

New Collaborative Learning Space at Australian Catholic University



Australian Catholic University (ACU) is a public university open to students and staff of all beliefs. ACU has six campuses based in Brisbane, Sydney (North Sydney and Strathfield), Canberra, Melbourne and Ballarat providing education for almost 20,000 students and shares with universities world-wide a commitment to quality in teaching, research and service.

With specialist undergraduate and postgraduate courses in disciplines including, arts, business, education, environmental science, music, nursing, psychology, philosophy, social work, religious education and visual arts, ACU enjoys an established reputation for quality and innovative teaching.

ACU is dedicated to rigorous intellectual scholarship and the individual's pursuit of truth and academic freedom. Graduates are high achievers and enjoy one of the highest rates of employment in Australia.

ACU's Melbourne Campus hosts more than 4400 domestic and international students. Facilities available to students include the library and

computer labs, cafeteria, café, student bar and recreation area, gymnasium, art gallery and studio, Central Hall performance space, a production studio for ACU's radio station, a video production studio and a parent's room.

Library facilities available to students include texts, audio visual and curriculum material available for loan, and on-line access to a wide range of e-Learning resources. Computers, laptops, scanners, printers and photocopiers are available for use and help is always on hand at the information desk.

ACU recently added to the wide range of educational facilities it provides at the Melbourne campus with its first Collaborative Learning Space. Collaborative learning involves students working together in smaller groups to achieve shared learning goals. Collaborative learning helps with the student's development of interpersonal, communication and problem solving skills.

Being a first within ACU, it was essential that the collaborative learning space would be an example



A Joey Lite control panel is installed in each room

of best practice in the provision of collaborative learning spaces, providing an environment in which students work effectively together to achieve shared goals. It was also essential that the requirements of the academic staff were met.

The collaborative learning space features dual 2Touch interactive whiteboards which are known for their finger touch capability, large 2.4m wide robust interactive, writing and projection surface and the fact that they can be used with any software and are Windows, Linux and Mac compatible.



Epson EB-450We widescreen ultra short throw projectors are installed in each of the two rooms of the collaborative learning space

The collaborative learning space is two rooms separated by a dividing wall. This means that it can be used as two separate spaces or as one larger combined space. When used as a combined space one room acts as the 'master' and this room has the option of allowing the user to select 'dual' mode. Selecting dual mode will enable the image from the computer in the master room to be displayed on the 2Touch boards in both rooms simultaneously. Both of the boards are interactive and input on either board is automatically displayed on both. Additionally, any VGA input from either room is capable of being displayed on both boards.

Epson EB450We widescreen ultra short throw projectors are installed in both rooms and are used to project on to the 2Touch boards. These ultra short throw projectors are mounted close to the boards and project light down at a sharp down angle helping to eliminate shadows being cast on to the board's surface and glare from the projector's lamp in the presenter's eyes.

To ensure everyone in the collaborative learning space is involved in what is going on at the interactive whiteboard,

a 50" Samsung commercial plasma is suspended mid-room on a ceiling post. This plasma will display whatever is selected on the second rooms 2Touch interactive whiteboard.

D.I.B. also supplied, designed and installed an integrated audio system in the master room including a rack mounted amplifier rated at 120 watts, which when in dual mode will also supply audio to the other room. A microphone located in an alcove facilitates audio to either room or both rooms simultaneously as required.

A MIPRO UHF wireless ear-worn microphone with pocket receiver and automatic channel assignment allows the presenter to move freely within the rooms and assist various groups, while still being able to be heard by all in attendance as required. Sound is supplied through ceiling mounted high quality 6.5" dual cone speakers complete with baffles which help contain audio in the desired areas.

Each room has its own rack on top of which sits a Lumens Document Camera with automatic focus. The document camera can be used to display text or objects onto the two 2Touch interactive whiteboards and Samsung commercial plasma.

A Joey Lite wall control panel was installed in each room. The panels, programmed to control the installed equipment, simplify operation of the systems and do away with easily lost remote controls. The panels are programmed to turn the systems off automatically if they are accidentally left on saving valuable lamp and projector life and reducing unnecessary power consumption.



A MIPRO UHF ear-worn microphone and pocket receiver used by presenters who want to move freely around the collaborative learning space.



A Lumens Document Camera used to project texts and objects onto the 2Touch interactive whiteboards and Samsung plasma



A 50" Samsung commercial plasma panel suspended in the second room shows what is on the 2Touch interactive whiteboard



A 2Touch interactive whiteboard and Epson EB-450We widescreen ultra short throw projector are installed in each of the two rooms of the collaborative learning space

Peter Wiegard, IT Client Services Campus Coordinator said "This collaborative learning space has hit the mark and achieved the desired results. Academics using it have been impressed with the innovative technologies used. The innovative set-up has given people food for thought and provided ideas for projects in other areas at ACU."