

Western Michigan University

Office Space Allocation Guidelines

(Aligned with WMU Space Policy and Benchmark Practices)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

These guidelines establish institution-wide standards for the allocation and management of office space at Western Michigan University. They define assignable square footage (ASF) ranges by position classification, clarify office typologies consistent with Facilities Inventory and Classification Manual (FICM) standards, and incorporate an 85% office occupancy benchmark to guide utilization and capital planning decisions.

The standards apply to new construction, renovation, reassignment, and periodic utilization review, ensuring consistent application across divisions and alignment with institutional priorities. They support data-informed planning and align with expectations of the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget (DTMB) and peer institutional practices.

Oversight is provided by Planning, Design & Construction (PDC) in coordination with the Space Advisory Committee (SAC).

University-wide Office Space Allocation Guidelines take precedence over any college, school, or departmental space practices or preferences.

Unit-level guidelines may supplement, but shall not conflict with or override these standards. Any deviation requires formal review and approval by PDC and the Space Advisory Committee (SAC).

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish formal standards for office space allocation, reassignment, and review.

These standards:

- Define ASF ranges by position classification
- Clarify criteria for private, shared, and open-plan offices
- Establish direction regarding multiple office assignments
- Provide a framework for reviewing vacant or underutilized space
- Apply to new construction, renovations, and reassignment decisions

II. Governance and Oversight

The Office of Planning, Design & Construction (PDC), in collaboration with the Space Advisory Committee (SAC), is responsible for:

- Maintaining and updating these standards
- Reviewing exceptions
- Integrating guidelines into renovation and capital projects
- Ensuring alignment with WMU Master Plan and Capital Outlay submissions

III. SPACE ALLOCATION STANDARDS

Ranges may vary due to documented programmatic need or building constraints. Creative solutions to effective space utilization are encouraged. Guidelines are not intended to discourage such creativity.

Assignable Square Feet (ASF)

Allocations shall be based on functional need, level of responsibility, and privacy requirements.

Position Classification	Recommended ASF Range	Type Work Space	FICM Code
President	200–250 ASF	Enclosed office	310.1
Senior Executive / VP	180–220 ASF	Enclosed office	310.1
Dean	150–200 ASF	Enclosed office	310.1
Associate / Assistant Dean	130–170 ASF	Enclosed office	310.1
Department Chair	140–180 ASF	Enclosed office	310.1
Faculty (Tenure / Research)	110–150 ASF	Enclosed office	310.1
Faculty (Term/Part Time)	100–130 ASF	Enclosed office/Workstation	310.1 / 310.2
Adjunct Faculty	60–100 ASF	Enclosed office/Workstation	310.1 / 310.2
Director / Senior Professional Staff	100–130 ASF	Enclosed office	310.1
Professional Staff	60–110 ASF	Enclosed office/Workstation	310.1 / 310.2
Administrative Professionals	48–80 ASF	Office workstation	310.2
Academic Advisor / Counselor	90–120 ASF	Enclosed office	310.1
Graduate Assistant (Shared)	40–70 ASF	Office open plan	310.3
Student Employee	30–50 ASF	Office open plan	310.3

IV. Private Offices (FICM 310.1)

Private offices are appropriate where:

- Confidential conversations are routine
- Significant individual concentration work is required
- Supervisory responsibility requires private discussion

Private offices should be appropriately sized to avoid excess square footage beyond functional need.

V. Workstations and Open Workspaces (FICM 310.2 / 310.3)

Open workspaces are recommended for:

- Administrative teams
- Units with hybrid work models
- Flexible staffing environments

VI. Walkthrough Offices (FICM 310.4)

A walkthrough office is defined as an enclosed office that provides required access to another private office.

These spaces:

- Should not be oversized
- Should clearly serve an access function
- May house administrative support staff

VII. Multiple Offices

Multiple offices are generally discouraged.

Exceptions may include:

- Faculty with laboratory and academic assignments
- Grant-funded research requirements

Approval authority:

- Dean (college level)
- Vice President (division level)
- Provost or President (for requests submitted by Deans and above)

All secondary offices must be periodically reviewed for continued necessity.

VIII. Underutilized or Vacant Offices

Offices unoccupied for extended periods should be reviewed for:

- Reassignment
- Conversion to shared space
- Repurposing

Facilities Management Planning shall conduct periodic reviews of office utilization through the Annual Space Survey process, identify vacant or underutilized offices and inappropriate office assignments, provide findings to the appropriate Dean or Vice President for review and corrective action, and report summary results to the Space Advisory Committee (SAC).

IX. Exception Process

Exceptions to these guidelines require:

1. Written justification
2. Functional explanation
3. Dean/VP approval
4. SAC review (if materially inconsistent with standards)

X. Implementation

These guidelines shall be:

- Applied to all new construction
- Integrated into renovation planning
- Considered during space audits and utilization studies

XI. Alignment with State of Michigan – DTMB Standards

Western Michigan University recognizes the guidance of the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget (DTMB) regarding space planning, stewardship of public assets, and capital outlay submissions.

