



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Finance**
Building Management and Works



Government Office Accommodation

Standards





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Contents

CONTEXT	4
PURPOSE	4
DEFINITION	4
AUTHORITY	4
SCOPE OF APPLICATION	4
SECTION 1: PROCUREMENT OF OFFICE ACCOMMODATION	5
Standard 1.1: office locations	5
Standard 1.2: environmentally sustainable designed (ESD) base buildings	5
Standard 1.3: universal access	5
Standard 1.4: car parking bay allocation	6
Standard 1.5: bicycle parking and end-of-trip facilities	6
SECTION 2: WORKSPACE	7
Standard 2.1: workspace density	7
Standard 2.2: enclosed workspaces	7
Standard 2.3: support workspaces	8
Standard 2.4: shared facilities	9
Standard 2.5: acoustic comfort	10
SECTION 3: FIT-OUT, FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT	11
Standard 3.1: acquisition of fit-out	11
Standard 3.2: environmentally sustainable designed (ESD) fit-outs	11
Standard 3.3: furniture and equipment	11
SECTION 4: OCCUPANCY AND BEYOND	13
Standard 4.1: sustainable practice	13
Standard 4.2: occupancy reviews	13

CONTEXT

Consistent with the key principles of the *Government Office Accommodation Policy* (the policy), the Department of Finance has developed the *Government Office Accommodation Standards* (the standards) to define best practice in the procurement and management of office accommodation, which will assist agencies in achieving value-for-money and sustainable outcomes.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the standards is to set out requirements, benchmarks and parameters to assist agencies with planning and establishing office accommodation, acquiring and fitting out suitable office space, and utilising and maintaining the space effectively.

DEFINITION

Government office accommodation is defined as the space that is predominantly used to accommodate staff who deliver government services by performing functions classified as executive, administrative or clerical.

Government office accommodation can be located in either leased or government-owned buildings.

AUTHORITY

The standards were endorsed by the Government Office Accommodation Steering Committee on 28 August 2013 and noted by Government in April 2014.

SCOPE OF APPLICATION

In accordance with the policy, the standards apply to government office accommodation occupied by all general government agencies.

The standards do not apply to agency-specific operational facilities, such as hospitals, schools, or police stations; however, the standards should be applied to office accommodation within these facilities.

The Department of Finance encourages all other agencies to adopt the standards to assist them in achieving best practice and value-for-money in the management of their office accommodation.

SECTION 1: PROCUREMENT OF OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

Standard 1.1: office locations

Office accommodation will be procured to support the State's strategic planning objectives and agencies' service delivery requirements.

Where possible and appropriate, agencies in metropolitan areas will be located in the activity centres identified in the Western Australian Planning Commission's *Directions 2031 and Beyond: Metropolitan Planning Beyond the Horizon*. These locations provide a high level of accessibility for both employees and clients.

Standard 1.2: environmentally sustainable designed (ESD) base buildings

Government office accommodation over 1000 square metres in new leased premises with a term over two years should be procured with the following target sustainability ratings:

- Green Star¹:
 - » 5 Star Green Star Design and As Built for new buildings
 - » 4 Star Office Design or As Built v2 or v3 for existing buildings
- National Australian Built Environment Reporting System (NABERS)²
 - » 4.5 Star Energy Base Building rating for new and existing buildings
 - » 4 Star Water rating for new and existing buildings.

In existing buildings, it is desirable that new leases be procured in accordance with the above target sustainability ratings. However, it is recognised that existing buildings cannot always achieve these targets.

Achievement of the above sustainable ratings can be supported by:

- certified ratings
- a NABERS Commitment Agreement
- sufficient documentation demonstrating equivalency to the rating requirements.

Compliance with the Commercial Building Disclosure³ Program should also be considered when procuring office accommodation.

Standard 1.3: universal access

In accordance with the *Western Australian Equal Opportunity Act 1984*, the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, the *Disability Standards AS1428 (2012)* and the *National Construction Code*, the requirements of people with disabilities, as both employees and clients, will be addressed, such as:

- wheelchair access
- proximity to public transport
- toilet facilities
- prominent signage
- access to lift controls.

¹ Green Star is a comprehensive, national, voluntary environmental rating system that evaluates the environmental design and construction of buildings and communities.

