design remains dynamic, evidence-informed, and rooted in community experience.

Outcome and Vision

The long-term vision is a sensory-inclusive campus where physical, social, and digital environments enable everyone to thrive. Through TCD Sense, Trinity demonstrates that accessibility and design excellence are inseparable, affirming the University's commitment to belonging, wellbeing, and universal inclusion.

Part 2

Sensory Evaluation & Audit

Purpose of Sensory Evaluation

Sensory evaluation is the foundation of every TCD Sense project. It provides an evidence-based understanding of how people experience a space—its light, sound, movement, temperature, texture, and usability—and highlights both what works well and what may cause discomfort or exclusion.

A structured sensory audit ensures that design decisions are guided by real data and lived experience rather than assumption. The process encourages reflection, collaboration, and continuous improvement across all campus environments.

When to Conduct an Audit

A sensory audit should be carried out:

- **Before** the design or refurbishment of a new space.
- **During** project planning or post-occupancy review to assess function and comfort.
- **In response to feedback** from staff or students indicating that a space may present sensory barriers.
- **As part of routine evaluation**, ideally every 3–5 years, to ensure ongoing relevance and compliance with Trinity's accessibility standards.

Audits can be initiated by any College unit, but are normally coordinated through the **disAbility Service** and **Estates & Facilities**, with Occupational Therapists providing professional guidance

Audit Tools and Frameworks

TCD Sense has used various frame worksand tools to create a comprehensive profile of each space, including the **Simpson Sensory Audit Tool and ASPECTSS Design Framework.**

Over the course of the project two evaluation tools have been developed based as outlined below:

1. User-Led Accessibility Audit Tool (ULAA-T)
www.tcd.ie/disability/disability-service-projects/accessibility-audits/empowering-inclusion-2025/

2. Sensory Environment Self-Evaluation Tool
https://sensoryenvironmenttool.github.io/SelfAssessment/

3. Sensory Environment Occupational Therapist Evaluation Tool
Together, these tools generate a balanced picture of sensory accessibility and inform design choices for diverse users.

Audit Process

1. Preparation

- Identify the space, its primary function, and typical users.
- Gather existing floor plans, occupancy data, and maintenance records.
- Determine the audit team: usually a member of Estates, an OT, a student intern, and a user representative from the area.

2. On-Site Observation

- Walk through the space during typical usage times.
- Record sensory conditions (light levels, sound, smells, temperature, movement flow, clutter).
- Photograph features that enhance or inhibit sensory comfort.

3. User Feedback

- Interview or survey regular users about comfort, usability, and emotional response.

4. Analysis and Summary

- Combine results from various audit tools to form a sensory review.
- Highlight immediate actions ("quick wins") and long-term priorities.

5. Reporting and Recommendations

- Produce a concise, visual report summarising findings.
- Map the space onto the TCD Sense Map and categorise it (Respite, Quiet, Study, Social, Outdoor).
- Share with Estates & Facilities and the disAbility Service for review and planning.

Preview and Advance Information

Preview and advance information should form part of every TCD Sense audit and implementation process. Users should be able to anticipate the character of a space before entering it, particularly where the space is intended for respite, quiet study, support, or recovery. Advance information should reduce uncertainty and support planning by describing the likely sensory conditions of the environment in a clear, consistent, and up-to-date format. This should include, where practicable, photographs, a short description of lighting and noise conditions, an indication of room size and layout, and notice of any temporary changes such as building works, altered routes, or reduced privacy. A simple plan at building entrance level and linked information through the TCD Sense Map should also be considered.

Where a room cannot be seen before entry, an image of the inside of the room should be provided near the door or through the online TCD Sense Map.

For bookable or supported spaces, preview information should be available at the point of booking or referral so that users can decide whether the environment is suitable for them.

Outputs and Use of Data

Each completed auditproduces:

- **A Sensory Report** (scoring and narrative report).
- **Annotated photographs** showing areas for improvement.
- **Recommendations for design features**, maintenance, or behavioural adjustments.
- **Accessibility rating** linked to the online **TCD Sense Map** so users can plan visits based on sensory preference.

Each completed audit should also record the space's sensory profile in a way that supports practical use. In addition to scoring and narrative findings, the audit output should identify typical noise conditions, visual complexity, privacy level, lighting controllability, and any known triggers or environmental constraints. This information should feed directly into the TCD Sense Map so that users can locate spaces not only by category, but by sensory characteristics and likely fit for need.

Data from multiple audits are aggregated annually to monitor progress, identify trends, and inform Trinity's Five-Year Accessibility Enhancement Plan.

Collaborative Audit Practice

Every audit is a co-design opportunity. Students, staff, and service teams work together to interpret findings and prioritise solutions. This approach ensures that technical improvements (lighting, soundproofing, layout) are matched by cultural improvements—understanding, empathy, and awareness.

Interns and student representatives play a key role, gaining experience in environmental accessibility, leadership, and Universal Design in practice.

Trinity Inclusive Internship Programme Group Photo outside Printing House Square.

From Audit to Action

The Sensory audit is the first step in the wider TCD Sense process outlined in Part 4. Its findings feed directly into the **Co-Design & Planning** phase, where practical interventions are developed and costed. In this way, the audit acts as a bridge between lived experience and physical change, ensuring that sensory inclusion becomes an integral part of Trinity's campus evolution.

Zón Mac Léinn, St. James's Campus

Part 3

Space and Sensory Environment Design

Purpose and Overview

Every campus space serves a purpose: to learn, to work, to rest, or to connect. Sensory design ensures that these purposes are fully realised by making environments easy to access, navigate, and enjoy. When sensory comfort aligns with function, spaces become more effective, inclusive, and sustainable.

TCD Sense promotes an integrated approach to sensory design across five broad categories: Respite, Quiet, Study, Social, and Outdoor spaces.

These categories allow staff and designers to plan improvements consistently while maintaining flexibility for the unique character of each location.

Design Foundations

- **Function Aligned with Purpose:** Each space should have a clear sensory identity that supports its intended use.
- **Simplicity and Predictability:** Layout, lighting, and signage should be intuitive, minimising uncertainty and cognitive load.
- **Accessibility by Default:** Spaces should meet or exceed universal design standards, ensuring everyone can use them independently and confidently.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Environments should allow users adjust light, sound, and seating to suit individual needs.
- **Sustainability:** Design choices should use natural light, durable materials, and energy-efficient systems that enhance wellbeing while reducing impact.

Operational Design Principles

Sensory inclusion depends on management as well as physical design. A space that is well designed on paper may cease to function as intended if it becomes cluttered, noisy, overly scented, poorly maintained, or difficult to interpret in everyday use.

