

Timetabling Protocol



UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH

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1.0 Prioritising the Student Experience

- 1.1 The primary objective of timetabling is to provide the best possible learning experience for our students. When considering changes to the timetable, the student experience is of paramount importance.
- 1.2 While prioritising the student experience, the timetable needs to support other priority agendas including support for excellence in research, which is the students' best interest, and managing the University's carbon emissions.
- 1.3 While Plymouth University will attempt to accommodate student choice, the timetable may not allow for every student to attend their preferred combination of modules.
- 1.4 Undergraduate students may be studying towards, or enrolled on, a first degree including foundation degree and integrated masters' programme such as MEng. Postgraduate students include Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research programmes.

2.0 Roles & Responsibilities

The following sets out roles and responsibilities of the **key staff** involved in delivering the University's undertaking to produce academic timetables.

2.1 Timetabling Manager (Timetabling Unit)

- 2.1.1 Produce and disseminate annually (in January) a Calendar of Timetable Events that clearly outlines the relevant dates for the submission, collection and reporting of timetable information for the forthcoming academic year.
- 2.1.2 Responsible for the final scheduling of the timetable.
- 2.1.3 Understand and coordinate the timetable process from an institutional perspective.
- 2.1.4 Oversee the collection of teaching requirements (Module Delivery Sheets) and constraints.
- 2.1.5 Ensure that the needs of students and the student experience are prioritised.

2.2 School Timetable Co-ordinator

This position is responsible for a range of duties according to School requirements:

- 2.2.1 The appointed School Timetable Co-ordinator will normally be a Deputy/Associate Head of School (T&L) and act on behalf of the Head of School. The School Co-ordinator has authority to make decisions on School prioritisation. A key role of the School Timetable Co-ordinator is to oversee and govern the production of Module Delivery Sheets (MDS), protecting the needs of the University as well as individual Schools and Programmes. The Timetabling Unit needs to look at the 'big picture' and the School Co-ordinator will be vital to achieving this aim.
- 2.2.2 The Timetable Co-ordinator must adhere to annual deadlines and procedures determined in advance by the Timetable Manager for the submission and exchange of timetable information (see Calendar of Annual Events/Timetabling Procedures).
- 2.2.3 Monitor adherence of School Staff to timetabling deadlines, and ensure timely collection and submission of MDS data from the School to the Timetabling Unit.
- 2.2.4 Liaise with Programme Directors/Module Leaders to submit MDSs to the Timetabling Unit. **Oversee the accuracy, suitability and appropriateness of MDSs emanating from the Schools.**
- 2.2.5 All MDSs are to be submitted via the School Timetable Co-ordinator.
- 2.2.6 Be conversant with and implement related timetabling protocols and procedures.
- 2.2.7 Ensure that staff regularly check timetables for amendments.
- 2.2.8 Ensure that the needs of students and the student experience are prioritised
- 2.2.9 Distribute relevant timetabling information to the School as necessary.
- 2.2.10 When there is competition for schools specialist rooms the School Co-ordinator has authority to state which module/programme takes priority.
- 2.2.11 The School Timetable Co-ordinator should not forward requests for timetable amendments to the Timetabling Unit unless they are for valid reasons specified in 5.5.3. Any request for adjustment to the draft timetable other than for these valid reasons should be authorised by the Dean.
- 2.2.12 Having a single line of communication between the School and Timetabling Unit enables timetabling to be done more efficiently and assists problems to be identified and resolved within the School before reaching the Timetabling Unit. It is also advantageous for Schools to have one person with an overview of what is going on, and so there is no duplication of effort.

2.3 Programme Managers

- 2.3.1 It is the responsibility of the Programme Managers to work with the School Timetable co-ordinator to check that the Programme timetables are correct.
- 2.3.2 Ensure that the needs of students and the student experience are prioritised
- 2.3.3 Adhere to timetabling deadlines and protocols.
- 2.3.4 Liaise with School Staff to make timely adjustments to the draft timetables as necessary through the School Timetable Co-ordinator.
- 2.3.5 Advise School Timetable co-ordinator of any timetabled sessions no longer required.