² National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS) is a government initiative to measure and compare the environmental performance of a building. Under this rating tool a 5 Star rating signifies 'excellent performance' and a 4 Star rating signifies 'good performance'.

³ Commercial Building Disclosure is a national program designed to improve the energy efficiency of Australia's large office buildings established by the *Building Energy Efficiency Disclosure Act 2010*.

The percentage of ACROD bays in a car park, as specified by the *National Construction Code*, is dependent on the class of the building. An office building for professional purposes (Class 5) is required to have one ACROD bay per 100 car bays. Only ACROD permit holders can use car bays displaying ACROD signage.

It is at the discretion of chief executive officers (CEOs) to determine the allocation of these ACROD car bays. Subject to availability and funding, CEOs may provide additional priority parking to ACROD permit holders.

Agencies should contact the Disability Services Commission to ensure that they are fully aware of their obligations for people with disabilities.

Standard 1.4: car parking bay allocation

Car bays within commercial premises are often limited and usually allocated according to the size of the tenancy (i.e. the net lettable area leased dictates the number of bays available). For this reason, it will not always be possible to accommodate all vehicles.

Subject to the availability⁴ of car bays and funding, the agency CEO may make car bays available for government-owned or leased vehicles. Any surplus car bays may be allocated in accordance with individual agency policy.

Standard 1.5: bicycle parking and end-of-trip facilities

Office accommodation should include bicycle parking and end-of-trip facilities, including showers, change rooms and storage facilities. When planning for bicycle parking and end-of-trip facilities, the following minimum provisions⁵ should be considered:

- secure bicycle storage space (1:20 workpoints⁶)
- accessible showers and change facilities (1:10 bicycle storage spaces or part thereof)
- personal storage facilities for each bicycle storage space.

Where possible, bicycle parking should be made available for visitors, preferably close to the building entrance and in a sheltered area that enables passive surveillance.

Consideration should also be given to employees who wish to use change rooms and personal storage facilities for jogging or walking to work and lunchtime recreational activities.

It is the agency's responsibility to consider and notify the Department of Finance of its bicycle parking and end-of-trip facilities requirements when submitting office accommodation requests.

⁴ The number of car bays allocated to agencies will be based on the proportion of net lettable area that the agency occupies in a building.

⁵ Aligns with Green Star Office v3 2008: Credit Criteria for End-of-trip Facilities.

⁶ An alternative method to calculate the secure bicycle storage spaces is to use Green Star Office v3's 5% of building staff which is based on one person per 15 m² of NLA. Green Star awards one point for providing bicycle parking for 5% of building staff and 2 points where bicycle storage is provided for 10% of staff.

SECTION 2: WORKSPACE

Standard 2.1: workspace density

To achieve value-for-money in office accommodation, government has set an office accommodation workspace density benchmark of 13 square metres (sqm) per workpoint or below, across the total net lettable area (NLA)⁷ of each tenancy⁸, excluding special operational requirements areas.

$$\text{Workspace density} = \frac{\text{total net lettable area}^9 \text{ minus special operational requirement areas}}{\text{total number of workpoints minus workpoints in special operational requirement areas}^{10}}$$

Most Australian jurisdictions and the private sector have adopted workspace density targets to reduce rental costs and lower expenses for office fit-out, energy, security and maintenance.

The 13 sqm per workpoint density target may not always be achieved and the Department will work with agencies to identify and manage possible exceptional circumstances according to the policy application guidelines.

It is the responsibility of the agency, in consultation with design professionals, to ensure that the area allocated in the workspace meets the agency's functional requirements.

Open plan office designs

Open plan office design is a widely accepted modern interior design philosophy. An open plan office environment promotes the easy flow of communication and knowledge sharing and it accommodates different ways of working: from autonomous, individual work, to collaborative work based on the immediate exchange of information and quick decision making. Meeting rooms and collaboration or break-out areas, or even shared kitchen spaces, promote flexible meeting opportunities. Flexibility is a key feature of this design and the removal of physical walls and large storage areas will allow for more adaptable use of space.

Open plan designs also provide better air circulation and light penetration, reduce costs and are more flexible to accommodate organisational change.

Special operational requirement areas

Special operational requirement (SOR) areas accommodate and support an agency-specific operational requirement. These areas are deducted from the calculation of the workspace density.