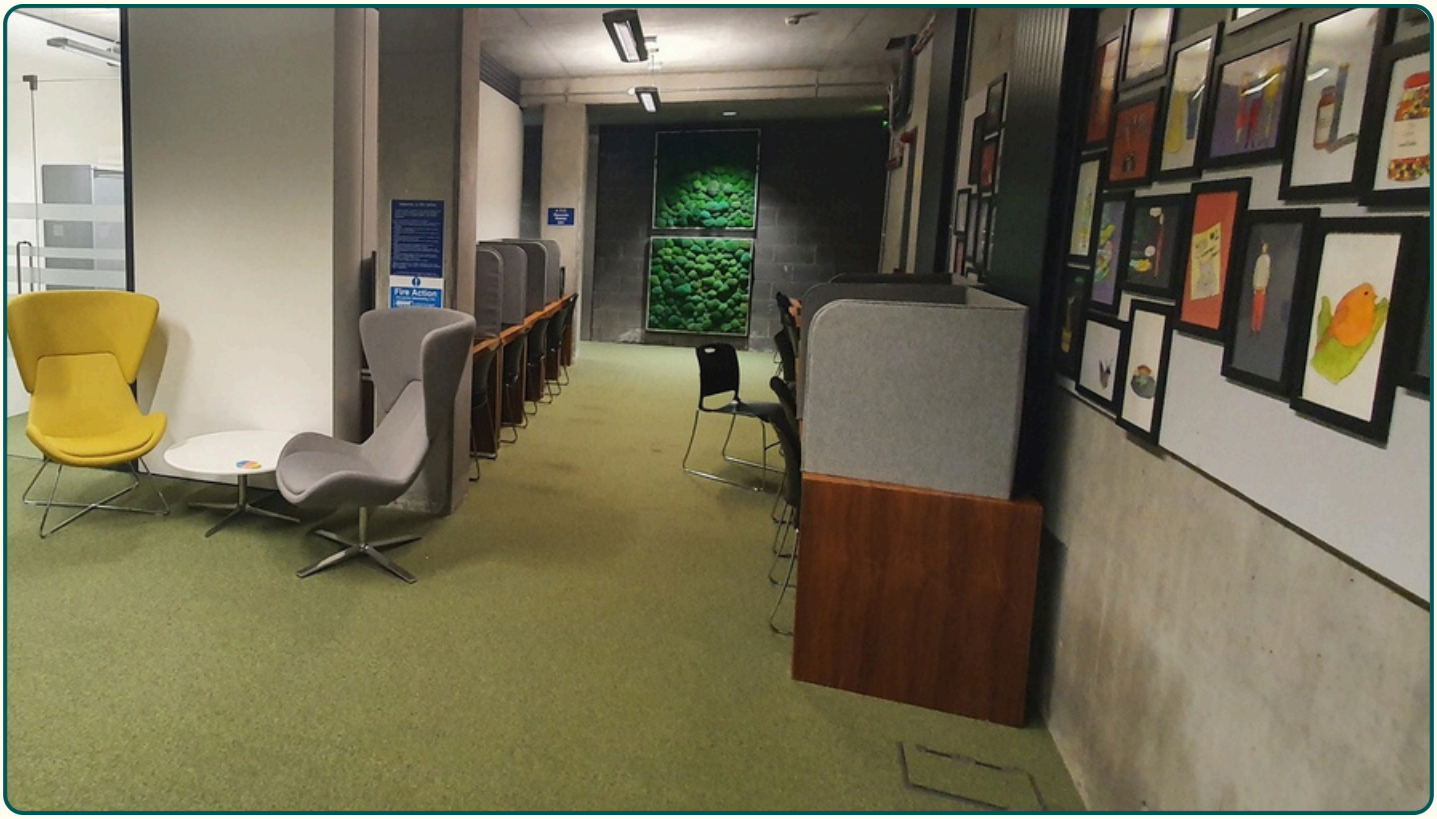
TCD Sense spaces should therefore be supported by operational standards covering room set-up, cleaning, furniture placement, lighting maintenance, signage, and user information. Sensory design should be understood as a continuing management responsibility rather than a one-off fit-out decision.

Facilities and Function

Every space on campus should serve its intended purpose clearly and consistently. Sensory design helps strengthen this function by making environments easier to access, understand, and use.

Function Aligned with Purpose

Spaces should be planned and maintained so their sensory character matches their role. For example, a study area should support quiet, focused work, while a social space should allow conversation and movement without being overwhelming.



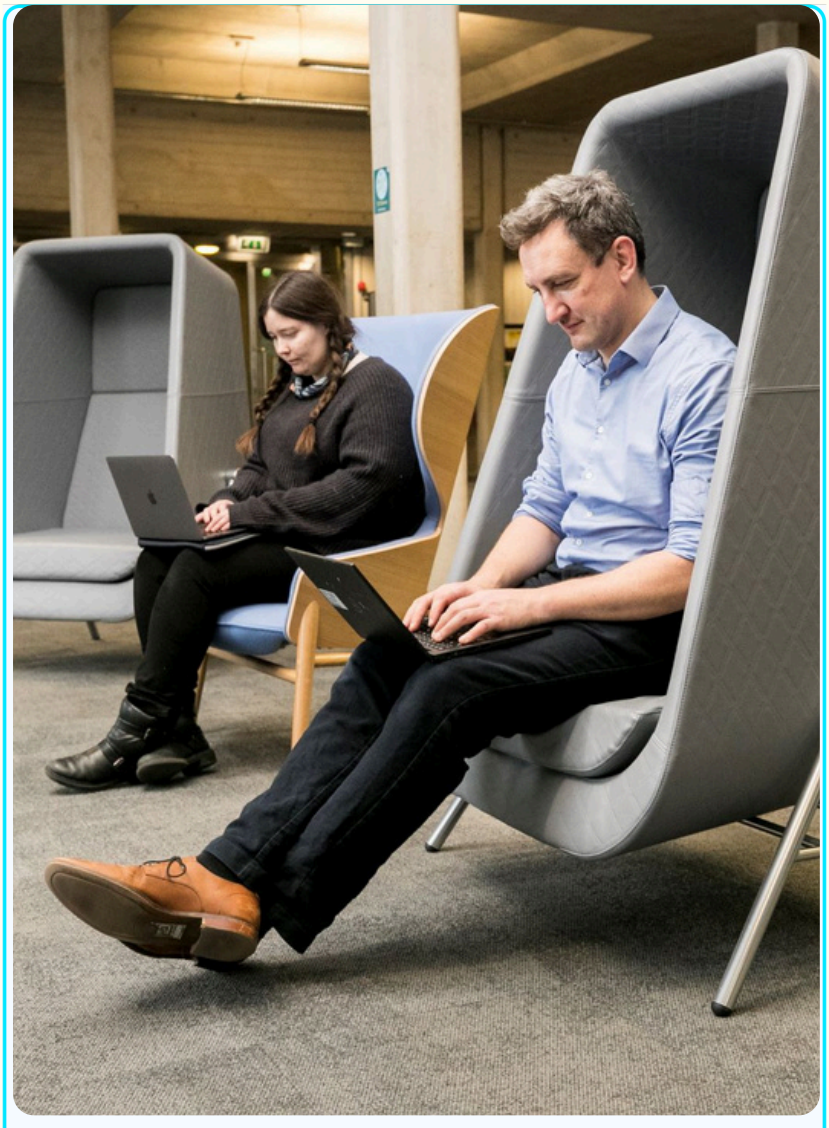
ATIC space in the Ussher library.

Space Categories

Not every space has the same role. To make design practical, campus spaces can be grouped into broad categories. Each category has its own sensory needs, linked to how people use the space and what they expect from it.

Why use categories?

- They make it easier to match design choices with the function of the space
- They help staff plan improvements without needing specialist knowledge
- They ensure consistency across campus, while still allowing flexibility.



Study Pods, Boland Library.

Space Categories

Respite spaces

Small, calm areas designed for short-term withdrawal, recovery, or regulation. These zones prioritise comfort, privacy, and neutral sensory input often featuring adjustable lighting, soft furnishings, and minimal background noise.

Quiet spaces

Tranquil indoor settings intended for low-stimulus rest, reflection, or quiet work. Noise, light, and movement are actively managed to support concentration and calm.

Study spaces

Focused academic environments where sensory conditions are deliberately moderated to enhance sustained attention. Includes individual desks, small group areas, and accessible seating designed to support diverse learning and student needs.

