Timetabling Principles - Operational Guidelines

Purpose of Document

This document provides a basic set of operating principles to enable fair, efficient construction and delivery of the teaching timetable. Timetabling contacts must acquaint themselves with these set of ground rules prior to sending requests to the central Timetabling Team.

Timetabling is a critical, core University operation with significant impact on the staff and student experience. It must support academic needs, deliver to a schedule that suits the institution, and adapt to university strategy.

It is critical for the general good of the academic community that the timetablers can operate with a clear and workable set of ground-rules.

Overarching Principles

The academic timetable should:

1. Adhere to the core teaching hours 09:00-18:00 on Monday to Friday. The period between 18:00-20:00 on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday may also be utilised for teaching purposes.
2. Ensure that all taught sessions start on the hour and finish no later than 10 minutes to the hour to allow session changeover and staff/student travel time.
3. Usually ensure that no member of academic teaching staff be timetabled to start at 09:00 following a 20:00 finish the previous evening.
4. Have no more than 4 hours of consecutive teaching for students and staff.
5. Endeavor to provide a minimum of 1 hour lunch break between 12:00-14:00.
6. Enable UG extracurricular/sporting/social activities, therefore no Wednesday p.m. teaching for UG is permitted, unless otherwise approved by Head of School/ PVC Education, Kelly Coate.
7. Allow PGT teaching to be timetabled on Wednesday p.m. without aforementioned permission.
8. Have the correct information by the specified deadline to avoid delays to the timetable's publication.
9. Any elective module will be scheduled in one of the four elective slots:
   - Monday   09:00 – 11:00
   - Monday   16:00 – 18:00
   - Tuesday   13:00 – 15:00
   - Thursday   11:00 – 13:00
10. Have delivery changes or cancelled modules communicated as soon as known, not when the timetable is published.
11. Ensure general teaching space not being used is returned, so colleagues are not deprived of a valuable resource.
12. It may not be possible to accommodate pedagogical sequencing requests, i.e., lectures before seminars.

Data Collection

1. Having the correct information by the specified deadline makes the collection process for the timetabling team and school staff simpler.
2. Required general teaching rooms on Sussex Campus must be submitted via teaching methods on CMS.
3. If an activity is not running in reading week, please inform timetabling so we can release the room.
4. All modules not running for the forthcoming academic year must be recorded on CMS teaching methods as either 'withdrawn' or 'suspended.'
5. Timetablers have been instructed to scrutinise planned versus real student numbers on all teaching activities.
6. Should a department amend their teaching from general teaching space to a departmental room, contact your timetabler.
7. Teaching longer than 2 hours will dictate the department's timetable and reduce flexibility in post publication amendments.
8. Allocating too many tutors on the CMS contacts list constrains your timetable.
9. Having the correct named teaching staff allocations at the outset gives the best chance of producing timetables that work for all participants.

Staff Availability

1. Staff are assumed to be available to teach Monday-Friday 09:00-20:00, unless a validly approved Teaching Staff Availability Form is submitted.
2. Teaching staff availability forms must be submitted by the specified deadline as outlined in the schedule for the production of the academic timetable.
3. The school/department must re-submit a new teaching staff availability form to the Timetabling Team **each year.**
4. Teaching staff availability form/s should not be confused with flexible working arrangements submitted via Human Resources.

Construction of the Timetable

The timetable is driven by various constraints.

- Academic programs and curriculum structures
- Staff and student constraints
- Specialist resource capacity
- Availability of functionally suitable space
- Duration and structure of the academic calendar and teaching weeks
- Availability of data and information in relation to
  - curriculum structure
  - enrolments
  - staffing and staff availability
  - student choices
  - room availability
- Policy and process factors, i.e., room ownership and control

The following factors are also taken into consideration:

1. Co-teaching of electives with non-elective modules for Foundation and Year 1 students is not permissible. Doing so creates clashes within the timetable and prevents students from choosing electives.
2. The scheduling of teaching events uses a 'best-fit' approach to make optimum use of the campus estate.
3. The system can only work on the basis that all time slots are treated as 'equal,' and that the less popular slots get shared.
4. The team will endeavor to provide larger space when requested, i.e., for group work.
5. Should real numbers be much smaller than expected, the Timetabling Team may allocate a smaller seminar room.
6. Activities involving staff or students with a disability will be appropriately timetabled.

Publication of the Timetable

1. The timetable will be published on Sussex Direct.
2. Staff have a 3-week period in which to check the timetable **for the whole year** and raise any issues with the Timetabling Team.
3. Requests for changes will be processed where practical and reasonable (within that 3-week window) if they will not adversely affect the student experience.
4. Any timetabling amendments must be submitted on the relevant form and approved by the Head of School.
5. Clashes within the timetable should be resolved between the relevant parties.
6. Any timetabling clashes that cannot be resolved will be escalated to the Head of Department and the Timetabling Manager in the first instance.
7. GTS space clashes will be resolved between the Timetabling Team and the parties concerned.
8. Having named lecturers associated with the correct teaching activities provides the best opportunity that works for all participants.
9. Where new staff names emerge later, we would kindly ask those individuals to fit within the published arrangements.
10. Where this results in a direct clash, the optimal solution will be found but late rescheduling always risks a poor outcome for students.
11. Naturally, the timetabling team will work within the limits of the timetable as it stands to accommodate clashes.
12. The caveat to the above may mean the timetabling team will identify other teaching activities belonging to the department to accommodate and resolve those clashes.
13. We understand that some changes are inevitable, but the annual timetable must be considered accurate and reliable for staff and student planning purposes.

Amendments to the academic timetable after publication

1. Acceptable amendments to the academic timetable include:
   - Staff/Student clashes
   - Room size is too small or unsuitable for purpose
   - Event requested is now redundant
   - Extra groups required due to student numbers
   - Staff illness
   - Student accessibility issues
2. Any amendment to the academic timetable must be done in conjunction with your Senior Timetabling Officer.
3. Any amendment must fit within the timetable as it stands.
4. Agreed amendments must be recorded manually via CMS by the departmental contacts. There is **no dynamic link** between Syllabus+ & CMS/Sussex Direct.
5. Any proposed amendment affecting more than one department must involve all relevant departments from the start.