

Learning and Information Services

PROJECT: STUDENT TIMETABLING



Project	Student Timetabling
Product	Timetabling Policy Draft Version 4.2
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1. Introduction

In order to establish a uniform approach to timetabling across the whole of its student provision, the University has created a timetabling policy which provides a set of principles guiding the timetabling process and which puts a system in place ensuring that students and staff are able to plan their learning and teaching activities more effectively.

The student timetabling project has two main objectives:

- Improving the student experience across the University by making timetable information available online to students in a timely fashion allowing them to make informed work/life/study decisions, with a particular focus on part time students;
- Optimising room utilisation across the university to provide efficient use of the University's estate.

The steps involved in developing the timetabling policy have involved:

- Capturing best practice particularly from other universities which already have a centralised system in place
- Drafting a timetabling policy which matches the objectives above and which fits the mission, objectives and values of the University
- Trialling the draft policy using the existing data from the academic year 2010/11
- Reviewing the policy to determine whether it has met the project objectives and revising the policy through adjustments to the principles as and where necessary. (there may be more than one iteration)
- Issuing the policy as the basis for the timetabling process for 2011/12

As part of the development of the policy, a set of policy metrics have been established to assess the benefits of the timetabling policy and measure the

conformance of the new timetabling process to that policy. It also provides the basis for continued development in timetabling over succeeding years leading to further improvements in student experience and use of the estate.

2. The Legislative Framework

Timetabling and the allocation of rooms will be undertaken in conformity with the legislative requirements in force at the time. The following legislation will be borne in mind in timetable scheduling:

1. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
2. The Working Time Directive 1998
3. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
4. The Part Time Workers (Less Favourable Treatment of Part Time Worker Regulations) 2000;
5. Other relevant legislation which may be from time to time enacted.

3. General Principles

The general principles of the timetable policy are as follows:

- 3.1. To enhance the student experience and support high quality delivery of teaching and learning within the University's resource constraints;
- 3.2. To ensure that students are taught in the most appropriate high quality teaching & learning accommodation;
- 3.3. To ensure that the construction and deployment of the timetable conforms to all requirements regarding equality of treatment and diversity of background of the students;
- 3.4. To provide personalised timetables and room booking information to students and staff that are up to date and easily accessible;
- 3.5. To optimise the effective management and utilisation of the University's learning space at the Preston, Burnley and Westlakes campuses;
- 3.6. To ensure that there is suitable space and facilities for all teaching and learning events requiring them;
- 3.7. To record all timetabled teaching and learning activities and space on one central timetable;
- 3.8. To provide a unified approach to timetabling and room booking across the University using one system;
- 3.9. To support all staff who in different roles contribute to the creation and production of the University's teaching timetable;
- 3.10. To plan timetables for new deliveries and developments;

3.11. To continuously enhance the timetabling process.

4. Specific Principles

The timetabling principles within the policy cover a number of different areas. The principles take into account the expectations of students and staff with regard to their individual timetables given their other commitments. They deal with the location and suitability of the teaching space and its efficient utilisation. The roles of staff engaged in the timetabling process at School level and within the Central Timetabling Unit are addressed. The principles also deal with timetable revision, its publication and the need to ensure a greater degree of stability in the timetable once it has been issued.

The University recognises that, within the complexity of the timetabling process, there will be certain circumstances where it is not feasible to adhere to all of the following principles. However, it will endeavour to do so as far as possible.

5. Expectations of Students

This section has been drawn up recognising that all students should have a timetable which meets the majority of their needs within a given framework, although acknowledging that it is not possible to meet all students' individual expectations. Students, particular mature students who frequently have childcare and other domestic duties need to be able plan, have early access to timetables and have few changes to the timetable impacting on them. The principles with respect to student expectations are therefore as follows:

- 5.1. Timetables will be constructed according to the course requirements e.g. full-time, part-time or block release (including professional practice requirements);
- 5.2. For full time students the majority of classes will be timetabled as defined in Section 7.1 except where there is sharing of classes with part time students; for part-time students studying primarily in the evening, classes will take place as defined in Section 7.2; part-time classes may, however, take place at other times during the week according to need.
- 5.3. Wherever possible full-time students will have one clear day free for individual study;
- 5.4. Day release and other part time professional courses will be delivered on one day per week unless otherwise specified by the course;
- 5.5. Timetables will be constructed to reduce the amount of travel between buildings, of particular importance for those with mobility issues,
- 5.6. Wherever possible, timetables will be constructed in such a way as to avoid large gaps in teaching on any one day.