Social spaces

Lively, multi-use environments encouraging social interaction, collaboration, and informal gathering. Furniture and zoning support flexible group sizes and social energy.

Outdoor spaces

Green areas offering restorative contact with nature and its varied sensory elements. Outdoor spaces act as extensions of campus wellbeing infrastructure, supporting regulation, relaxation, and informal community connection in low-pressure, open-air settings.

Respite Space

Respite spaces are often designed as minimally stimulating rooms for individual usage. These spaces are dedicated, and sometimes bookable, rooms or small spaces where a student can go to relax and be at peace, either as part of their daily routine, or if the need arises.

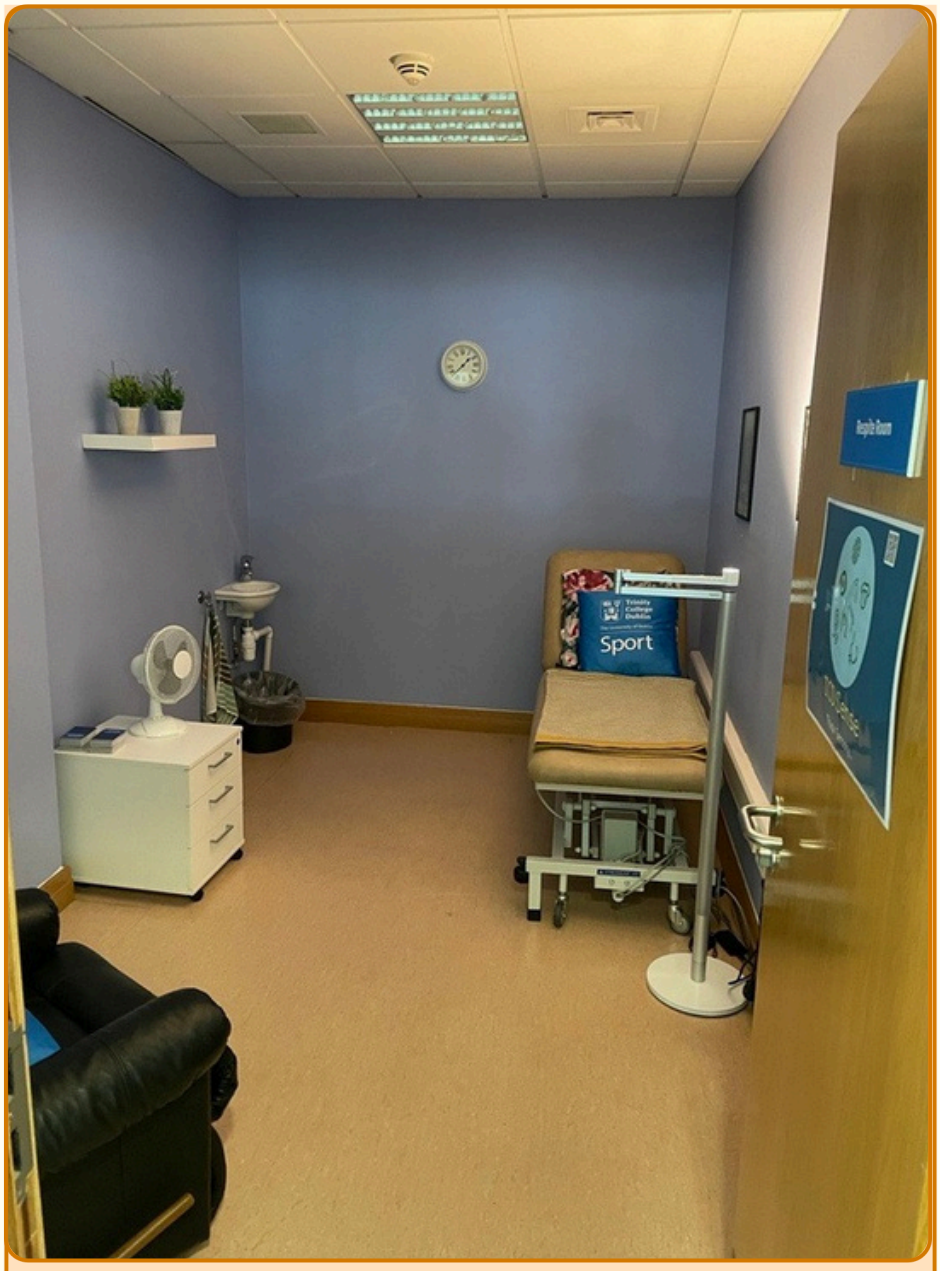
Respite Room Graphic, Arts Building

Respite Space

Functionality

These spaces tend to be highly comforting, providing low stimulation, soft and relaxing furniture, with the aim of bringing peacefulness to students in need.

It is important that object clutter is kept as minimal as possible while still being impactful to the functionality of the room, to ensure the low-stimulation nature of the space.



Respite Room, Trinity Sports Centre

Respite Space

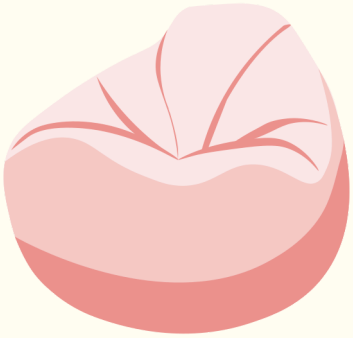
Defining Features

Private and Individual

Private,single-user rooms designed for calm withdrawal, offering minimal noise, low visual stimulation, and a secure sense of privacy.

Flexible Seating

Comfortable seating options like beanbags or armchairs that allow users to recline, relax, and regulate sensory or physical comfort.



Adjustable Environment

Soft, dimmable lightingand window blinds enable personal control of brightness and tone to reduce glare and overstimulation.

Easy and Welcoming Access

Clearly signposted, independently accessible rooms requiring minimal staff interaction, designed for comfort, safety, and ease of spontaneous use.

Additional Guidance for Respite Spaces

Management and Availability

Respite spaces should remain easily and reliably available when needed. Because sensory overload and distress cannot always be predicted, provision should not depend solely on advance booking. Where a respite room is bookable, an alternative nearby provision should be available wherever feasible. An occupancy indicator should be provided at the door, and where possible linked to digital information systems without revealing who is inside. The room should be monitored in use to determine whether current provision is sufficient in number, location, and condition.

Preview and Privacy

Users should be able to understand the nature of the space before entering. A photograph or visual preview should be available through the TCD Sense Map, and where appropriate at the room entrance. Respite spaces should provide visual and audible privacy, while still allowing users straightforward and dignified access. Where windows provide visibility into the room, privacy blinds or curtains should be provided. Where no view to nature exists, consideration should be given to a calm visual focal point or artificial window effect, with the option to conceal this where a plain environment is preferred.

Décor and Sensory Character

Respite spaces should provide low sensory stimulation without appearing stark or clinical. Finishes should be matt or low sheen, with muted or natural colours preferred. Bright or vivid colours, complex repetitive patterns, and bold linear patterns should be avoided.

At least one elevation should remain visually plain so that users can position themselves facing a minimally stimulating view. Artwork, where used, should be limited and tranquil. Plants should be non-toxic and safe to touch, and strongly scented, spiky, or highly contrasting plants should be avoided.

Lighting

Respite spaces should provide dimmable lighting with simple and intuitive controls. A combination of ambient and task lighting should be considered where appropriate. Lighting should not produce detectable flicker or hum. An ambient colour temperature around 3000K should be used as a calm default, with adjustability from warmer to cooler light considered where feasible. Coloured lighting should not form part of the default setting and should only be available where users choose to activate it.

