

# Timetabling Policy

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## 1 Introduction

**1.1** This Policy sets out the agreed principles for timetabling and room booking. It ensures that issues of equality and transparency, accuracy, timeliness, accountability and continuous improvement can be managed within Timetabling procedures.

**1.2** The main overall aim of this Policy is to improve the quality of the student experience by ensuring that University resources are used to their maximum potential and efficiency.

**1.3** To achieve these aims and objectives, the University uses timetabling software to construct timetables for all teaching across the whole institution, on all campuses. Space and staff time are costly, finite resources with often high levels of demand. Timetabling early in a structured, consistent and accurate manner will maximise the effective usage of these scarce resources.

**1.4** The context is for us all to work together, as a community, to provide the best timetable and space usage we can for the benefit of our students and staff.

## 2 Governance of this policy

**2.1** This policy is developed and overseen by the Timetabling Governance Group, chaired by the PVC Dean.

**2.2** Working together, Academic and Student Administration (ASA), Estates and Campus Services (ECS), IT Services (ITS) and Faculties ensure the implementation of this Policy.

**2.3** Responsibility for agreeing amendments to this Policy rests with Academic Board.

**2.4** The policy will be reviewed and revised as appropriate on an annual basis taking account of the impact on the wider student experience.

### **3 Principles for timetabling**

**3.1** Any timetable represents a balance between different, often competing requirements. The principles of this policy listed in priority order are as follows:

- To ensure that students have the best possible experience
- To ensure that teaching takes place in the most appropriate accommodation available with consideration given to availability of amenities in the vicinity at the scheduled time
- To ensure that staff have the best possible experience
- The University will strive to ensure all students and staff have equal access and opportunity, but there will be occasions where optimal arrangements cannot be made because of operational difficulties.
- To ensure the optimum number of teaching events can be accommodated
- To provide a consistent room for module delivery across the semester
- To ensure the effective utilisation and management of the University's teaching space
- To provide a unified approach to timetabling and room booking using one common timetable system for all users
- To ensure that appropriate timetable information is available to both staff and students in an appropriate and timely manner
- To seek to resolve and / or minimise as many clashes in the timetable as possible
- To enable the use of space for non-teaching events (see Section - Priorities for the Use of Teaching Space).

**3.2** Access to at least view timetable information should not be unreasonably denied to anyone. Students and staff should be able to view personally relevant timetables. Timetabling software users should be able to view scheduling information for all rooms.

**3.3** All timetables produced using the timetabling software will be considered to be a reliable and accurate reflection of reality; the timetabling software will be the repository and ultimate source of all timetable information.

**3.4** Teaching will be timetabled across the full range of hours within the standard teaching periods listed in 6.2 below.

### **4 Priorities for the use of teaching space**

**4.1** Teaching rooms are a finite University-wide resource which, during semesters and terms, are allocated to activities in line with the following priorities:

- Academic contact sessions
- Examinations
- Graduation
- Enrolment, Induction and Freshers' Fair activities
- Open Days, Applicant Days and mandatory applicant interviews

- OCSLD and other internal training events
- High-profile and public events (e.g. Professorial lectures)
- Formal University Committees
- Brookes Venues Bookings
- All other events

**4.2** The University Timetabling and Room Bookings Team will set aside space as required for the priority events listed in paragraph 4.1.

**4.3** Outside of semesters and terms teaching rooms are allocated to activities in line with the following priorities:

- Academic contact sessions
- Examinations
- Graduation (in published calendar week)
- Brookes Venues bookings including summer schools
- Enrolment, Induction and Freshers' Fair activities
- Open Days, Applicant Days and mandatory applicant interviews
- OCSLD and other internal training events
- High-profile and public events (e.g. Professorial lectures)
- Formal University committees
- All other events

## **5 Areas of responsibility in timetabling**

**5.1** The overall timetabling process for academic activities is overseen by the Directorate of Academic and Student Administration (ASA) through the University Timetabling and Room Bookings Team (UTAR). UTAR controls the booking of all teaching space and meeting rooms, and holds overall responsibility for the construction, dissemination, monitoring and updating of all general timetable information.

**5.2** Estates and Campus Services (ECS) manage and control the built aspects of the teaching environment and their ongoing upkeep and maintenance.

**5.3** ITS is responsible for the AV equipment and IT equipment and software.

**5.4** Faculty dedicated space is managed through the timetabling software.

**5.5** Each Faculty will ensure that the UTAR have been informed of the name(s) of those individuals(s) empowered to resolve conflicts between modules. Each Faculty will ensure that UTAR have been informed of the names of individuals responsible for reviewing and acting upon room audit data.