- 5.7. Where possible and where there is a concentration of students with a particular religious belief, timetables will be constructed to take into account religious observance which may affect student attendance at specific classes;
- 5.8. All students on Preston, Burnley and Westlake campuses will be expected to engage with an online timetable and view the published timetables on a regular basis;
- 5.9. Updates for timetables will be provided normally by email via Uclan email addresses only and occasionally by text alerts using Contact Your Students via the relevant School Office, in case of short notice such as staff sickness;

6. Expectations of Teaching Staff

The principles recognise that staff undertake many duties in the University apart from teaching. These include commitments to research and knowledge transfer activities as well as a number of administrative and committee duties. Time therefore has to be made available for these activities and will be a constraint on the timing of teaching duties. Staff also need to have access to their timetables at the earliest opportunity to be able to plan all their activities effectively. The principles governing teaching activities are as follows:

- 6.1. Full-time staff will normally be expected to be available to deliver day-time classes as defined in Section 7.1 (with the exception of block delivery). Given the professional nature of the academic contract and the need to have evening classes, staff may also be timetabled for some evening work as defined in Section 7.2. A reasonable teaching load will be created which will not make unreasonable demands on staff or cause hours to be unsocial or excessive within the meaning and terms of the staff teaching contracts.
- 6.2. Staff will not be expected to deliver classes for more than six consecutive hours in line with the European Working Time Directive and, under normal circumstances will be much less than this in order that quality of delivery will not be adversely affected; if a member of staff is teaching until 9pm in the evening then, where possible, they will not be required to teach the following morning (up to midday).
- 6.3. For staff with specific and funded research or knowledge transfer contract commitments – for example, contractual obligations to a research council - timetables will be constructed to ensure that these commitments can be met;
- 6.4. For staff on fractional posts or paid by the hour, timetables will be constructed in such a way as to ensure that their time at the University is effectively optimised;

- 6.5. Wherever possible, timetables will be constructed in such a way as to avoid large gaps in teaching on any one day;
- 6.6. Timetables will be constructed wherever possible to reduce staff travel between buildings to a minimum and particularly so for those with mobility issues
- 6.7. All University staff on Preston, Burnley and Westlake campuses will be expected to engage with an online timetable and take account of email notification of changes to the timetable;
- 6.8. Staff will be expected to report immediately to their School timetabler(s) when rooms booked are no longer required; the timetablers will ensure that the Central Timetabling Unit is informed;
- 6.9. Generic restrictions on staff working will be set at School level. The Head of School will make the final decision about availability of staff having taken advice from the School timetabler(s);
- 6.10. Timetables will not be constructed to satisfy individual staff preferences regarding time of day or day of week of teaching activities (other than those specified above);

7. Standard Teaching Hours

The teaching hours of the University are defined below:

- 7.1. Day-time teaching for full time students is defined as Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm;
- 7.2. Evening teaching for part-time students is defined as Monday to Thursday 5pm to 9 pm;
- 7.3. Weekend teaching (Saturday and Sunday) has no standard hours applicable;
- 7.4. Wednesday afternoon teaching is not scheduled for undergraduate students except where professional or employment requirements dictate;
- 7.5. All classes of 1, 2 or 3 hours duration will start on the hour. In the case of classes of 1.5 or 2.5 hours duration, these may start on the half hour where they abut classes which are of similar length; in order to make most effective use of space;
- 7.6. Classes booked will always provide for the last 10 minutes of the session to be changeover time to allow for rooms to empty ready for the next session.

8. Location and Timetabling of Rooms

The University has had a centralised system of rooming for a number of years but there are many exceptions to this. During the process of organisational restructuring involving the creation of Schools, the University has changed its

approach to ownership of rooms and the timetabling of them. This change is incorporated into the principles below:

- 8.1. All rooms are centrally owned and timetabled;
- 8.2. Specialised rooms e.g. laboratories, dance studios, will be restricted in use for the specific purpose for which they were designed and must be used appropriately;
- 8.3. Schools will be allocated to a zone with home or pooled rooms and home buildings which will be used as first choice in room allocation (these may be zones where specialised rooms for an individual School are spread across the campus);
- 8.4. Rooms will be centrally allocated to make the most efficient use of space;
- 8.5. The capacity numbers for teaching rooms will be agreed by Central Timetabling Unit, Space Management Group and the Health and Safety Committee;
- 8.6. Room facilities will be clearly specified and any clearly identified.

9. School Staff Timetable Responsibilities

Each School currently has at least one person (depending on the size of School) responsible for the timetabling process making sure that it is effective and efficient for its students and staff. Academic staff and administrative staff tasked with timetabling duties will:

- 9.1. Abide by the annual timetabling process;
- 9.2. Submit timetabling requests in the format:- duration of hours to be taught and weeks to be taught;
- 9.3. Submit staff and student constraints in the format:- location, capacity and duration of class requested;
- 9.4. Submit information related to event specification, delivery patterns and room requests in the allotted timeframe;
- 9.5. Submit any disclosed information relating to student and staff disability that may affect room allocation and scheduling;
- 9.6. Check that the correct staff have been allocated and report any inaccuracies to the Central Timetabling Unit;
- 9.7. Check thoroughly the published timetable and report any inaccuracies to the Central Timetabling Unit.

