University of Cumbria

Academic Timetabling Policy

4 November 2022

Contents

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1. This document sets out the University's policy and procedures in respect of academic timetabling. Detailed roles and responsibilities are set out in Appendix A.

2. Objectives

2.1. To support the delivery of an exceptional student experience in respect of learning and teaching at the University of Cumbria.

2.2. To ensure students are taught in teaching accommodation suited to the particular needs of the session whilst, where possible, optimising the utilisation of the University's teaching spaces.

2.3 To achieve a timetable that is consistent, accessible and sufficiently flexible to meet the changing needs of the institution.

2.3. To ensure the best use of staff time to deliver a student focused timetable.

2.4. To commit to ensuring the effective provision of space to facilitate teaching and learning.

3. Guiding Principles

3.1. The production of the timetable will be based upon the following priorities: i) the student experience ii) the staff experience and iii) efficient estate and room utilisation in that order.

3.2. Where possible, individual student timetables will be consolidated into teaching blocks, rather than spread across the teaching week.

3.3. The timetable for the University will be centrally scheduled.

3.4. An annual full academic year timetable will be designed for each campus and finalised no less than four weeks before the start of Semester 1.

3.5. While the timetable is draft and not yet published to students, any changes are considered in line with this policy and agreed process.

3.6. Once the final timetable has been agreed there will be no 'changes to the timetable' except for unavoidable rescheduling (see appendices) of classes for a particular group of students. *Where classes need to be rescheduled, it will remain possible for alternative room bookings to be made but only where these do not have a knock-on effect for any other group.*

3.7. The online publication tool of the timetable software is the corporate method of publicising the timetable to students and staff. Local versions of the timetable are not to be produced and published.

3.8. Teaching space must not be booked on a contingency basis for periods longer than are required for delivery and Timetabling must be informed immediately when previously booked space is no longer needed.

4. Teaching Times

4.1. The normal teaching week takes place Monday to Friday. The standard teaching day is 09:00 to 18:00 except on Wednesday when teaching hours are 09:00 to 13:00 for undergraduate students. Wednesday afternoons are to be free of timetabled commitments for full time undergraduate programmes, except those programmes engaged in professional training.

4.2. Patterns of teaching outside the standard teaching day (e.g. only evenings or weekends) will be set out in the validation documents and published programme information.

4.3. All rooms should be vacated five minutes before the hour to allow time for

students to vacate the room to enable the following session to start on time. This timing allows for interchange of students and installation of any required equipment.

4.4. Programmes/modules delivered in the 18:00-21:00 slot will normally primarily be delivered at this time to meet particular stakeholders' needs, for example PT students in employment.

4.5. To maximise the use of rooms, planned activities should start on the hour regardless of the length of the activity.

5. Timetabling

5.1. Teaching activities take precedence over non-teaching activities other than University Open Days, Examinations, high profile external audits and inspections.

5.2. Regular, full semester taught activities take precedence over infrequent general teaching taught sessions.

5.3. All teaching activities must be timetabled, and rooms must be reserved via the Timetable Office.

5.4. Timetable clashes and rooming issues should be resolved prior to the publication of the final timetable.

5.5. In the initial stages of constructing the timetable the following criteria will apply:

- Depending on usage, minimum occupancy will normally be 70%, *there will clearly need to be exceptions in some, particularly practical-related, areas. (This minimum only applies in initial stages; lower occupancy may be unavoidable if large rooms are all that is available towards the end of the process)*
- Specialist space will be allocated in the first instance on the basis of specialist need but thereafter can be allocated for general teaching unless there are Health and Safety risks attached.
- Consistency will be a priority (same time, same room every week).
- Activities that occupy large consistent blocks of time will be scheduled before those that occupy smaller blocks of time.
- Where possible the scheduling of staff will seek to ensure a day free of teaching with no day longer than 8 hours.
- Same day cross campus teaching will be avoided where possible. However, where essential, staff travel time between campuses will be treated as a hard constraint to avoid unrealistic scheduling arrangements.
- Maximum student day will be no more than 8 hours and where possible no less than ½ a day to minimise frequency of attendance across the week. Where possible a day per week will be free of timetabled activities.
- Access for students with disabilities will be prioritised.
- Class sizes should under no circumstances exceed the size of the room allocated.
- The Timetable Office must be informed immediately if group sizes increase so that allocated rooms can be amended.
- While timetabling should strive to provide viable student pathways and student choice, the timetable should not be constructed based on individual student choices: the emphasis will be on the production of programme timetables into which student choices are made.
- Tutorial activities will be included in a timetabled module only where such activities require learning processes in particular spaces and where the Academic Department specifically requests this.
- In year submissions to the Timetable Office that are made to enable CPD/Enterprise activity should be clearly identified as such.
- CPD/Enterprise submissions should not impact on the core timetable – eg the

delivery of UG/PGCE/Taught PG sessions.
- Ensure that technical requirements are identified so that IT/software support for the timetable production process is clearly communicated in line with planning processes.