2.4 Teaching Staff

All academic, technical and administrative staff have an individual responsibility to:

- 2.4.1 Follow the annual timetabling process and submit timetabling requests and other timetable information at the times and dates requested, through the School Timetable co-ordinator.
- 2.4.2 Ensure that the needs of students and the student experience are prioritised
- 2.4.3 Check thoroughly the relevant timetables published on the web. Inaccuracies must be reported immediately to the School Timetable Co-ordinator.
- 2.4.4 Adhere to the latest version of the timetable as published on the web.
- 2.4.5 Formally request any required timetable changes via their School Timetable co-ordinator. Such requests should not be acted upon until confirmation that the change has been agreed.
- 2.4.6 Report immediately to the School Timetable Co-ordinator when rooms they have booked are no longer required.
- 2.4.7 All academic staff are required to verify the data from room surveys as and when required.

3.0 Teaching Week

- 3.1 The core teaching hours for undergraduate students:
9am to 6pm on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday
9am to 5pm on Friday
9am to 1pm on Wednesday
- 3.2 Teaching for undergraduate students should not be scheduled after 1pm on Wednesdays to allow for extra-curricular activities such as sports, volunteering and other participatory activities unless exemptions are authorised by the Dean.
- 3.3 The core teaching hours for postgraduate students:
9am to 6pm on Monday to Thursday
9am to 5pm on Friday
- 3.4 When a programme is available in a full-time mode classes may be scheduled any time during these hours.
- 3.5 University staff engaged with teaching are expected to teach within the core teaching hours (as listed below), unless they have specific contractual arrangements or they have a specific written agreement authorised via their Head of School (These will be identified, verified and confirmed via Performance Development Framework)
- 3.6 Part-time staff will only be scheduled to teach during periods agreed by the School. The School should advise the Timetabling Unit of staff availability (again these will be identified, verified and confirmed via Performance Development Framework).
- 3.7 'One hour' classes are 50 minutes long i.e. teaching will begin 5 minutes past the hour and finish at 5 minutes to the hour, to assist with the safe flow of staff and students between rooms. However, sessions will appear on timetables as 'one hour'.
- 3.8 Evening classes will be scheduled where required.
- 3.9 When teaching activities e.g. lectures and seminars are scheduled to run for 2 hours or more, staff will typically identify an appropriate time for a break in discussion with students at the start of a teaching block or session. Activities where having a formal break is not necessary or not appropriate, such as practical sessions and field trips, are typically excluded from this requirement.

4.0 Timetable Construction

- 4.1 Schools should provide a rationale for lectures/seminars which are over 2hrs in duration.

- 4.2 Sessions with very small group sizes have low priority. Rooms are allocated according to the group size; therefore priority needs to be given to larger groups.
- 4.3 Classes of 10 or under will make use of available space.
- 4.4 Schools and staff should adhere to the timetables published on the web, and not to those prepared within the School. Timetables can be viewed via the portal – My Edesk - Timetables
- 4.5 All academic bookings are to be made via the Timetable Co-ordinator for the School. Other academic staff should not normally contact the Timetabling Unit directly to make bookings/changes.
- 4.6 The timetable system should not be used for recording non-teaching activities for staff. Bookings should only be entered where they are attached to a room for a taught session.
- 4.7 Students should be able to access a full and complete timetable for their programme on the University website. **Therefore, all taught sessions whether they are in lecture rooms or specialist facilities (labs, studios, fieldwork etc), must be recorded on the timetable system.**
- 4.8 An 'academic activity' is any booking that relates to teaching/research programmes offered by Plymouth University, and generally associated with a module i.e. timetabled teaching sessions that allow student attendance.
- 4.9 During the annual timetable construction period, requests must only be made via School Timetable Co-ordinator who will co-ordinate the requirements of the School.
- 4.10 The Timetabling Unit should be advised of any newly validated programmes (Via ADC).