SOR areas include, but are not limited to:

- operational or agency-specific requirement areas (e.g. laboratories, tribunal/hearing rooms, publication/printing rooms)
- general public areas of an operational nature (e.g. press conference or media rooms, public galleries, client interview rooms and customer service areas, such as licensing centres, retail counters and associated public reception and waiting rooms)
- storage areas for non-standard office items and long term on-site storage as required by legislation (e.g. armoury, marine research equipment, publications for sale).

⁷ The net lettable area is the floor space that may be rented to tenants, upon which rental payments are based and is measured in accordance with the *Property Council of Australia (PCA): Method of Measurement for Lettable Area*.

⁸ A tenancy can consist of a part floor, a whole floor or several floors in a building.

⁹ The total net lettable area is the aggregation of all the floor space that the tenant occupies in the building and includes individual workspaces (in either open plan or enclosed spaces) and support workspaces.

¹⁰ The total number of workpoints includes the number of workpoints in open plan and enclosed offices. The number of workpoints in special operational requirement areas is excluded from the workspace density calculation. A workpoint includes a desk in an open plan or enclosed office or section of a counter or reception at which it would be reasonable to expect one person to carry out ongoing office work.

Special types of office accommodation, such as call centres, are not considered special operational requirement areas and are therefore included in the NLA calculation of the workspace density.

Agencies should contact the Department of Finance to discuss the classification of SOR areas.

Standard 2.2: enclosed workspaces

Enclosed offices

Enclosed offices are rarely needed for the best service delivery outcomes or value-for-money for agencies.

Open plan office design should be maximised and enclosed offices provided only where an officer's function requires an exceptionally high level of privacy and confidentiality and must be continually protected from the unauthorised presence of other officers in the same organisation.

Enclosed offices may also be provided for officers of the following classification:

Officer classification ¹¹	Office size ¹²
Class 2 and above	15 sqm - 30 sqm
Level 9 and Class 1	12 sqm - 15 sqm

Ideally, office sizes should be based on a modular design that allows for cost-effective flexibility and adaptation of a workspace to meet future agency requirements within the existing premises. Therefore, the office sizes above may vary slightly in accordance with the agreed modular design.

Where enclosed offices are considered necessary, they should be located close to the building core and not on the building's periphery to improve light penetration, uniformity and views to windows across the floor plates.

Quiet rooms

The inclusion of quiet rooms, which are usually 6 sqm in size, can provide privacy for those using the room and minimise disruption to others. Quiet rooms allow staff to undertake tasks that require concentration and provide privacy when making conference, business or private phone calls. The rooms should not be used as a private office by staff, even temporarily.

Quiet rooms may be located towards the core of the floor (e.g. along the main public corridor adjacent to meeting rooms and enclosed offices).

To maximise the usage of quiet rooms they should be provided with:

- both acoustic and visual privacy
- voice communication and data network access.

Standard 2.3: support workspaces

Sufficient support workspaces should be provided to meet agency business needs and multi-purpose support spaces should be used to avoid duplication or infrequent use.

Support workspaces include, but are not limited to:

- meeting and collaboration spaces
- training rooms

¹¹ Officer classification in accordance with the *Public Service and Government Officers General Agreement* (PSGOGA). Officer classifications under other awards and agreements used in the Western Australian Public Sector will be considered in line with the PSGOGA officer classification.

¹² Depending on the officer's operational needs.

- utility bays (dedicated areas for stationery, faxes, photocopiers, printers etc.)
- filing hubs
- storage spaces
- reception and waiting areas
- work cafes/lunch rooms/staff hubs
- family rooms/sick rooms/first aid rooms.

Meeting workspaces

Each floor should have a range of different sized meeting rooms and areas to suit the floor layout, including fully enclosed, partly enclosed, and open and informal settings. Agencies in a single building are encouraged to share meeting rooms, particularly meeting rooms in common areas and larger meeting rooms on different floors.

Meeting rooms and areas should be located close to the building core, and not on the building's periphery to improve light penetration, uniformity and views to windows across the floor plates.

It is the agency's responsibility to identify the special requirements for meeting rooms, such as teleconferencing rooms and boardrooms (used primarily for boards established by the agency's enabling legislation).