6. Availability to Teach

6.1. Full-time staff will be expected to be available to deliver teaching within the standard University hours, 09:00- 18:00. Where there are exceptions, these will be discussed between the Heads of Department and the Timetable Office and signed off by the Timetabling Operational Group (TOG).

6.2. Part-time staff hours are reviewed and amended annually. Availability of part-time staff should be notified to the Timetable Office in the data collection phase. Amendments to staff availability that have cascade implications for timetabled delivery within the academic year will not be considered.

6.3. It is acknowledged that staff may have certain needs that impact on their ability to be available for teaching between the specified hours, these needs could relate to a disability, practising a religion, or regular childcare responsibilities that need to be considered in preparing the timetable. Staff who consider they have such a need should submit their requirements annually to their Head of Department or line manager prior to the data collection phase for the timetable production. The Head of Department or line manager will consider the request, seeking advice from the HR department as required, and if approved will submit the appropriate information to the Timetable Office.

6.4. In the case of a member of staff with a disability, guidance should be sought by the member of staff and their line manager from Disability Services to identify what reasonable steps are necessary to provide support. Advice should be sought from Occupational Health where required. This should be communicated to the Timetabling Office annually prior to the data collection process or at the earliest opportunity where a support need is identified in year.

6.5. The University will make every effort to accommodate reasonable requests in the construction of the timetable. The final timetable should not be changed except as a last resort where all other options have been exhausted in which case classes may be rescheduled.

6.6. Restrictions imposed by external commitments should be considered carefully by Head of Department or line manager and, if approved, should also be notified to the Timetable Office in advance of the timetable design period.

7. Timetabling changes and changes to room allocation

7.1. Once the draft timetable has been issued, requests to change the timetable are considered on an individual basis by the Timetabling Office and relevant nominated individuals.

7.2. During the draft timetable publication period, requests to change the timetable that would have a knock-on effect for students on other programmes need to be considered and negotiated between the relevant Heads of Institute/Department, Principal Lecturers and Programme Leaders with assistance from the Timetabling Office.

7.3. Once the final timetable has been issued, requests to change the timetable because of changes to teaching personnel or to the personal circumstances of staff declared available to teach will not be accommodated if there is any consequent adverse impact on the timetable as a whole (such as the need to change the timetable for another programme)[1]. It will be expected that such events will be managed by the Head of Department and Programme Leaders

through reallocation of existing resources.

7.4. Once the final timetable has been issued no changes will be made as a result of changes to methods/teaching patterns where such changes would have a knock-on effect for students on other programmes. This includes changes to patterns of staff teaching if this would require the timetable to be altered resulting in an adverse impact on the timetable.

7.5. Any changes to the final timetable post publication should be made through the Change Request Form and subject to relevant approval before being actioned by the Timetable Office.

7.6. Timetable sessions may, where unforeseen circumstances occur, be postponed but must _not_ be cancelled. ('Cancel' is understood to mean the planned session is not taking place at all).

8. Ad Hoc and External Room Bookings

8.1. Ad hoc room bookings in timetable-able space during teaching hours will not be confirmed until after the final timetable has been published.

8.2. Ad hoc room bookings in dedicated meeting rooms can be requested via the online booking tool, prior to the start of the academic year.

8.3. Rooms that are not scheduled for use during the timetabling process may be booked for ad hoc purposes provided there are no Health and Safety or specialist equipment implications.

8.4. The University's requirement for rooms and facilities takes priority over external groups or organisations (see Appendix B).

8.5. Prioritisation and approval of non-teaching booking requests are managed as described in Appendix B.

8.6. Certain rooms are designated as non-teaching.

9. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

9.1. The Equality Act 2010 covers the "protected characteristics" of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex and sexual orientation. The University has developed a Single Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives to implement the Equality Act within the University practices and procedures.

9.2. Within the Equality Act it remains permissible to treat a disabled person more favourably than a non-disabled person. It remains lawful to make reasonable adjustments in relation to employment, education and services to ensure that there is true equality of opportunity for disabled people.

9.3. This policy and its implementation will be monitored, as appropriate, in line with relevant legislation for its impact on different equality groups. This process will provide a check on whether there are any differences and allow the University to assess whether these differences have an adverse impact on any particular group such that appropriate action is taken.