**5.6** Use of University space for conferences, summer schools or other external purposes is managed by ECS through Brookes Venues. Brookes Venues are able to book available rooms via UTAR, with agreement from Faculties where necessary.

**5.7** Students also accept a level of responsibility for their own activities. It is the student's responsibility, for example, to check their timetable regularly for accuracy and changes, and to advise relevant staff in the event of any issues. Students should also notify relevant staff of any specific personal requirements, i.e. access, disabilities, religious or other responsibilities, etc.

**5.8** Guidance and Responsibilities for Heads of Departments.

- Ensure that the Faculty / Department works collegiately to produce and fulfil the best timetable for students' learning experience, within the available resource;
- Ensure that Faculty/Departmental input and checking is carried out in timely fashion, according to the published timetable production cycle;
- Manage and sign-off staff and module constraints together with the Associate Deans;

### 5.9 Guidance and Responsibilities for Programme Leads

- Ensure that programme and module developments and changes are managed so that approvals are completed on time to fit the timetable production cycle, and so enable timely completion of module selection activities as well as supporting timetabling;
- Ensure the timetable remains stable, and that any essential updates are communicated to the UTAR and to students, once the timetable has been published to students.

### 5.10 Guidance and Responsibilities for Module Leaders

- Check draft timetables for your students and for yourself, and notify the Programme Lead or UTAR of any problems or preferences, including any known additional requirements for staff or students;
- Adhere to the final version of the timetable, as published to students;
- Inform the UTAR of any cancellations or additional teaching sessions, as soon as they arise, to enable appropriate timetable updates and communication;
- Support data collection and checking activities, when requested, ensuring they are carried out accurately and in timely fashion, according to the published timetable production cycle.

## 6 Standard teaching periods

**6.1** Standard teaching periods are necessary not only to ensure a sufficient number of appropriate space-hours, but also to accommodate the complexities of shared modules and programme structures. It also clarifies when teaching takes priority for students, staff and other space users.

**6.2** Formal academic contact sessions for all programmes may be held at any point during the standard teaching periods in semester time. These periods are as follows:

Monday	9.00 am to 8.00 pm
Tuesday	9.00 am to 8.00 pm
Wednesday	9.00 am to 8.00 pm
Thursday	9.00 am to 8.00 pm
Friday	9.00 am to 4.00 pm

**6.3** Optional modules will be run at any point during the standard teaching periods. Evening and Wednesday afternoon teaching will be avoided where this is reasonable in order to maximise student opportunities for extra-curricular activities.

**6.4** Academic contact sessions for **compulsory** modules may be held during the following periods during semester time:

Monday	9.00 am to 6.00 pm
Tuesday	9.00 am to 6.00 pm
Wednesday	9.00 am to 12.00 noon
Thursday	9.00 am to 6.00 pm
Friday	9.00 am to 4.00 pm

**6.5** Compulsory modules may be held outside of these times if there is a clear reason to do so, but students must be informed as early as possible if a compulsory event is likely to be scheduled outside of these hours.

**6.6** Academic contact sessions will generally **start on the hour**. Academic contact sessions will generally **end at ten minutes to the hour**. This is to allow academic staff to prepare and set up for the coming session, and for students and staff to move on to their next session.

**6.7** Academic staff and students may be expected to deliver or attend academic contact sessions at any of the University's campuses or venues within the town or city in which the module delivery is based e.g. Oxford or Swindon. This is irrespective of where the majority of academic contact sessions occur for that staff member or student. However, unreasonable amounts of travel are not supported by this policy.

## **7 Timetabling practice**

**7.1** If there is a perceived clash in room usage, the room must be given to the user or event which is shown in the timetabling software.

**7.2** Academic staff and students are expected to be available for academic contact sessions at any time during the standard teaching periods defined in 6.2 above. Staff contract clauses regarding working hours will be honoured within this policy. Departments are expected to assign suitable available staff to the timetabled teaching for each module. Departments are expected to vary the assigned staff in the event of one member of staff being unavailable for the timetabled session.