These Office Space Allocation Guidelines align with:

- DTMB Capital Outlay Planning Principles
- Efficient use of state-funded facilities
- Right-sizing and lifecycle stewardship
- Avoidance of excess square footage per employee
- Documentation of utilization for future project requests
- Consistency with Statewide Facility Inventory reporting standards

WMU will ensure that:

1. Office allocations support justifiable square footage in capital outlay submissions.
2. Renovation and new construction proposals reflect efficient office typologies to the extent possible by existing building constraints.
3. Utilization metrics and vacancy data inform future project prioritization.

4. FICM classifications are applied consistently for state reporting and benchmarking.

Where DTMB guidance evolves, these standards shall be reviewed accordingly.

XII. Peer Institutional Benchmarking

WMU's office allocation ranges and typologies reflect review of peer institutions, including:

- University of Michigan
- Michigan State University
- University of Arizona
- University of North Texas

XIII. Capital Outlay and Master Plan Integration

These standards directly support:

- WMU Five-Year Capital Outlay submissions
- Deferred Maintenance prioritization
- Space Utilization & Facility Condition initiatives
- Master Plan right-sizing objectives
- Data-informed SAC review processes

Office allocation decisions must demonstrate consistency with these standards prior to advancement in the capital planning cycle.

XIV. Office Occupancy and Utilization Benchmark

To support responsible and equitable use of university space, WMU will work toward improving office occupancy levels over time, using an 85% benchmark as a reference point to guide future decisions.

A. Target Occupancy Standard

Occupancy of administrative and academic office areas (FICM 310 series) should achieve:

- 85% workstations or offices actively assigned to personnel
- Consistent presence patterns aligned with work schedules

B. Interpretation of the 85% Benchmark

An 85% occupancy rate reflects:

- Operational flexibility for temporary vacancy
- Practical efficiency without over-densification

Sustained occupancy below 85% may indicate:

- Excess office allocation
- Opportunity for shared or hybrid models
- Potential reassignment or consolidation

C. Application in Decision-Making

The 85% benchmark shall be considered in:

- Renovation planning
- New construction proposals

- Space reassignments
- Vacancy reviews
- Capital Outlay justifications

Units proposing additional office space must demonstrate:

1. Current occupancy rates at or above 85%, or
2. Documented programmatic growth requiring expansion.

D. Alignment with State and Peer Practices

The 85% benchmark aligns with:

- Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget stewardship expectations
- Peer utilization thresholds observed at institutions such as the University of Michigan and Michigan State University
- National higher education facilities planning trends emphasizing density optimization prior to expansion

E. Periodic Review and Annual Utilization Assessment

- WMU will perform annual utilization assessments of office space using survey data and available analytics tools. These assessments will evaluate assignment levels, occupancy patterns, and vacancy rates across FICM 310 classifications.
- Summary reports of utilization and vacancy data will be provided to Deans, Vice Presidents, and Department Heads to support data-informed planning, continuous improvement, and alignment with the University's 85% utilization benchmark.
- Occupancy metrics will be reviewed periodically by:

- Planning, Design & Construction (PDC)
 - Space Advisory Committee (SAC)
 - Relevant Deans and Vice Presidents
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- Units demonstrating sustained underutilization relative to established benchmarks may be subject to:
 - Space consolidation
 - Conversion to shared or hoteling models
 - Reassignment to meet institutional priorities

Reference

FICM 310.1 – Office Enclosed

Definition:

A private, enclosed room assigned to one or more individuals, typically used as a workspace for faculty, staff, or administrators. The space is defined by full-height walls and a door and is designed to support focused work, confidentiality, and individual productivity.

Key criteria:

- Fully enclosed (floor-to-ceiling walls/partial floor-to-ceiling)
- Has a door (lockable or closable)
- Typically assigned to one primary occupant
- May include small meeting seating (guest chairs)
- Individually room-numbered and assignable



FICM 310.2 – Office Workstation

Definition:

A designated workspace for an individual located within a larger room or open area, typically defined by partial-height partitions or panels rather than full walls.

Key criteria:

- Not fully enclosed (no full-height walls or door)
- Defined by cubicles, panels, or modular furniture
- One occupant per workstation
- Located within a larger room (not separately room-numbered)
- Supports administrative or staff functions



FICM 310.3 – Office Open Plan

Definition:

A large, open room that accommodates multiple workstations or desks without full-height partitions. The space is treated as a single room and supports group-based or flexible work environments.

Key criteria:

- Multiple occupants in one room
- Minimal or no partitions (may include benching or clusters)
- One room number for the entire space
- Workstations may be assigned or shared
- Emphasizes collaboration and space efficiency



VI. Walkthrough Offices (FICM 310.4)

Definition:

A walkthrough office is defined as an enclosed office that provides required access to another private office.

Key Criteria:

These spaces:

- Should not be oversized
- Should clearly serve an access function
- May house professional administrative staff



VI. Office Reception (FICM 310.5)

Definition:

Open area that serves a reception function, includes staff workstations and waiting areas, circulation area, and small amount of other office support areas (copy, file)

Key Criteria:

These spaces:

- Should not be oversized
- Should clearly serve an access function
- May house professional administrative staff