For meeting and conference rooms, the number and size of rooms should be determined on a needs basis. The recommended benchmarks for meeting rooms in a large premises of 1000 square metres or more are as follows:

Space description	Area ¹⁴	Benchmark ratio
4 person meeting room	12 sqm	1:60 workpoints
10 person meeting room	24 sqm	1:65 workpoints
14-16 person meeting room	36 sqm	1:200 workpoints
20 person meeting room	48 sqm	1:224 workpoints

Collaboration spaces

Well-considered collaboration spaces support group and project work, knowledge sharing and inclusive discussion. Collaboration spaces should:

- be close to individual work areas for ease of access and to encourage use
- have appropriate acoustic attenuation to minimise impacts on other work areas
- have a non-hierarchical spatial arrangement and include furniture that supports discussion and collaboration.

Standard 2.4: shared facilities

Where feasible, agencies occupying multi-tenanted buildings are encouraged to share facilities to maximise use of space. Shared facilities include, but are not limited to:

- whole-of-building reception and waiting areas
- meeting and conference rooms
- equipment storage
- catering facilities
- library/resource rooms
- training rooms.

¹³ The number of meeting rooms would be calculated based on the number of workpoints provided in a building rather than the available net lettable area (which would include any shared areas) and the type of work undertaken by staff.

¹⁴ Based on a 12 sqm modular design.

Libraries should be limited to operational libraries with resource materials in daily use. Rarely used or archived material should not be kept in expensive office accommodation.

Unless staff are trained daily, consider using existing meeting spaces or external training facilities as needed. When training facilities are required as part of office accommodation, they should be multi-purpose and shared to optimise space utilisation.

The number and size of shared meeting rooms should be determined by need. The recommended maximum areas for shared meeting and conference rooms are:

Space description	Area	Benchmark ratio ¹⁵
3-6 person meeting room	12 sqm	1:164 workpoints
10 person meeting room	24 sqm	1:575 workpoints
14-16 person meeting room	36 sqm	1:575 workpoints
20-28 person meeting room	50 sqm	1:1150 workpoints
100 person conference room/auditorium	120 sqm	1:2300 workpoints

Standard 2.5: acoustic comfort

Acoustic comfort is an important element in any office accommodation. When designing a workspace, the impact of acoustic ratings on the functionality of the space should be considered and adjusted to meet the agency's requirements. Effective office designs need to coordinate ambient noise controls with appropriate internal surfaces and office joinery in conjunction with unique workspace layouts and staff groupings.

Privacy requirements¹⁶ are classified as:

- normal
- confidential
- sensitive.

The majority of meeting rooms should target the normal privacy requirement level.

To determine the suitable privacy level for an enclosed workspace, the following table identifies the speech intelligibility of the following ratings:

Privacy requirements	Rating, dB ¹⁷	Speech intelligibility
Normal	35	Can hear loud talking, but not understand
	42	Can hear loud talking as a murmur
Confidential	45	Strain to hear loud talking
	48	Can barely hear some loud talking
	50	Cannot hear loud talking
Sensitive	53	Cannot hear very loud talking
	59	Cannot hear very loud noise

¹⁵ The ratio is based on a multi-tenanted office for 2000 people and a 12 sqm modular design. It should be adjusted to meet the size of the multi-tenanted office and agency's requirements.

¹⁶ Privacy requirements and ratings report prepared by Herring Storer Acoustics (2012).

¹⁷ dB is the symbol for decibel which is a unit used in acoustics to quantify differences in sound levels relative to the threshold of hearing for the average person.

SECTION 3: FIT-OUT, FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT

Standard 3.1: acquisition of fit-out

Under the policy, the Department of Finance is responsible for procurement of fit-out works in accordance with approved business cases and project definition plans.

Before the approval of fit-out plans, agencies must seek agreement from the Department of Finance that the fit-out proposal meets the policy and standards. It is the agency's responsibility to consider and identify its special operational requirements when submitting office accommodation requests to the Department of Finance.

Fit-outs valued at \$100,000 or greater require the approval of the agency's responsible minister.

Standard 3.2: environmentally sustainable designed (ESD) fit-outs

Fit-outs for office accommodation over 1000 square metres should be procured with the following target sustainability ratings:

- a 5 Star Green Star Interiors
- a minimum of 4.5 Star NABERS Energy Tenancy.

Agencies must contact the Department of Finance for exemptions to these requirements.