5.0 Constraints on the Timetable

5.1 Staff Availability

- 5.1.1 All staff must be available to deliver their agreed teaching commitments between the hours of 9am to 6pm on Monday-Friday, except where any of the following apply:
- 5.1.2 Teaching activities are required to be delivered in an evening slot.
- 5.1.3 Agreed and defined flexible working arrangements are in place.

- 5.1.4 A member of staff requires days/slots free from teaching in order to undertake research, consultancy, clinical practice and/or other activities agreed with the Head of School/ Dean. Please note that any 'free days/slots' will be determined by the timetable process unless there are valid reasons for allocating particular days/times. These to be agreed by the Head of School via the PDF.
- 5.1.5 The Timetabling Manager must be notified by the School Timetable Co-ordinator of any specially agreed arrangements.
- 5.1.6 Fractional staff should agree their availability to teach with their Head of School (again via PDF). The Timetabling Manager should be notified by the School Timetable Co-ordinator of these arrangements prior to the academic year whenever reasonably possible.
- 5.1.7 Fractional staff should agree their availability to teach with their Head of School (again via PDF). The Timetabling Manager should be notified by the School Timetable Co-ordinator of these arrangements prior to the academic year whenever reasonably possible.

5.2 Allocation of Teaching Rooms

- 5.2.1 Rooms are allocated on a best-fit basis; therefore, Schools should provide details of group sizes as early in the timetabling process as possible, as detailed in the Calendar of Timetabled Events.
- 5.2.2 If rooms are not required, the Timetabling Unit should be informed to release the room e.g. reading weeks.
- 5.2.3 When there are competing demands for space, the issue will be referred back to the Schools to be resolved. The Timetabling Unit can assist with information on free slots or alternative rooms, but will not act as arbitrator in room booking disputes.
- 5.2.4 The timetable system will not allow rooms, staff or students to be double-booked.
- 5.2.5 Every effort will be made to match exactly preferred timetable slots and preferred teaching rooms. However, the Timetabling Unit cannot guarantee that a programme can be taught at, or that a room is available for, preferred timeslots.
- 5.2.6 Provided reasonable notice is given, the Timetabling Unit reserves the right to change the allocated room for any and all bookings.
- 5.2.7 Access for students and staff with disabilities takes precedence over other considerations, unless this causes unjustifiable hardship. It is therefore important that the Timetabling Unit is informed of staff and student disability requirements as early as

possible, via Disability Assist, in order to minimise disruption to timetables.

5.3 Avoiding Clashes

- 5.3.1 Optional modules will not be guaranteed to be clash-free. All Schools are required to nominate clash-free pathways for the most common module combinations.
- 5.3.2 Schools that initiate a timetable change are responsible for avoiding clashes, and should liaise with other Schools to avoid clashes where possible.
- 5.3.3 Ultimate responsibility for resolving conflicts which arise from School timetabling decisions rests with the relevant Dean(s).

5.4 Requests for Timetable Changes

- 5.4.1 All requests for minor changes by School Timetable Co-ordinator Staff should be made by e-mail to the Timetabler. Larger issues may involve meetings between the School Co-ordinator and Timetabling Unit staff.
- 5.4.2 The Timetabling Unit will provide confirmation via the portal of all bookings. Staff and students should not act on a proposed change or request unless confirmation has been received.
- 5.4.3 For reasons of efficiency and student experience, timetable changes should be kept to an absolute minimum. Therefore, when checking the draft timetable, changes should only be made for valid reasons e.g.
 - Staff changes/rotations
 - Conflict of agreed student module combination
 - Changes of week pattern
 - Changes in group size
 - External Staff availability
 - Specific facilities required
 - Efficient room utilisation
 - Fragmented timetables

School Timetable Co-ordinators should not forward requests for timetable amendments to the Timetabling Unit unless they are for the valid reasons specified above. Any request for adjustment other than these valid reasons will be referred back to the Dean.