Reset and Condition

Respite rooms should be returned after use to a neutral, ready state for the next user. Items taken from cupboards should be returned. Lighting should be reset to a midway setting and blinds left in a standard position unless privacy needs require otherwise. The space should be kept clean, orderly, and free from unnecessary clutter.

Respite Space

Living Examples

Respite Room, Arts Building

Other Respite Rooms:
Sports Centre, Health Centre.

Quiet Space

Quiet Spaces are areas with naturally low levels of noise, providing a calm and peaceful atmosphere for students. Their function is often flexible and can be used for quiet study, reflective reading, peaceful eating, or even light, low-volume socialising.

Quiet Room Graphic, Lecky Library

Quiet Space

Quiet spaces should be managed as calm shared environments with clearly stated expectations for use. Signage should explain, in concise language, the purpose of the space, expected behaviour, and any relevant instructions. Quiet spaces should be monitored to confirm that they remain readily available when demand is highest and that their physical condition supports calm, concentration, and low sensory load.

Where a single quiet space is provided, it should be treated as a neutral environment designed for the highest sensory sensitivities. Finishes should avoid glare, excessive contrast, bright colour, visual clutter, and complex pattern. Furniture should be comfortable, repositionable where safe, and selected to minimise risk of injury. Sharp or unnatural lines and overly harsh fittings should be avoided.

Quiet Space

Functionality

These spaces are generally indoors to ensure year-round accessibility regardless of weather or daylight.

They may not always be specifically designated "quiet rooms", but are recognisable by their stillness and subdued ambience.

O'Reilly Building Indoor Garden

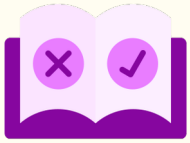
Quiet Space

Defining Features

Calm Shared Space
Designed for a few attendees at once, maintaining calm through limited capacity and reduced ambient noise.

Flexible Furniture
Comfortable seating for individuals or small groups, with optional tables allowing quiet reading, rest, or discussion.

Natural or Low Visual Clutter
The blank canvas makes thebest approach for minimising visual clutter, maintain calm and focus within a balanced sensory environment.



Clear Signage
Signage that clearly identifies the space and reminds people to be respectful to the quiet nature of the space.

Natural Acoustics
Soft materials such as flooring, wall panels, or curtains absorb sound, maintaining consistent and gentle acoustic conditions.

Quiet Space

Living Examples

Arts Building Respite Room

Academic Registry Respite Room

Study Space

Study Spaces are designed to support focus concentration, and productivity. They may be communal or semi-private, but all are set up to minimise distractions and provide comfort during extended study sessions. Lighting, seating, and desk layout are carefully considered to support a range of study preferences.

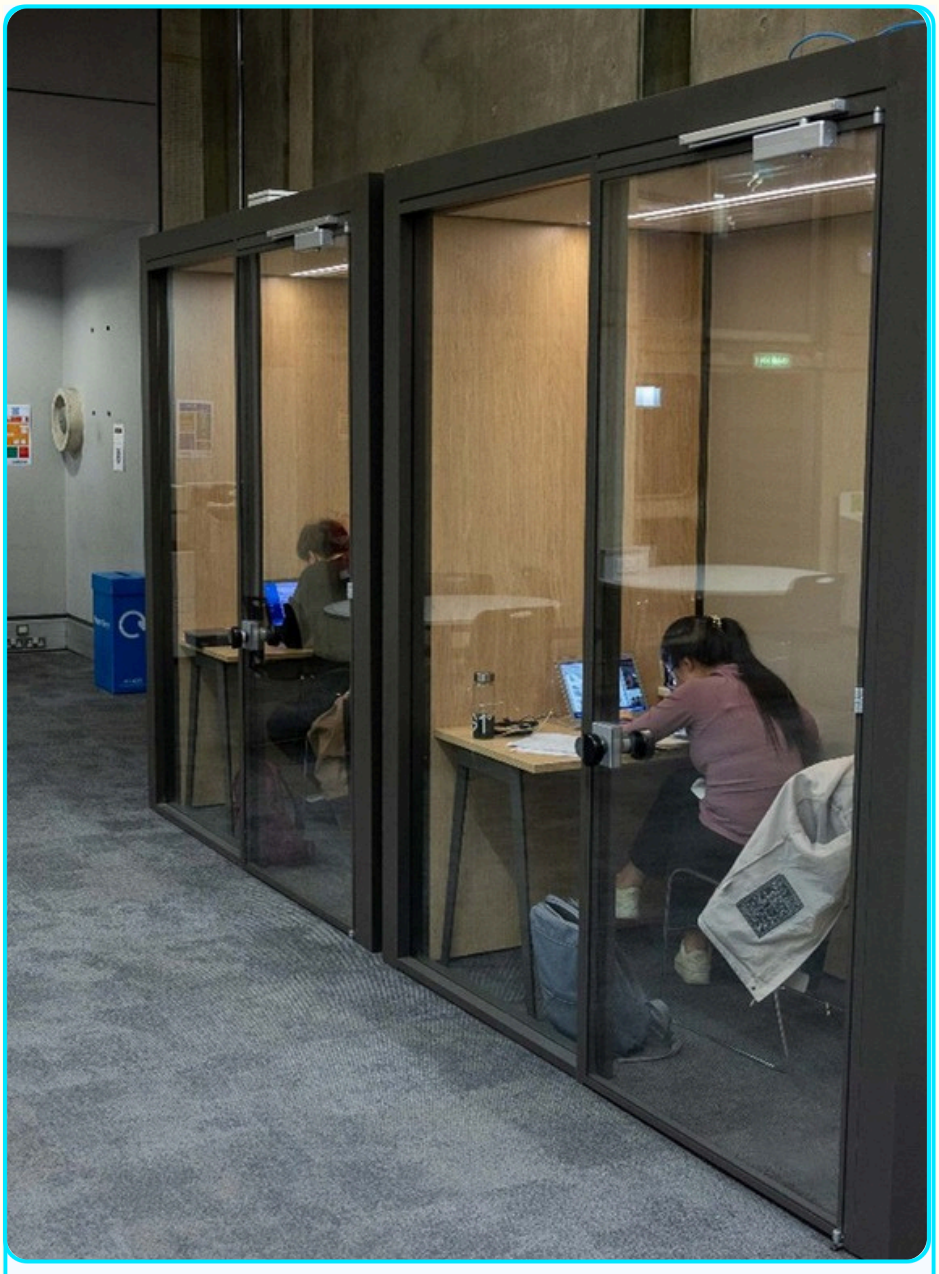
ATIC Study Space Graphic, Ussher Library

Study Space

Functionality

These spaces are generally indoors to ensure year-round accessibility regardless of weather or daylight.

They may not always be specifically designated "quiet rooms", but are recognisable by their stillness and subdued ambience.

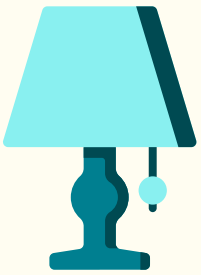


Study Pods, Boland Library

Study Space

Defining Features

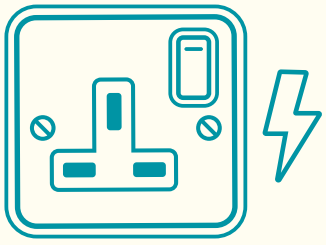
Ergonomic seating
Comfortable, supportive chairs and desks designed for extended use, promoting healthy posture and reducing fatigue during focused study sessions.