**7.3** Any constraints that may affect when a module can be delivered must be fed into the timetabling process at the appropriate time of year using the standard data collection format. Data are collected on an annual basis from Heads of Department. The data will be used to restrict the time slots allocated to modules. The constraints can fall into the following acceptable categories:

- Staff with agreed specified part-time hours who are essential to the module's delivery
- Staff with a formal compressed hours arrangement who are essential to the module's delivery
- Staff with a formal flexible working agreement who are essential to the module's delivery
- Modules that are taught in blocks and advertised as such e.g. taught in one full-time week
- Modules that are taught on set days or in the evenings or weekends and are advertised as such
- Modules that rely on availability of external resources such as daylight or off campus venues
- Agreed reasonable adjustments for staff with a disability or impairment
- Any other constraint covered by the Equality Act 2010 (such as religious observance) which has been agreed by the Head of Department.

**7.4** Staff are considered essential to the module delivery when the module covers a specialist subject for which no other academic member of staff is able to teach at the required level.

**7.5** All constraints limit the scheduling possibilities, and as such limit the timetable construction. Consequently, all constraints need to be scrutinised to ensure they are only included where required, and that the limitation applied is no more restrictive than necessary.

**7.6** If the staff member is not satisfied with the decision on their individual teaching constraint made by the head of department, they may refer this to the of the PVC/ Dean (or their nominee) for review. If they the staff member considers that approval of the individual teaching constraint by the PVC Dean has been unreasonably withheld, they may refer their case to a central panel for a final

decision. That panel will comprise an Associate Dean from another faculty, a member of the UTAR and a representative of HR. The panel's decision will be final.

**7.7** When creating the timetable, the following travelling periods are allowed:

<b>From / To and To / From</b>	<b>Travel Time to be allowed</b>
Headington (Gipsy Lane & Headington Hill) / Wheatley	1 slot/hour
Headington (Gipsy Lane & Headington Hill) / Harcourt Hill	1 slot/hour
Headington (Gipsy Lane & Headington Hill) / Headington (Marston Road)	1 slot/hour
Wheatley or Harcourt Hill / Headington (Marston Road)	2 slots/hours
Wheatley / Harcourt Hill	2 slots/hours

**7.8** Students should not normally have more than 4 consecutive hours of academic contact sessions and not more than 6 hours in a single day.

**7.9** The timetable for individual staff and students will be arranged so that all individuals have a one hour slot free between 12.00 noon and 2.00 pm and between 4.00 pm and 7.00 pm.

**7.10** The timetable will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that teaching is located in active areas of the campus with suitable amenities available to students at the start and end of the teaching, in particular when timetabling evening activities.

**7.11** For students who have made the University aware of additional needs, timetables may need to be constructed or adapted to ensure those students do not experience any difficulties in attending contact sessions. (This may include, for example, avoiding timetabling classes in rooms that are not accessible to students with mobility difficulties.)

**7.12** Some programmes follow non-standard delivery patterns. These will be accommodated as far as is reasonably possible.

## **8 Amendments or cancellations to bookings**

**8.1** 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
- Replacement of leaving staff
- Actual number of students exceeds room capacity
- Actual number of students is significantly smaller than expected and would fit into a smaller room (freeing a large room for an activity for a larger group which cannot otherwise be accommodated)

**8.2** Where cancellations or changes are made students must be informed as far in advance as is reasonably possible by the Faculty. Where cancellations or changes disadvantage certain students then reasonable arrangements must be put in place to rectify the situation for those students.

**8.3** Should UTAR, for reasons beyond its control need to make any amendments to your booking we reserve the right to offer you an appropriate alternative choice of facilities.

**8.4** Any changes to timetables should only be made if absolutely necessary and via the appropriate channels. UTAR reserve the right to refuse late changes to the timetable where they are not necessary or reasonable. Changes must be notified to the module leader or faculty by UTAR and to affected staff and students by the faculty without delay. Students and staff are advised to check their timetables regularly for any updates, via the appropriate channels (currently Google Calendar).

**8.5** If a booked room is not needed for any reason, for the whole of a booked period or any part thereof, it must be released without delay by informing UTAR and where possible updating the timetabling software.

## **9 Production of the timetable**

**9.1** UTAR is responsible for issuing detailed guidance 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.

**9.2** UTAR will produce and disseminate an annual production cycle timeline each autumn. This will include deadlines for programme and module changes, for data collection, entry and checking, and, for delivery of draft and final teaching timetables.

**9.3** Early planning helps achieve a clear, predictable picture of workloads and timetables to students and staff. Excessive, late or unnecessary changes are likely to cause problems and weaken the validity of the timetables produced. UTAR manages the timetabling procedure to reduce as much as possible impacts on the validity of the published timetable.

