

Policy on timetabling teaching activities

Scope

- 1 This policy covers the scheduling of all undergraduate and postgraduate teaching activities delivered on campus. It does not cover any scheduled activities on distance learning programmes, the use of University space for activities not directly associated with teaching and learning and the use of non-University space for teaching activities.

Governance and management

- 2 This policy is developed and overseen by the Timetabling and Shared Learning Spaces Group chaired by the Vice-President (Teaching, Learning and Students). The scheduling of teaching activities, i.e. timetabling, is undertaken by Schools in accordance with the principles set out in this policy. The Directorate of Estates and Facilities is responsible for the management and booking of centrally managed rooms.

Overarching principles for the timetabling of teaching activities

- 3 The processes for timetabling and booking rooms support the delivery of excellent teaching and the provision of the best possible student experience whilst also optimising staff time and working towards a more efficient utilisation of space.
- 4 Timetabling is undertaken by Schools using common processes to develop a University timetable. These processes are automated wherever possible with the objective of removing duplicate or unnecessary processes which diminish the student experience and waste staff time and resource.
- 5 The University timetable aims to ensure that, wherever possible, students are taught in the most appropriate teaching room and in accordance with the parameters set out in this policy.
- 6 The University timetable aims to minimise, wherever possible, the amount of travelling across campus for students and staff.
- 7 Individual timetables are easily accessible to those who need them.
- 8 Staff involved in timetable construction and related activities have access to high quality training and support. Academic staff are supported in considering and specifying the physical resources they require for their teaching.

Principles of timetable construction

- 9 The timetable is “educationally-led”, constructed on the basis of accurate and up-to-date data, in the knowledge of students’ unit choices where possible (for continuing students) and based on predictions of unit choices (for new students). The timetable

is developed on an annual basis and time slots plus rooms for teaching activities are not normally rolled forward from one year to the next.

- 10 Any timetable represents a balance between different, often competing requirements. The University aims to construct a “best-fit” timetable each year although with competing demands for timeslots and space, as well as different interpretations of “best-fit”, there is no timetable which will be able to accommodate all preferences.
- 11 Within the limits of available space and based on the most up-to-date information available the University seeks to construct a best-fit timetable in line with the following criteria:
 - The timetable is constructed on the basis of the teaching to be delivered and the availability of the most appropriate rooms.
 - The timetable will seek to minimise and resolve as many clashes as possible.
 - The timetable will enable students to meet programme requirements with optimum flexibility in options, with consideration given to the specific needs of part-time students.
 - An appropriate spread or concentration of staff commitments through the week, to allow and encourage excellent teaching and research. To enable different scenarios to be modelled we will base room availability on Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm (see paragraph 16).
 - Efficient use of space and equipment, and the most appropriate allocation of activities to rooms, taking into account the availability of both Estates-managed and School-managed rooms, the availability of specialist equipment and other similar considerations.
- 12 The Directorate of Estates and Facilities is responsible for issuing detailed guidance to Schools each year, setting out the process for constructing the teaching timetable and requesting bookings in centrally-managed rooms for the following academic session, including deadlines for the various processes involved.
- 13 The Timetabling and Shared Learning Spaces Group is responsible for leading an annual review of the timetable construction process (taking account of student feedback) and for implementing agreed improvements.
- 14 With effect from 2012, the University is rolling out Syllabus Plus software from Scientia. The software will be integrated with Campus Solutions for the collection of teaching data. The Directorate of Estates and Facilities is responsible for ensuring the effective use of the software, all liaison with Scientia, and for the regular review of the software and its use. It will undertake these responsibilities in close liaison with the Timetabling Forum and the Timetabling and Shared Learning Spaces Group.