Task lighting
Bright, adjustable lighting at each desk to reduce eye strain and maintain visual comfort across varied study needs and preferences.

Consistent Environment
Low, consistent background noise with acoustic design supporting focus, sustained attention, and minimal sensory distraction for concentrated work.

Facilities for Long Stays
Convenient amenities such as charging sockets, water access, and nearby restrooms to support extended, uninterrupted academic engagement.



Individual and Group Options
Balanced layouts combining private booths, high-back seating, and shared tables to accommodate both solo study and quiet collaboration.

Additional guidance for Study Spaces

Study spaces should provide clear sensory gradation so that students can choose between lower-stimulation and more collaborative environments. Layout and information should reduce working-memory demands by making navigation, seating options, and room function easy to understand. Information about the local environment should be made available through booking or access systems where possible, including a photograph, basic layout description, and relevant sensory notes. This is particularly important where study rooms differ substantially in design, lighting, visibility, or background noise.

Study spaces should also support self-regulation. In addition to ergonomic seating and task lighting, consideration should be given to optional tools and aids such as screen filters, ear defenders, noise-cancelling devices, seating with gentle movement, or comfort items in designated contexts where operationally appropriate.

Study Space

Living Examples

Study Spaces in the Hamilton Library, Boland Library and John Stearne Library

Social Space

Social Spaces are areas that encourage connection, conversation, and community building. They are typically informal, open, and adaptable, with comfortable furniture that invites students to relax and interact. These spaces may also accommodate casual study, group meetings, or events.

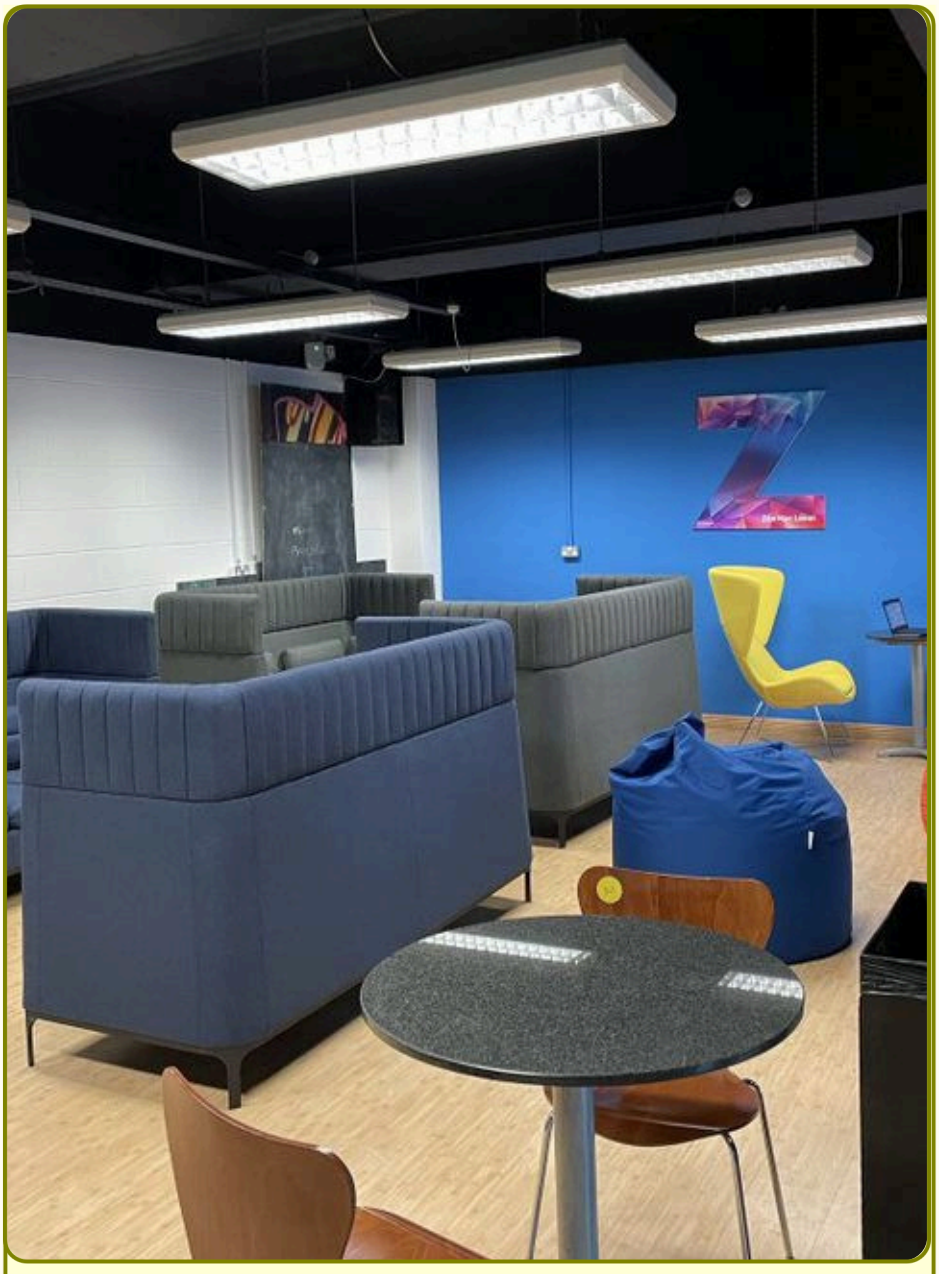
Zón Mac Léinn, St. James' Campus

Social Space

Functionality

These spaces are generally indoors to ensure year-round accessibility regardless of weather or daylight.

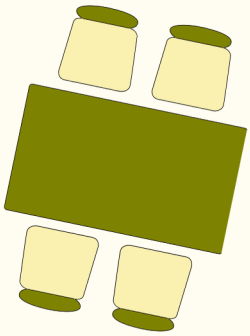
They may not always be specifically designated "quiet rooms", but are recognisable by their stillness and subdued ambience.



JCR Pool Room, Goldsmith Hall

Social Space

Defining Features



Flexible Layout
Movable tables and varied seating allow groups of any size to rearrange spaces easily for events, collaboration, or conversation.

Welcoming Atmosphere
Warmcolours,balanced lighting, and comfortable furnishings create an inviting, inclusive environment that encourages social connection and belonging.

Multi-Use Potential
Adaptable zones supporting socialising, informal meetings, or light work, maintaining a balance between activity, comfort, and accessibility.

Accessible Design
Clear circulation routes, step-free access, and varied seating heights ensure inclusivity and comfort for all users.

Sensory Zoning in Social Spaces

Social spaces should be planned to support interaction without creating unnecessary sensory burden. Sensory zoning should distinguish between more active and quieter parts of the same environment, allowing users to remain socially included while modulating their exposure to noise, movement, and proximity. Furniture layouts should allow generous clearance and avoid forcing close proximity where this is not necessary. Temporary furniture and pop-up arrangements should be positioned to protect circulation space and minimise collision risk. Rounded corners and intuitive layouts should be preferred.