**9.4** Teaching space should only be booked for the time that teaching will be taking place in it and not to cover breaks or other absences from the room.

**9.5** All teaching (including dedicated space such as laboratories and studios) events using Oxford Brookes University space resource must be recorded on the timetabling software. This will enable all stakeholders to view to timetabled events.

**9.6** Target numbers should be used to provide an estimate of cohort and group sizes, until such time as more accurate information becomes available. Changes to anticipated module numbers must be communicated to UTAR as soon as they are known.

**9.7** Any constraints that may affect when a module can be delivered must be fed into the timetabling process at the appropriate time in the year using the standard data collection processes and formats. Ensuring this information is available is the responsibility of Faculties.

**9.8** UTAR and the Data Modelling Team will ensure that compulsory activities do not clash. Every effort will be made to ensure that optional modules do not clash, however, due to various timetabling constraints, some clashes between optional modules may be unavoidable.



**9.9** UTAR and the Data Modelling Team are responsible for the allocation of time slots to teaching. Teaching space bookings must follow the agreed and advertised time slots for the module. Requests for new modules to have time slots or for existing modules to change slots must be made using the advertised processes and deadlines in the annual production cycle timeline.

## **10 Publication of timetables**

**10.1** Draft indicative timetables showing day, time and campus should be produced at the earliest possible opportunity prior to the start of the academic year and published to staff and students to enable their planning. A proviso may be in place that some changes are likely, but that large-scale change is to be avoided. Rooms will be published to staff and students as soon as the likelihood of significant change is minimal.

**10.2** Personalised timetables detailing rooms and set allocations should be produced later but at the earliest possible opportunity and prior to the start of teaching in the academic year. They should be published to students once the likelihood of significant change is minimal but allowing reasonable time for students to plan their attendance.

## **11 Meeting rooms bookings**

**11.1** All meeting rooms (space which is not dedicated to teaching) are managed and booked by UTAR via the online timetabling room booking portal, with the exception of meeting rooms agreed for exclusive use of individual Faculties or Directorate. In these cases responsibility will lie with that Faculty or Directorate. Such dedicated space must still be viewable to other users in the online timetabling room booking portal.

## **12 Space auditing**

**12.1** The use of all University teaching space and meeting rooms is monitored and audited on a regular basis by the Space Management Team in ECS. This data is used to produce Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and identify areas where space could be better utilised and to inform improvements to the future use of the estate.

**12.2** Space utilisation audits usually take place throughout the teaching terms. Staff should cooperate with student counters, who in turn will be instructed to collect data as unobtrusively as possible.

**12.3** The data is available, and analyses will be reported as appropriate. In addition the data will be used to identify timetabled sessions which are regularly not taking place. Such instances will be followed up with the Faculties so that redundant bookings can be removed from the timetable to avoid confusion and release space.

## **13 Charging; Brookes Venues' connection to timetabling, students booking rooms**

**13.1** Non-academic bookings in term time can only be made once the room allocation process for academic purposes has been completed.

### **Brookes Venues**

**13.2** The University also permits staff to book rooms for non-teaching-related activities.



If a room is booked for a personal event, an event for which attendees are being charged or an event for non-university business, then the staff member will be liable to pay a fee. The event booking will need to be managed by Oxford Brookes Venues and a staff discount applied.

**13.3** Use of space by external clients is supported by the University after priorities for the use of teachings space are met. Hiring out to external clients is carried out through Brookes Venues.

**13.4** In principle, all ad-hoc bookings for University business in either University pooled space or Faculty dedicated space (committees, student society meetings, etc.) are made free of charge.

**13.5** Bookings made by external clients, or for externally organised events that are subject to charges, must be made with Brookes Venues.

**13.6** Bookings made by University staff for activities related to the business of the University are not charged (except, as noted in 13.5 above) where those attending the event are charged by the event organisers.

### **Students booking rooms**

**13.7** Students are permitted to book pooled rooms for society events or for work related to their courses. Such bookings must be made through the UTAR with a minimum of 7 days' notice; or 14 days if there is a visiting speaker to allow time for any necessary security checks to be made.

**13.8** For work related to their courses, student bookings must be accompanied by a booking form countersigned by their module leader.

**13.9** For bookings relating to Students' Union society events, student bookings must be accompanied by a booking form countersigned by the nominated Student Union staff member.

**13.10** In the event that a visiting speaker is attending the University please refer to the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech including Guidance on Visiting Speakers.

For further information about this policy, please contact the Head of Timetabling and Examinations.

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