10. Records Management Statement

10.1. The records associated with this policy are controlled by the Academic Registry and will be created, stored and disposed of in line with the University's Records Management guidelines and procedures.

10.2. The University is committed to complying with the requirements of GDPR legislation and regulations and any personal data created as part of this policy will be processed in accordance with the University's procedures. This includes ensuring that data is held securely, is not disclosed unlawfully and is destroyed

when no longer needed.

10.3. The University also aims to ensure that users of this policy are aware of Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Records Management issues associated with this policy.

11. Ownership, Monitoring and Review

11.1. This policy is owned by the Academic Registrar. Its implementation is monitored and reviewed by the manager with responsibility for Timetabling. Any disputes should be arbitrated by the Academic Registrar working with the relevant Heads of Institutes/Department/Directors.

11.2. The Timetabling Office will work closely with the Institutes/Departments and other professional services in respect of the implementation of the Timetable Policy, procedures and associated processes. The Timetabling Manager will be expected to facilitate effective communication on timetabling matters.

11.3. The implementation of this policy should be reviewed at least every three years.

Appendix A - Roles and Responsibilities

A. Timetabling Team

1. Plan and co-ordinate the construction and production of the optimal teaching timetable for the University in partnership with the Institutes, Departments and other stakeholders.
2. Allocate teaching space in accordance with University policies.
3. Produce a student led timetable with consideration to optimise room utilization.
4. Working with Heads of Departments and Programme Leaders to produce the timetable to agreed deadlines.
5. Maintain relationships with Institutes and Department representatives and ensure clear and open lines of communication.
6. Maintain and develop the University's timetable online content and other associated applications.
7. Manage the University's room booking service.
8. Ensure the Timetable can be made available in different formats to meet the needs of all users
9. The senior manager with responsibility for timetabling is responsible for fostering constructive collaborations across the University in the construction of the timetable.

B. Academic Quality and Development

1. Ensure that the Timetable Team is kept up to date with all validation outcomes and minor modifications throughout the year.
2. Ensure that all newly validated modules and updated versions of amended modules are speedily and accurately added to the student record system.
3. Ensure that published deadlines for formal notification of module amendments/new modules are met so that these can then be reflected in the construction of the timetable.

C. Heads of Institute/Department and Principal Lecturers

1. The role of each Head of Department and Principal Lecturer(s) shall be confirmed by each Head of Department at the start of each academic year.
2. Manage validation submissions in line with agreed processes and deadlines.
3. Manage the timetabling process within department areas and programmes respectively in accordance with this policy.
4. Alert the Timetable Office to possible module changes in advance of the scheduling process or as soon as possible thereafter.
5. Ensure that staff availability to teach is managed in advance of the scheduling process.
6. Ensure that all full-time members of staff, particularly those who are newly appointed, are made aware that they may be scheduled for teaching at any time during the standard teaching week.
7. Ensure that full and accurate information on staff availability is provided to the Timetable Office.
8. Oversee the checking and confirmation of the draft timetable by academic staff prior to publication to students
9. Take responsibility for, or appoint an individual as the main contact for, liaising with the Timetable Office, and for maintaining excellent relations and clear and open lines of communication.

10. Ensure appointed individuals undertake necessary training to complete the timetabling data collection process.
11. Ensure the impact of strategic decisions relating to Academic Strategy is communicated to the Timetabling Office as part of the academic planning process.

D. Programme Leaders

1. Take responsibility for ensuring that teaching is planned well in advance and is considered and prepared ready for the timetabling data collection process.
2. Ensure that all requirements for relevant programmes are provided for the timetabling process in a timely and accurate fashion in line with the production plan.
3. Ensure that teaching space is not booked on a contingency basis for periods longer than are required for delivery.
4. Ensure academic teams encourage and support students to complete confirmation of module selection (especially optional modules) in a timely manner.
5. Responsible for considering the impact of changes on other programmes.
6. Any rescheduling of classes necessitated by unexpected staff absences should be achieved with minimum impact on the Final Timetable.
7. Ensure that affected students are immediately alerted to any such rescheduling.