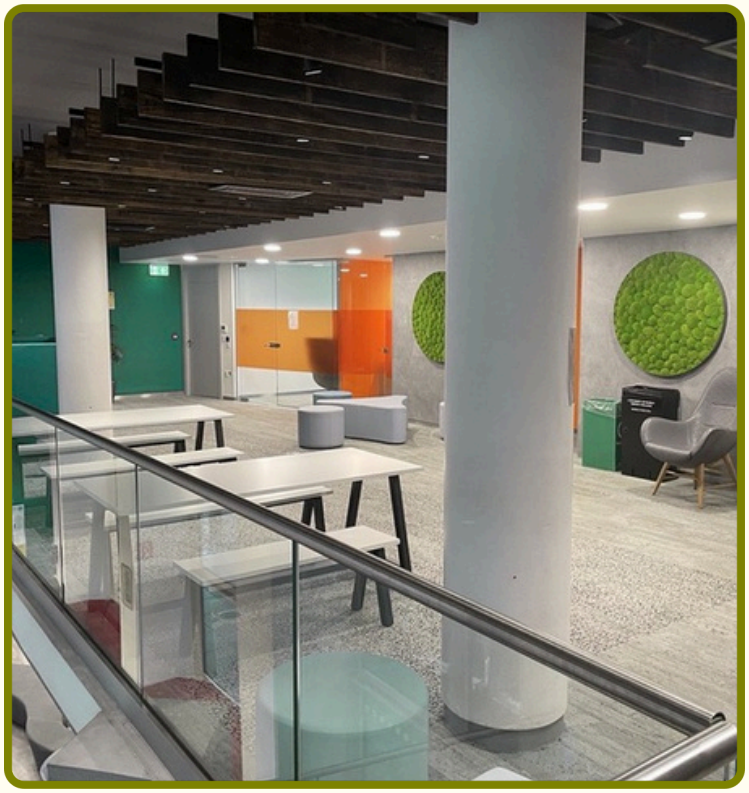
Where background music or sound masking is proposed in social environments, specialist input should be considered. White noise, background music, or other masking strategies should not be introduced casually, as they can improve conditions for some users while worsening them for others.

Social Space

Living Examples

Seomra na Gaeilge

Postgraduate Common Room



JCR Hamilton Zón Mac Léinn

Outdoor Spaces

Outdoor Spaces offer fresh air,natural light, and opportunities for restoration. They can be designed for both quiet reflection and small group interaction, often incorporating planting, seating, and weather protection.

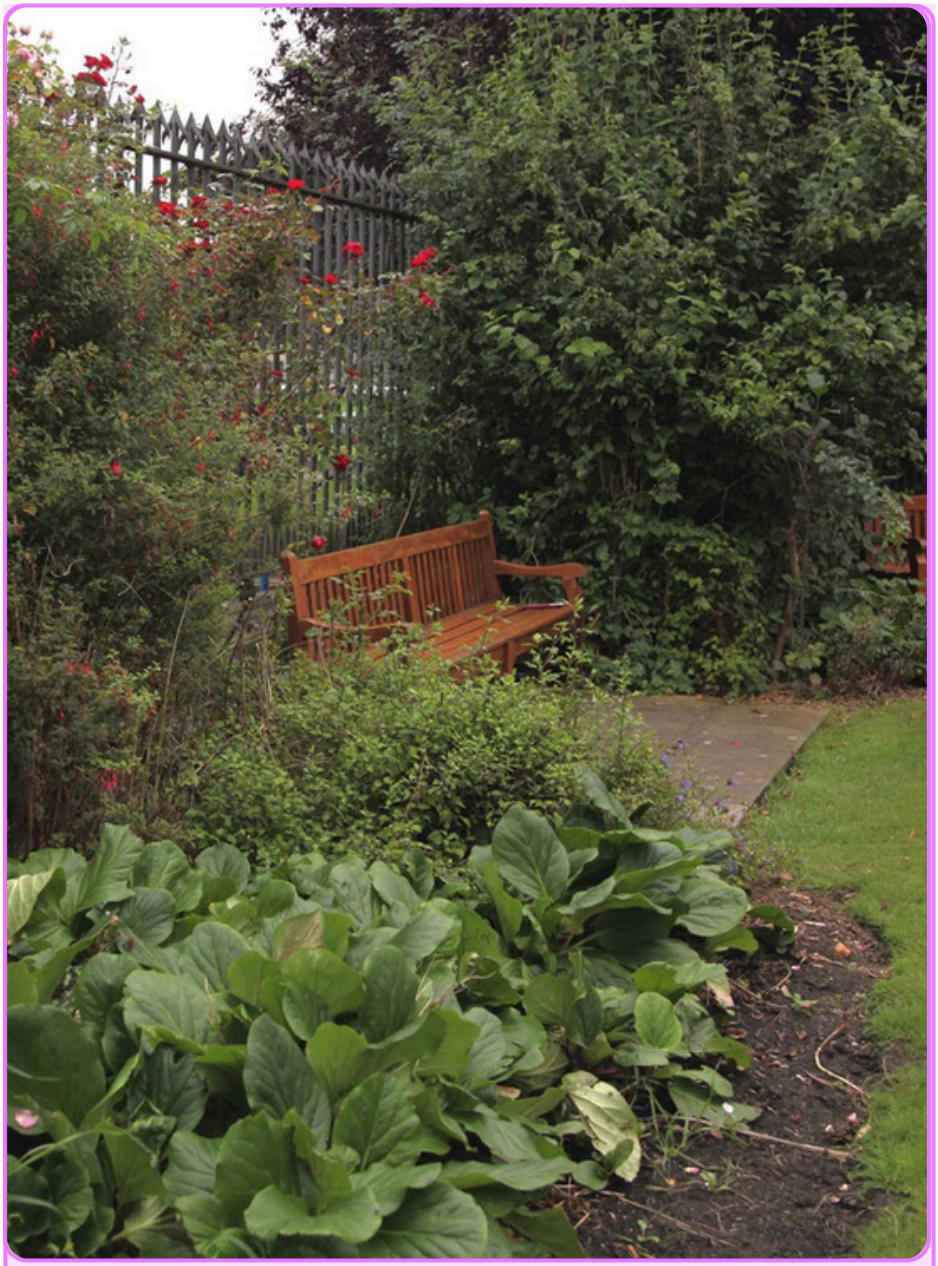
5th Floor Garden Graphic, Arts Building

Outdoor Space

Functionality

These spaces are generally indoors to ensure year-round accessibility regardless of weather or daylight.

They may not always be specifically designated "quiet rooms", but are recognisable by their stillness and subdued ambience.



Rose Garden, Near the Museum Building

Outdoor Space

Defining Features

Calm and Open Air Space
Open, low-stimulationareas designed for reflection and decompression, offering gentle airflow, natural soundscapes, and restorative sensory balance.

Mixed Seating options
Benches, picnic tables,and grassed areas provide comfortable, flexible seating for rest, socialising, or quiet time outdoors.

Accessible Pathways
Level,well-maintained surfaces and clear routes ensure inclusive access, with ramps or automated gates where needed.

Natural Elements
Trees,planting, and biodiverse habitats promote relaxation, sensory enrichment, and a stronger connection with the natural environment.

Sheltered Areas
Covered seating or pergolas offer refuge from rain or sun, enabling year-round use and comfort across weather conditions.

Predictability and Recovery Outdoors

Outdoor spaces within TCD Sense should support both restoration and predictability. Routes into and through outdoor spaces should be legible and easy to follow, with clear entry points, obvious destinations, and identifiable quieter zones where possible.

Outdoor sensory spaces should be described through the TCD Sense Map in a way that helps users anticipate noise levels, seating options, shelter, sunlight exposure, and likely crowding. Where temporary events, works, or route changes affect the experience of a space, this should be communicated in advance where practicable.

Outdoor Space

Living Examples

Part 4

Retrofit / New-Build Process Flow

Purpose

The Retrofit / New-Build Process Flow sets out a repeatable pathway for embedding sensory inclusion in every stage of campus development. It ensures that sensory and accessibility considerations are not an after-thought but an integral part of the design journey—from first idea to post-occupancy review.