Standard 3.3: furniture and equipment

When selecting furniture such as desks and chairs, the ergonomic suitability for the task, the person performing the task and the degree of adjustability should be considered so that furniture can accommodate a range of users. The requirements of people with special needs must be met and this might involve customisation or acquisition of special equipment. These must be specified when submitting office accommodation requests to the Department of Finance.

Individual workstations

As individual workstations are a critical part of the workplace experience, consider:

- ergonomic comfort
- visual stimulation
- appropriate visual connectivity to staff and team members
- appropriate acoustic separation from other workspaces and communal areas
- good quality views/aspects to external areas
- good access to natural light and air quality.

For long term flexibility and re-use for the life of the lease, standard modular workstations should be chosen to best suit the floor plate and meet the functional requirements of the majority of work styles in each agency. Custom designed workstations should be avoided unless the building configuration precludes workstations of standard dimensions.

Separating groups of workstations with enclosed offices should be avoided as it constrains future changes to the size of the team groupings and creates physical barriers to effective communication between and within groups.

Workstation screens

Workstation screens should be between 1200 and 1350mm above floor level to maximise the natural light and outlook for staff. As screen height increases, privacy level increases but communication and outlook are constrained. Acoustic requirements and performance should be considered in the selection of a screen system.

Storage

Workstations should include storage for:

- individual use: one pedestal storage cabinet
- team use: two tambours per three people.

Active or operational storage is associated with workstation activities and needs to be readily accessible to the user.

Intermediate storage refers to the storage of material that needs to be generally available but is not necessarily part of the current work process. Intermediate storage can be more centralised and should meet intermediate or legislative requirements. Intermediate storage items should be progressively archived.

Archival storage refers to high density off-site storage that is needed infrequently. All archival material should be transferred regularly to lower-cost storage facilities and not kept in expensive office accommodation.

Desks and chairs

Workstation desks and chairs should be:

- ergonomically sound
- fully adjustable
- suitable for universal access
- consistent with the work function.

Furniture

Except where functionally necessary, furniture should be consistent with the modular design of workstations and be free-standing to allow economical reallocation and re-use.

Custom designed, built-in furniture, curtains and drapes should be avoided. The use of any built-in furniture limits future configurations.

Office equipment

It is the responsibility of the agency to fund and procure office equipment because the supply and installation of office equipment (photocopiers, computers, printers, routers, servers, facsimile machines) is outside the scope of fit-out projects managed by the Department of Finance.

To reduce energy costs and improve environmental sustainability, the Department of Finance encourages the procurement of the highest energy star rating appliances and recommends locating refrigerators and printers in the designated kitchen areas and shared support spaces. Further information about appliance energy efficiency can be found at www.energyrating.gov.au.

SECTION 4: OCCUPANCY AND BEYOND

Standard 4.1: sustainable practice

In accordance with *Principle 6: sustainability* of the policy, agencies are encouraged to maintain and improve the sustainability of their tenancies by:

- developing strategies to reduce energy consumption, costs and emissions, including monitoring and obtaining their NABERS energy tenancy rating and procuring the highest energy star rating computers, printers and appliances
- developing strategies to minimise water consumption
- developing waste management practices to minimise waste and encourage recycling
- participating in sustainable transport by developing and implementing workplace travel plans.

Standard 4.2: occupancy reviews

In accordance with *Principle 5: value-for-money* of the policy, the Department of Finance may conduct occupancy reviews six to 12 months before and after the completion of office accommodation projects over 1000 square metres. These timeframes are considered sufficient for occupants to become accustomed to their new surroundings and new ways of working.

A follow-up review may be required to establish if occupants' perceptions have changed after becoming more familiar with the accommodation.

Occupancy reviews can assist with the evaluation of value-for-money gained from the investment and whole-of-life management of government offices. These reviews provide valuable lessons for future projects, contribute to improvement in the workplace environment and assist in identification of any issues for rectification or adjustment.

Occupancy reviews can include:

- assessments of how closely the project's outcome meets the occupants' expectations about the physical workplace environment and the effectiveness and functionality of the design, construction, communication and occupancy process
- comparisons of the actual performance of building and services with the design performance, to evaluate workplace environmental conditions such as temperature, humidity, lighting levels and acoustics
- measurements of the project's success including occupants' satisfaction, productivity and absenteeism, and improvements or variations within the workplace.