- 5.4.4 Following publication of the final timetables, timetable amendments will only be considered under the following conditions:

- The group size exceeds the capacity of the allocated teaching room. Staff must be aware that the availability of an alternative room at the chosen timeslot is not guaranteed.
- The allocated room is unsuitable for students and staff with disability.

5.4.5 Staff must contact their School Timetable Co-ordinator as soon as possible in the event of:

- Session no longer required.
- **Allocated room (significantly) too large.**
- Allocated room too small.
- Allocated room unsuitable for purpose.

5.5 Adherence to the Timetable

All academic and administrative staff have an individual responsibility to:

5.5.1 Follow the annual timetabling process and submit timetabling requests and other timetable information at the times and dates requested, through the School Timetable Co-ordinator.

5.5.2 Adhere to the latest version of the timetable as published on the web.

5.5.3 Report immediately to the School Co-ordinator when rooms they have booked are no longer required. Non-use of space will be reported to the Head of School and Dean.

5.6 Staff must not use rooms they perceive to be free of teaching without first requesting use of the room via the School Timetable Co-ordinator. Rooms may be empty for a number of reasons, and may well be timetabled for use in future weeks. **Illicit occupation of rooms is the perceived main contributor to 'double bookings'.**

6.0 Room Audits

6.1 In order to monitor the usage of rooms, the Timetabling Unit will carry out regular utilization surveys of teaching rooms. Heads and Deans will be advised when rooms booked by Schools are found to be unoccupied. Staff will then need to indicate why the room was empty and whether the rooms will be required in future weeks. In addition, to these surveys, rooms that evidence consistent low utilization will be audited throughout the year.

7.0 Ownership of Teaching Space

7.1 All space is ultimately 'owned' by the University.

- 7.2 On behalf of the University, all teaching space is under the control of the Timetabling Unit, which is responsible for the efficient utilisation of such space through timetabling and room allocation.
- 7.3 All teaching space must be recorded in the timetabling system for reporting purposes. All teaching activities must be timetabled to allow complete timetables to be provided to staff and students. This also ensures clashes are avoided.
- 7.4 Estates to provide Timetabling Unit with accurate room data (capacities and facilities) yearly in December to update the new academic timetable system.

8.0 Other Bookings

8.1 Ad Hoc Bookings

- 8.1.1 The Ad Hoc Room Bookings system (WRB) on the Timetabling Website should **not** be used to make academic bookings. This system is for the purposes of non-teaching activities only.
- 8.1.2 Annual events (non-teaching e.g. Induction, preview day, SU bookings) must be booked and confirmed in writing each year; such bookings will not be carried over from one year to the next.
- 8.1.3 When producing the timetable, teaching activities will be scheduled before ad hoc bookings. Therefore, ad hoc booking requests submitted prior to the final timetables being published will be kept on file and dealt with after the timetabling process has been completed
- 8.1.4 For any ad-hoc event that requires bookings / teaching to move, this must gain approval (via PVC T&L) prior to submitting to Timetabling Unit. The policy for booking a room for an event is found at the end of this document (12.0)
- 8.1.5 No advance bookings can be made prior to the creation of the timetable system.

9.0 Equality and Diversity

- 9.1 Staff and students will be accommodated in line with the University's policy on equality and diversity.
- 9.2 Staff or students with a special room need should advise their School prior to the production of the timetables.

10.0 Health & Safety

- 10.1 Regular checks will be conducted by Estates & Facilities on centrally managed space with regard to Health & Safety issues.

Nevertheless, the Health & Safety of students in teaching rooms is the responsibility of the lecturer. Staff should be vigilant of potential risks, and any problems (real or potential) must be reported immediately to Estates & Facilities.