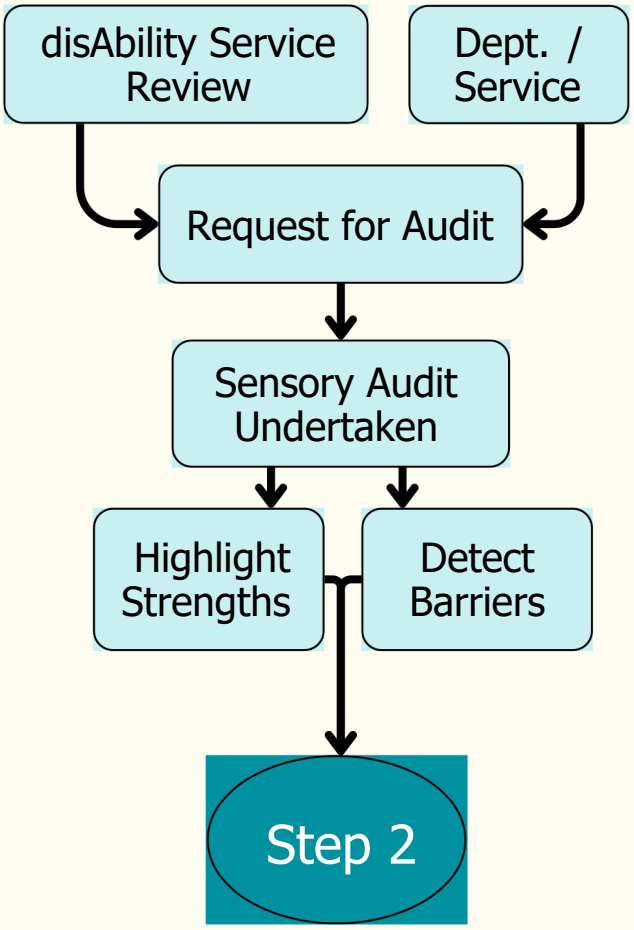
The process applies equally to:

- **Retrofits** – improvements or adaptations to existing spaces.
- **New Builds** – projects designed from the ground up.

Each stage is collaborative, transparent, and data-driven, drawing on the expertise of students, staff, and professional teams.

Step 1 – Initiation & Audit

A project begins when a department, service, or Estates & Facilities identifies a need for improvement or receives feedback through the disAbility Service or Sense Map review.



Actions:

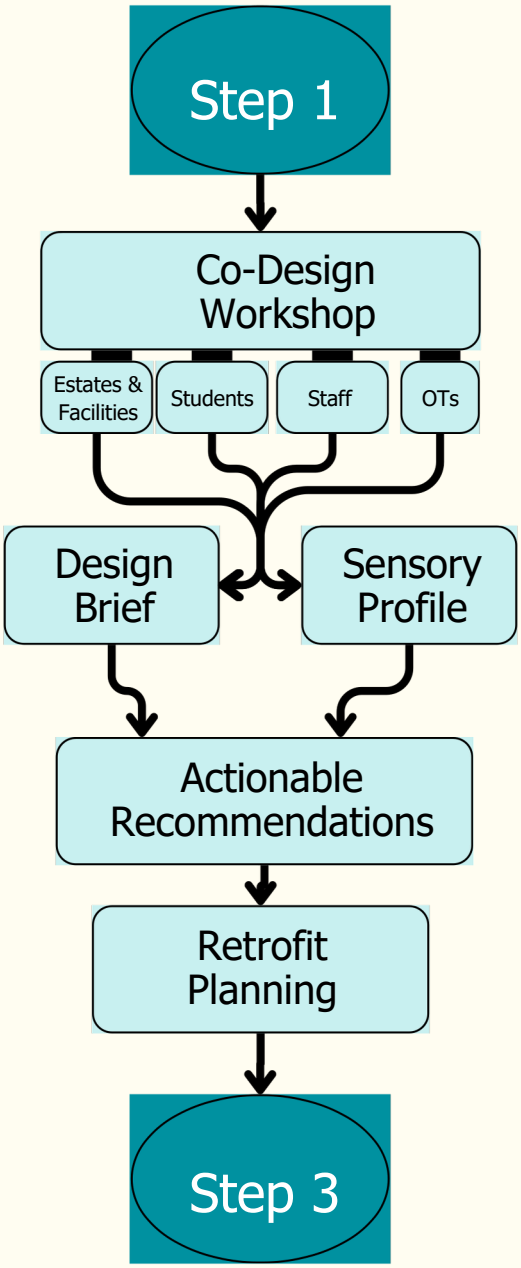
- Confirm ownership and intended function of the space.
- Conduct a Sensory Audit (ULAA and Sensory Evaluation Tool, see Part 2). Record current strengths and sensory barriers.
- Collate photographs, plans, and user comments.

Outcome:
A concise **Audit Report** describing the existing sensory profile, barriers, and potential opportunities for change. This becomes the foundation for all design decisions.

Step 2 – Co-Design & Planning

Following the audit, a **Co-Design Workshop** is convened with representation from:

- Students and Student Interns
- Estates & Facilities
- disAbility Service - Occupational Therapists & Other Staff
- School / Department representatives



Objectives:

- Identify which **space category** (Respite, Quiet, Study, Social, Outdoor) best fits the purpose.
- Translate audit findings into practical **design features**.
- Agree measurable **functional goals** for daily use (e.g., noise levels, lighting type, seating range).
- Consider sustainability, maintenance, and universal design compliance.

Outputs:

- A clear **Design Brief** containing scope, concept sketches or photos, estimated costings, and priorities.
- Identification of "quick wins" achievable within existing budgets.

Step 3 – Integration & Implementation

The agreed design is delivered in partnership with Estates & Facilities and relevant contractors or suppliers.

Key actions:

- Integrate sensory and accessibility specifications into formal design drawings and tender documents.
- Ensure procurement aligns with Trinity's environmental and inclusion policies.
- Consult the disAbility Service for review before final approval.
- On completion, document the space with photographs, floor plans, and a short sensory description.

Outcome:

Every completed project is added to the TCD Sense Map, displaying:

- Space category
- Sensory profile (e.g., lighting, sound, seating)
- Access information and opening hours
- Contact for feedback

This creates a living database of inclusive spaces across campus.

Procurement and Facilities Management

Inclusive sensory design should be embedded in procurement, specification, handover, and facilities management. When acquiring new equipment, fixtures, or services, Trinity should consider operational sound levels, visual distraction, lighting quality, scent, and ease of user control. Low-noise or silent devices should be preferred where possible. Where noisy equipment cannot be avoided, an alternative should be available. Product specifications should be reviewed for likely sensory impacts rather than cost and durability alone.

Facilities management standards should include prompt replacement of flickering or humming lights, minimisation of strong synthetic fragrances in public and sensory spaces, correct cleaning methods for specialist finishes, and protection of sensory rooms from clutter or drift in use. Staff working in and around sensory spaces should understand that perfume, scent, background noise, and informal room reconfiguration can materially affect accessibility.

Step 4 – Feedback & Continuous Review

Sensory design is not static; it evolves with use and feedback. Each new or refurbished space enters a structured review cycle:

1. **Immediate Feedback:** QR codes or AccessTips link users to a short form for comments.
2. **Usage Monitoring:** Sensors or occupancy data may track traffic, temperature, and noise trends.
3. **Annual Review:** disAbility Service OTs, students, and Estates assess performance against goals and recommend adjustments.
4. **Maintenance and Improvement:** Quick fixes (e.g., lighting repair, furniture rotation, signage updates) are actioned promptly.