Teaching weeks and the standard teaching day

- 15 Teaching activities should normally be scheduled for the first 12 weeks of each semester. Some programmes follow non-standard delivery patterns, e.g. certain programmes in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.
- 16 Teaching activities are booked in slots of one hour or multiples thereof. Activities normally start on the hour and finish at 10 minutes to the hour, allowing 10 minutes to move from one activity to the next. The standard day for booking rooms will be taken to be 9am to 6pm (5pm being the last scheduled timetable slot) for modelling purposes.
- 17 The timetable is constructed with the aim of allowing staff and students at least one hour free of teaching activities for lunch, wherever possible, between 12 and 2pm. Where teaching activities are scheduled to run for two hours or more, including across lunchtime, staff and students must agree an appropriate opportunity for a break.
- 18 Wednesday afternoons from 1pm onwards should normally be kept free to allow undergraduate students to participate in sport and other activities.
- 19 Teaching outside of the above hours is permitted if:
 - Students and staff have been informed in advance and invited to make their needs known before the main timetabling period.
 - The School makes any necessary operational arrangements with other Schools and/or the Directorate of Estates and Facilities.

Priorities for the use of teaching space

- 20 Teaching rooms are a finite University-wide resource which, during semesters, are allocated to teaching activities in line with the following priorities (which are listed in order of priority):
 - Teaching activities. Priority is given to first year teaching and to cases where a student or member of staff has a disability requiring particular arrangements or a reasonable adjustment.
 - Location of sequential lectures
 - Examinations
 - Welcome Week and student registration
 - One-off bookings for meetings etc
 - University open days
 - CPD activity
 - External bookings including conferences can only be accommodated if there is availability after all teaching activities, open days and other University activities have been booked.

- 21 Teaching rooms are allocated to Schools' activities on a "best-fit" basis although every effort is made to meet Schools' needs for rooms in particular buildings or for specific rooms. This means that some lectures and other teaching events will be in buildings which are not the same buildings where Schools are based.

Publication of timetables

- 22 Students are provided with individual timetables in a clear and accessible way. The University aims to provide complete, accurate and up-to-date timetables, published at the start of the academic year.
- 23 The timetable will also be available to other staff including academic and PSS staff, Heads of Schools, and the Directorate of Estates and Facilities.

Changes to timetables

- 24 Changes to the published timetable can have a negative effect on the student experience and a change in one part of the timetable can have knock on effects on a range of other activities. Changes should be largely avoided by the construction of a timetable based on timely and accurate data. However changes can be made in **exceptional circumstances**, such as:

- Staff illness.
- Approved change in staff availability.
- Actual number of students exceeds room capacity.
- Actual number of students is significantly smaller than expected and would fit in a smaller room (freeing a large room for an activity for a larger group which cannot otherwise be accommodated).

- 25 Where changes are made students must be informed in advance by their School.

Use of teaching rooms

- 26 Schools and staff using the University's teaching rooms are required to abide by the 'Central Teaching Room Booking Procedure' for centrally-managed rooms and by School guidance for School-managed rooms.

Support and training

- 27 Support and training needs are currently being identified via a 'timetabling project'. Details of user handbooks, 'how-to' guides, FAQs, training sessions, at-elbow support, telephone/e-mail contacts etc will be added here once confirmed.

Monitoring and review

- 28 As part of the University's timetabling project, service level agreements for the relationships between the key stakeholders will be developed e.g. Directorate of Estates and Schools, the University and Scientia.
- 29 This policy and its implementation will be reviewed regularly by the Timetabling and Shared Learning Spaces Group.

Problem resolution

- 30 Wherever possible problems should be identified during the construction of the teaching timetable and resolved by negotiation between the affected Schools with the involvement of the Directorate of Estates and Facilities as appropriate. Problems which cannot be resolved in this way should be referred, by the Directorate of Estates and Facilities, to the appropriate Associate Dean or, if the problem spans more than one Faculty, the Vice-President (Teaching, Learning and Students).

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Related information	
Policy owner	Louise Walmsley, Director of the Teaching and Learning Support Office
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