- 10.2 Teaching staff must be aware that the Health and Safety of students in teaching rooms is their responsibility. Health and Safety legislation requires Plymouth University to ensure that the stated capacity of a room is not exceeded.

11.0 Service Level Agreement

11.1 It is the responsibility of the School Timetable Co-ordinator to:

- Co-ordinate School timetable activities. Govern and verify all timetabling requests are forwarded to the Timetabling Unit.
- Ensure that requests for amendments meet the criteria of valid reasons specified.
- Adhere to annual deadlines set out by the Timetabling Unit Manager in the Calendar of Timetable Events for the submission and exchange of timetable information.
- Ensure that any timetable requests sent to the Timetabling Unit contain the relevant information for the request to be acted upon i.e. module number, group size, staff, type of room, duration etc.
- Ensure that staff follow the timetables published on the web, and that staff have checked that the details are correct.
- Inform the Timetabling Unit immediately of any changes/amendments that affect previously submitted timetable information e.g. a change in expected number of students enrolled.
- Inform the Timetabling Unit immediately of any programme cancellations, timetabled rooms that are no longer needed, and any staff changes due to staff leaving or being recruited.

11.2 The Timetabling Unit will:

- Produce annually a timetable for all Programmes of Study, Staff, Modules, and timetabled space.
- Allocate rooms best matching the requested criteria.
- Provide advice when requested on room capacities, layouts and suitability.
- Initial draft timetables will be published on the web in good time for the School Timetable Co-ordinator and staff for checking.
- Accept and act upon queries generated from draft timetables.
- Produce and publish on the web a timetable at least 2 weeks before the beginning of each academic year.

11.3 The Timetabling Unit is not responsible if:

- School Staff fail to submit timetable information by previously set deadlines.
- School Staff fail to notify the Timetabling Unit of changes to programmes/modules that affect the timetable: for example, if student numbers have increased dramatically and extra rooms are required, or if the teaching pattern has altered.

12.0 **Booking a room for an event**

- 1) Email roombooking@plymouth.ac.uk to request a room, giving the following information:
 - a. Your name and contact telephone number
 - b. Event Title
 - c. Date
 - d. Time (Total time room required – from and to)
 - e. Size of Room Required
 - f. Room number (if specific room is required)
 - g. Please state if your booking is flexible (dates/times or room)

- 2) If your event is outside of teaching weeks: if a room is free we will make the booking and email confirmation.

- 3) If your event is during teaching weeks and the timetable is draft: we will not be able to make a booking until the timetable has been finalised.

- 4) If your event is during teaching weeks and the timetable is final: we will check on room availability:
 1. If a room is free we will make the booking and email confirmation.
 2. If the room isn't free, we will offer you an alternative date / time or room.
 3. If the alternative isn't acceptable, we will email and ask you to provide a business rationale for your event so fair consideration can be given as to whether the event takes precedent over existing teaching.
 4. When we receive the business rationale, we will produce a detailed list of all teaching sessions that would require moving or cancelling (provisionally booking alternative teaching slots, should the event receive approval).
 5. The business rationale and the timetabling information will be submitted to OVC for an informed decision to be made.
 6. If the booking doesn't receive approval, we will email you to let you know.
 7. If the booking is approved, we will email all staff with bookings in the room to make them aware of the event and arrange for their sessions to be moved or cancelled.
 8. We will then book the room for your event and email confirmation.

Versions Control:

Version	Date	Contributor	Revision details
1	30/11/2011	Richard Gibb	First Timetable Protocol introduced.
2	26/11/2018	Julie Lakey	Update to 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 agreed by UEG
3	12/06/2019	Julie Lakey	Added 1.4 agreed at UTLQC
4	12/11/2019	Julie Lakey	Added 3.9 agreed at UTLQC
5	19/11/2019	Julie Lakey	Rewording of 3.9 approved