10. Central Timetabling Unit

The principles below set out the responsibilities of the Central Timetabling Unit. The Unit should:

- 10.1. Provide an up-to-date version of an online timetable;
- 10.2. Process changes to the timetable to staff and students via email;

- 10.3. Allocate rooms according to the prioritisation weighting specified in the timetabling policy;
- 10.4. Schedule the timetables based on the timetabling rules specified in the timetabling policy;
- 10.5. Conduct room audits within the semester and conduct fining as appropriate;
- 10.6. Review annually the allocation of home zones and rooms to Schools based on the size of student cohort, actual room capacity, delivery pattern and capacity numbers requested;
- 10.7. Annual review and maintain estate data related to each campus, zones, building names, room capacities, room facilities and building and room partitioning.

11. Scheduling and Rooming

Timetable scheduling and rooming will take place in such a manner as to ensure that student satisfaction levels are high and best use is made of the estate.

The priority order for **scheduling** of events is as follows

- 11.1. Those events likely to cause most clashes in the timetable should be locked in early in the process to minimise clash potential, for example, the Joint Honours/Combined Honours spotting system and associated events;
- 11.2. Blocks of teaching resulting from student placement which has been fixed in advance with a commissioning authority, for example timetables of nursing students;
- 11.3. Courses for student on part time courses which need to be blocked on specified days of the week;
- 11.4. Annual events which take precedence in specific weeks for example, orientation and induction;
- 11.5. First year undergraduate students given priority over second and third years;
- 11.6. Two hour lectures will be scheduled from 9 am on the odd hours first;
- 11.7. Scheduling will take into account travel time between campus sites buildings and the 'handover' time at the end of teaching sessions; normally, staff will not be expected to teach at two campuses within one day.
- 11.8. Events with long durations e.g. three hours will normally be roomed before those with shorter durations;

The priority order for **rooming** of events is as follows:

- 11.9. Allocation of rooms to students or staff with disclosed disabilities will be given priority;

- 11.10. The most constrained resources should be allocated first; for example currently large lecture theatres; thereafter, class size matched to room capacity with large cohorts being given priority;
- 11.11. Specialist rooms allocated solely based on the specialist requirements for teaching and after any health and safety assessment or risk assessment undertaken by the appropriate technical staff;
- 11.12. Any conflict between Schools arising from use of specific rooms will be resolved through the Space Management Group.

12. Institutional Priorities

The University has a number of institutional priorities involving one-off or irregular events of short duration which may affect the scheduling. In principle, the only institutional priorities which should take precedence over normal teaching timetables and should be booked in advance include the following, all of which are teaching-related:

1. Induction week
2. Orientation week
3. Central examinations weeks

Non-teaching activities have lower precedence in the use of teaching space. Many of these events and activities may be undertaken by employing committee and board rooms available across the campus:

- 12.1. Institutional Open days and School Open Days should be accommodated on Wednesday afternoons, at weekends or in student vacations;
- 12.2. Periodic review events should be located wherever possible in non-teaching rooms;
- 12.3. Corporate training events should be located in non-teaching rooms;
- 12.4. Taster sessions should normally be accommodated at weekends or in student vacations;
- 12.5. Accreditation meetings and other professional body visits should be located wherever possible in non-teaching rooms.

13. Requests for Timetables Changes

Late changes to room bookings will be considered only where there are:

- 13.1. New staff appointments or staff transfers or periods of notice;
- 13.2. Cancellation of modules with insufficient student numbers affecting the student group size;
- 13.3. Unexpected absence affecting the availability of teaching staff;

- 13.4. Refurbishment requirements which cannot be undertaken outside the teaching periods;
- 13.5. Insufficient room capacity or facilities in the room to enable effective teaching to be delivered to students;
- 13.6. Health and safety reasons affecting the safety of both teaching staff and students.

In all cases the scheduling rules regarding disability indicated in section 11.9 apply in the case of room changes.

14. Communication of Timetable Changes

The procedure for communicating changes to room allocation or teaching event times will include:

- 14.1. UCLan email notification (alerts) will be sent via UCLan email addresses only for all students and staff affected by the change or, by other means where disability may prevent access via email
- 14.2. The published timetable will reflect changes made in real time;
- 14.3. For any student affected by a late timetable change (within 24 hours of the event), the School Office will send an SMS text to the student's current mobile using Contact Your Students.