Outcome:
A continuous monitor-review-adjust loop that keeps spaces relevant, functional, and inclusive.

Governance and Accountability

Oversight of the process rests with the disAbility Service Director and Estates & Facilities Design Team, reporting through the Accessibility Enhancement Steering Group.

An annual summary of all retrofits and sensory upgrades is included in the disAbility Service Annual Report and informs Trinity's Five-Year Accessibility Enhancement Plan (2025–2030).

Summary

Every retrofit or new build represents an opportunity to model inclusion in action. By embedding sensory awareness into each project stage, Trinity ensures that accessibility is not a specialist feature but a shared standard—creating a campus where every person can learn, work, and belong.

Part 5

Navigationand Coherence

Purpose

Navigation and coherence are central to sensory inclusion. A sensory-aware campus is not only about individual rooms but about how people move between them—how clearly spaces are signposted, how consistent the design language is, and how intuitive it feels to navigate. TCD Sense promotes a connected system of spaces that are easy to find, recognise, and use. The goal is a campus that feels predictable, coherent, and welcoming, supporting everyone.

Cognitive Access and Multisensory Wayfinding

Wayfinding within TCD Sense should support cognitive access as well as physical orientation. Information should be available through at least two senses, combining visual information with tactile and, where appropriate, audible cues. Signage and navigation should be designed to reduce working-memory demand and avoid overload through unnecessary visual or audible noise.

The TCD Sense network should include clearly identifiable wayfinding nodes where users can pause, orient themselves, and make decisions with confidence. These nodes should be supported by logical layouts, clear sightlines, consistent symbols, and concise information hierarchy. Colour coding and surface changes may be helpful where used carefully, but should be applied in a way that supports legibility without creating confusion or unintended barriers.

Sense Map Integration

All new and retrofitted spaces must be added to the TCD Sense Map, a live digital platform that enables users to locate sensory spaces and choose environments that best meet their needs.

Each space listing should include:

- **Category**: Respite, Quiet, Study, Social, or Outdoor
- **Sensory Profile**: light, sound, temperature, movement, and texture characteristics
- **Accessibility Information**: entry routes, step-free access, door automation, assistive technologies
- **Images and Descriptions**: to give users a visual and emotional sense of the environment
- **Contact for Feedback**: to encourage co-production and ongoing refinement

The Sense Map transforms the campus into an interactive sensory network, allowing users to plan their day with confidence and comfort.

Collaboration and Stewardship

Navigation and coherence are shared responsibilities.

Maintaining consistent sensory environments depends on collaboration between Estates & Facilities, the disAbility Service, the Library, academic Schools, and student representatives.

Recommended Actions:

- Appoint a **Space Steward** for each major sensory area to monitor signage, cleanliness, and accessibility.
- Conduct an **Annual Sense Map Review** to ensure listings, images, and contact details remain current.
- Encourage student-led feedback through QR codes and termly reflection surveys.

This collaborative stewardship model keeps the campus alive, adaptive, and aligned with real user needs.

Summary

A coherent sensory campus enables people to move through Trinity with confidence, comfort, and autonomy. When navigation is predictable, signage is accessible, and information is transparent, the environment itself becomes a form of support—reducing stress, saving energy, and enhancing participation.

TCD Sense turns sensory design from a collection of good spaces into a unified system of belonging.

Part 6

Evaluation and Strategic Embedding

Purpose

Evaluation ensures that sensory design becomes an enduring part of Trinity's culture, not a temporary project. TCD Sense spaces are living environments that evolve with use; systematic evaluation allows the University to measure their impact, learn from experience, and embed sensory inclusion within every level of planning and decision-making.

Principles of Evaluation

TCD Sense adopts a continuous-improvement model built on four principles:

1. Evidence-Informed: Decisions are guided by data—audits, surveys, usage patterns, and student feedback.

2. Participatory: Students, staff, and Estates & Facilities jointly assess what works and what can improve.

3. Transparent: Findings are shared through the TCD Sense Map, annual reports, and College committees.

4. Adaptive: Recommendations translate directly into design adjustments, policy updates, or training.

Key Indicators of Impact

To measure progress, each annual review cycle considers quantitative and qualitative indicators such as:

- **Accessibility Coverage:** Number and distribution of TCD Sense spaces per campus zone.
- **User Satisfaction:** Percentage of survey respondents reporting increased comfort or ease of use.
- **Engagement:** Volume of feedback submissions and co-design participants.
- **Operational Responsiveness:** Average time to resolve reported issues (e.g., lighting, signage).
- **Learning and Awareness:** Participation in staff training or student orientation activities linked to TCD Sense.
- **Sustainability Alignment:** Inclusion of energy-efficient, low-waste design solutions.

Together, these metrics form a Sensory Inclusion Dashboard integrated into Trinity's institutional reporting systems.

Monitoring of Use and Demand

Evaluation of TCD Sense should measure not only whether spaces exist, but whether they are usable, available, and maintained in practice. Monitoring should include occupancy and demand patterns for respite and quiet spaces, frequency of environmental faults such as flicker or excessive noise, feedback on scent and visual clutter, and whether users can locate and understand spaces through available information. Where monitoring shows unmet demand, repeated maintenance issues, or drift from intended use, remedial action should be taken and recorded.

Inclusive Engagement

TCD Sense should continue to use co-production and engagement methods that allow different ways of participation. Feedback should not depend only on face-to-face meetings. Written, digital, visual, and supported routes for feedback should remain available so that people with different communication, cognitive, and sensory preferences can contribute meaningfully. Consultation settings themselves should also be checked for acoustics, lighting, step-free access, and assistive listening where relevant.

Embedding in Strategy and Policy

TCD Sense is not a stand-alone project but a mechanism for delivering Trinity's strategic goals under People, Place and Purpose.

It directly supports:

- **disAbility Service: Ability, Inclusion & Belonging Strategic Plan 2025–2030**, providing tangible outputs for inclusive infrastructure.
- **Five-Year Accessibility Enhancement Plan (2025–2030)**, feeding audit data and design standards into capital works.
- **Sustainability & Wellbeing Framework**, promoting environments that support both ecological and human health.
- **HEA National Access Plan (2022–2028)** Priority Area 4 on Inclusive Campus Design.

Embedding occurs through policy clauses in capital-project procedures, procurement guidelines, and Estates planning templates, ensuring sensory considerations appear in every brief and review.

Governance and Responsibility

Overall accountability for TCD Sense rests with the **Director of the disAbility Service**, supported by the **Accessibility Enhancement Steering Group** and **Estates & Facilities.**

Key responsibilities include:

- Monitoring implementation and quality assurance of audits and retrofits. Ensuring findings inform College management decisions and capital planning.
- Coordinating with Student Services and EDI Office to embed TCD Sense within policy reviews.
- Publishing an annual summary of achievements and next steps.

Learning and Dissemination

Evaluation is also a learning tool.

Insights from TCD Sense projects feed into:

- **Research and publications** on inclusive and sensory design. **Training modules** for staff and students on Universal Design in practice.
- **Sectoral sharing** through DAWN, AHEAD, and HEA networks to influence national policy.

Trinity thus positions itself as a leader in evidence-based sensory inclusion, demonstrating how academic environments can support wellbeing and performance for all.

Summary

Evaluation completes the TCD Sense cycle—linking audit, design, navigation, and review into one coherent system. Through this embedded approach, Trinity ensures that sensory inclusion is not just visible in individual spaces but woven into the University's strategic DNA: a campus that is continually learning, responsive to its community, and committed to belonging for everyone.