E. Academic Staff

1. Ensure availability for teaching during all University teaching hours except when by exemption (on the basis, for example, of a disability, caring responsibilities or religious/belief commitments). In considering exemptions, line managers or nominees will act sensitively and in accordance with the guidance in Section 6. They are responsible for indicating approval or otherwise and informing the Timetable team.
2. Plan teaching delivery well in advance and ensure delivery is student focused.
3. Check and confirm the draft timetable prior to publication to students.
4. Adhere to the final timetable.
5. Start on the hour and finish sessions promptly five minutes before the end of the scheduled session to allow for a smooth changeover.
6. Ensure teaching spaces are left in a clean and tidy condition and furniture is returned to a standard configuration for the room if this has been altered during the session.
7. Ensure where possible, the Timetabling team are aware of students requiring special arrangements ahead of the production of the timetable to ensure they can be accommodated.
8. Support Heads of Department and Programme Leaders in ensuring that students are notified of any postponement and rescheduling of classes.
9. Engage with the timetable production as appropriate and as directed by line manager.

F. Academic Programme Manager

1. Act as a point of liaison between Academic Departments and Timetabling Office.
2. Assist in the discussion of approaches that differ from the standard timetabling process, including campus and programme specific approaches.
3. Support the planning of teaching requirements in advance of the timetabling data collection process.
4. Ensure all programmes have a nominated individual with timetabling responsibilities.
5. Ensure any barriers to complete the timetabling data collection process are identified and

seek to find resolution with the Timetabling Office and appointed individuals, prior to the commencement of the data collection process.

6. To work with the Timetabling Office to monitor engagement with the timetabling data collection process, highlighting areas of concern with relevant Head of Department for action.

7. Review timetable requirement submissions in line with validation documents to ensure delivery complies with validation, highlighting variations with the relevant Head of Department for action.

G. Students

1. Check published timetable as it appears on the University publication resources (e.g. Publish or SWS), including following communications relating to any changes.

2. If notified of an emergency postponement of a class, maintain contact with the relevant academic with regard to rescheduling.

3. All full time students are expected to be available Monday to Friday throughout all teaching weeks and for all scheduled teaching.

4. All part time students are expected to be available for their scheduled teaching.

5. Students will not be scheduled to attend classes before 09:00 or beyond 18:00 unless this has been communicated to them in advance by the University.

6. Students requiring special arrangements should make their needs known to a relevant member of academic staff ahead of the production of the timetable to ensure any special arrangements can be accommodated. Where possible such information will have been collected as part of the enrolment process.

7. Students will not be scheduled for more than 3 hours teaching at a time and will get a minimum of a 30 minute break between the hours of 11:00 and 14:00.

H. Estates and Facilities

1. Liaise with the Timetabling Office in relation to room checks/audits.

2. Ensure all teaching spaces are fit for purpose with a view to enhancing the quality of the student experience and help reduce the justification for staffing preferences for particular teaching spaces.

3. Establish in consultation with the Timetabling Office the optimal configuration for teaching rooms.

4. Ensure that timetabled teaching rooms meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 in terms of access for staff and students with a physical disability.

5. Consider space utilisation performance within the parameters of this policy.

6. Where essential location developments are required, the Timetabling Office is kept informed in planning; and that adequate notice is provided in advance of the timetable design period.

7. Timetabling must be informed if the usage of any space changes.

8. Ensure the impact of strategic decisions relating to the Estates Strategy is communicated to the Timetabling Office as part of the academic planning process.

9. Timetabling must be informed immediately if any space is out of use/has damaged equipment or if access is restricted due to an out of order lift etc.

I. Information Services

1. Ensure that media provisions in teaching rooms are fit for purpose.
2. Support the publication of the timetable.
3. Ensure relevant technologies are operational (e.g. electronic door signage).
4. Ensure that any updates/additions to relevant technologies are communicated to the Timetable Office so that systems can be kept up to date in order for spaces to be booked appropriately.

J. Student Services Disability Team

1. Ensure that the Timetable Office is made aware as soon as possible of any student whose needs should be accommodated in finalising the timetable, particularly where new entrants are concerned.
2. Share with the Timetable Office relevant information about students with support needs including those arising from protected characteristics (e.g. disability, faith, pregnancy etc.) and other requirements (e.g. caring responsibilities) that are relevant to the construction of the timetable (e.g. room location).

Appendix B – Prioritisation and Approval of Booking Requests

1. The University encourages early booking of non-teaching room requests, these will be approved on a first come first served basis.
2. Where competing requests for non-teaching are received, consideration of the impact on the below will be given:
   2.1. Student
   2.2. Applicant
   2.3. Reputation (employers, local industry, local community, partners)
   2.4. Staffing
   2.5. Cost/income
   2.6. Estate
3. The final decision rests with the senior member of staff with responsibility for Timetabling who will make the decision in consultation with the managers with responsibilities for timetabling, student data and student systems.
4. Requests for non-teaching activity resulting in a displacement of teaching must be approved by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), with consideration given to points 2.1 to 2.6 listed above.