15. Access to the Published Timetable

The timetable will be published by the Central Timetabling Unit. It will provide all staff and students with clear and accurate information suitable for their needs. The timetable will be formatted using on-screen reading software in ways suitable for reading, irrespective of disability:

- 15.1. Students will be able to view their own individual, course and module timetables via the student portal; Students with disabilities will also be provided with help by the Student Learning Support Unit
- 15.2. Academic staff will be able to view their own individual timetable as well as timetables of the courses and modules on which they teach;
- 15.3. The Head of School, School, School timetablers and School administrative staff will be able to view the timetables of their own School in terms of the courses, modules, students and staff for whom the School is the home;
- 15.4. All staff of the Central Timetabling Unit will be able to view all timetables;
- 15.5. All course timetables will be available on the University website to aid prospective students in their choice of study

16. Timescale for Publication of the Timetable

The Central Timetabling Unit will publish an annual calendar in which the following must occur by the agreed calendar dates:

- 16.1. Dataset (events and staff) created;
- 16.2. Dataset (events and staff) available to Schools;
- 16.3. Dataset(events and staff) validated by Schools;
- 16.4. Draft timetable published (lectures only);
- 16.5. Constraints and preferences entered into CMIS;
- 16.6. Sub groups (seminar groups, PBL groups etc) entered into CMIS;
- 16.7. Scheduled timetable and allocated locations;
- 16.8. Draft timetable (lectures and sub groups) published;
- 16.9. Draft timetable reviewed and requests for change provided;
- 16.10. "Final" timetable (lectures and subgroups) published prior to teaching.

17. Room Audit and Financial Penalties

Room audits will be undertaken in order to ensure that scheduling and rooming are taking place effectively:

- 17.1. Room audit will be conducted throughout the year;
- 17.2. Central Timetabling Unit staff will be responsible for room audit and will audit all teaching rooms within each period;
- 17.3. Where rooms are scheduled to be used but not in use there will be a financial penalty to the School when the room is not in use. This penalty must be paid by the School for accommodation that is not used. Schools will be able to appeal the fine where they can provide evidence that the fine is unjustified.

18. Timetabling Metrics

In order to test the efficacy of the timetabling policy in relation to the overall objectives, metrics will be employed to help determine whether the objectives have been achieved. Specific targets associated with these metrics will be set and reviewed each year. The metrics are shown in the Appendix.

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Timetabling Metrics

The metrics can be divided into two broad groups:

a. Student Experience

The following metrics will be used to determine the success of the timetabling process each year in terms of the student experience. Such metrics do not measure student satisfaction directly (apart from those from the National Student Survey) but can be considered as proxies for student satisfaction:

- 1.1. The timetable meets students needs - NSS Q13. "The timetable works efficiently as far as my activities are concerned".(UCLAN 2009 81%)
- 1.2. Changes to be the timetable are communicated effectively - NSS Q14 **"Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively"**. (UCLAN 2009 67%);
- 1.3. The publication of a timetable in terms of the completeness and quality in delivering an integrated time table containing all teaching events in general and specialist teaching rooms - percentage of events scheduled by publication date;
- 1.4. Measure of disruption to students – the number of changes to rooms by course;
- 1.5. Measure of disruption to students – the number of cancellations during the year by course;
- 1.6. Measure of travel - percentage of time students are outside the home zone;
- 1.7. The percentage of related events (based on programme structure and event links) that remain in the same building;
- 1.8. The communication of changes to the timetable in terms of the timeliness and accuracy of the communication as changes are made. – all changes to be communicated to staff and students within x hours - percentage within X hours;
- 1.9. The percentage of full-time students who receive one clear day per week;
- 1.10. The maximum number of consecutive teaching hours delivered to students and assessment of whether this is within reasonable boundaries - percentage of continuous contact time – e.g. 4 hours or below for any cohort of students;
- 1.11. The number of clashes on programmes, modules and students and an analysis of the reasons for clashing

b. Estate Utilisation

The following metrics relate to the other major objective of effective estate utilisation:

- 1.12.Total utilisation - the percentage of teaching rooms centrally pooled. (If the number of rooms centrally pooled is less than 80% it indicates an institution is not optimising the teaching stock (SUMS);
- 1.13.Room utilisation - the room frequency is the number of occasions a teaching room is used. If room frequency is greater than 70 % it indicates good practice (SUMS);
- 1.14.Room utilisation - percentage of time a room is occupied (Room occupancy is the best fit of teaching group size to room capacity. Low occupancy indicates poor fitting. (Occupancy is based on booking not attendance));
- 1.15.Space utilization to be normalized across the working week to make the best use of space;
- 1.16.Percentage of room bookings cancelled.(Room booking cancellations based on bookings made and confirmed and then later cancelled).;
- 1.17.Percentage of events unroomed;
- 1.18.Room changes in terms of the number of changes issued after publication and the reason for change;
- 1.19.Bookings and room utilisation at key periods where increased occupancy would improve space utilisation e.g. 9-10 am Monday to Friday;
- 1.20.Room utilisation from Monday to Friday no more than 20% variance between days;