

Course Timetabling Principles and Guidelines

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Approval Authority	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Contact Officer	Timetable Manager – Office of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

Introduction

This document governs the University's approach to developing and managing student timetables.

Definitions

Class – a discrete teaching activity (e.g., a lecture, laboratory, tutorial, field-trip, practicum, assessment activity or workshop).

Compulsory course – an individual course that is required for a specific qualification.

Core timetabling hours – University timetabling hours which run from 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday.

Course – an individual 15-point (or multiple thereof) unit of study which is identified by a code, title, and occurrence.

Draft timetable – a timetable that has been developed by the University Timetabling Unit which is being consulted on and has not been officially published.

Examination – a centrally administered assessment exercise normally of two or three hours duration occurring during prescribed examination periods.

Optional course – an individual course that contributes towards a specific qualification but is not a required part of that qualification.

Teaching space – a centrally timetabled University teaching space.

Test – a programme administered assessment exercise.

Timetabling hours – University timetabling hours which run from 8am-10pm, Monday to Friday.

Policy Statement

This document recognises that published timetables are an important aspect of University life. They are used by students for planning their learning alongside other commitments that they have.

The purpose of this document is to achieve coordinated and equitable timetabling practices within the University which will enhance the academic experiences of both students and staff. The timetable will be developed to support student learning whilst also achieving equitable treatment of staff and sensible use of physical University resources for non-class activities.

The document primarily designed to enable the timely production of course timetables for all learning and teaching activities at undergraduate level and where appropriate, postgraduate level taught courses, consistent with the [Bookable Spaces Management Policy- Principles and Guidelines](#).

1. Administration and Governance

The administration, production, and dissemination of the University's class timetable will be undertaken by the University Timetabling Unit. This Unit will be headed by the University Timetable Manager, and will report to the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic) (AVC(A)) on class timetabling matters.

The governance and approval of the University timetable will be made by the University-wide Timetabling Committee (the "Timetabling Committee"), or its executive sub-committee. The Timetabling Committee will be a sub-committee of the University Learning and Teaching Committee. In the case that the Timetabling Committee, or the executive sub-committee is unable to approve the timetable, the AVC (A) will resolve any conflicts and approve the University timetable unless the conflict is over priority of use.

The composition of the Timetabling Committee will be

- a. AVC(A) or nominee (Chair),
- b. The University Timetable Manager,
- c. An academic representative from each College
- d. Student representatives from the University of Canterbury Students' Association (UCSA) (undergraduate and postgraduate), will be asked to attend on an ad-hoc basis when specific student issues arise.

The executive sub-committee of the Timetabling Committee will consist of those members in (a)-(c) above.

2. University Academic Year and Hours of Class

The University academic year is primarily a semester based system with the addition of a summer school period. Professional programmes may operate on a separate timetable. The academic calendar is set through Academic Board. This includes setting the start and end of teaching periods. All teaching activity will occur during the approved periods.

All structured teaching activities will be centrally timetabled. This includes all undergraduate courses and, where appropriate, postgraduate courses.

Every year the University Timetabling Unit will produce a teaching timetable and room schedule. This will be produced utilising student enrolment data, data provided by academic departments and data regarding other activities on campus where space is required. A draft timetable will then be constructed and distributed to academic departments for comment and iterative refinement.

The final annual timetable will be produced and published no later than three weeks prior to the start of the first semester. Any changes to the published timetable will only be made in exceptional circumstances. Such a change request should be placed through a staff member's Head of Department/School (HOD/S) and must be approved by the appropriate College Pro Vice-Chancellor ("PVC"). Final approval must then be gained from the AVC (A). Where a change is approved it is the responsibility of the department/school to communicate directly with enrolled students.

The University teaching hours for classes are from 8am-10pm, Monday to Friday. This is broken down into core teaching hours which run from 8am-6pm and hours outside of this (6-10pm). By arrangement, some teaching activities may fall on a Saturday or Sunday, for example examinations and field trips.

3. Academic Staff Availability

In determining the teaching hours of contact for academic staff, the University will act in accordance with each staff member's existing contractual arrangements. Consideration will also be given to the reasonable needs of each staff member and to current practice.

Where no existing contractual arrangement with respect to hours of work is in place, a staff member may as a result of personal circumstances (for example, care responsibilities or medical requirements) or employment circumstances (for example, a part-time staff member), request that a reasonable constraint be placed upon the range of hours that the staff member is available to teach. Such a request must be approved by the employer representative (PVC) relevant to that staff member.

Staff will only be required to teach outside of the core timetabling hours by agreement.

Regular non-teaching University business requirements of teaching staff should be provided to the University Timetabling Unit.

Note that teaching times and locations will not be inconsistent with providing staff with disabilities appropriate working conditions.

4. Departmental Teaching Constraints

The HOD/S will be responsible for providing teaching staff constraint data to the University Timetabling Unit.

As part of the timetable development process, departments/schools may request that particular activities occur at particular times of day (for example laboratories that need to occur during daylight hours). Such requests must be endorsed by the HOD/S.

5. Student Availability

The generation of the University timetable is principally driven by student enrolments with the objective of eliminating clashes of core courses and minimising clashes with optional courses. All students are expected to be available for classes during the University teaching hours. There are no fixed constraints on student availability, with the exception of those students who are also teaching staff. However, a student will not normally have a day longer than eight hours from the start of the first class to the conclusion of the last class. A student will not normally be required to attend more than four hours of consecutive lectures without a break of at least one hour before the next teaching activity.

Where there are multiple sessions of a class the rules for allocation will be determined by the HOD/S.

Note: Students who have special requirements in terms of timing of teaching activities should approach the relevant HOD/S or Programme Coordinator at least a semester in advance of an intended course to investigate flexibility in timing of teaching activities. Some flexibility may be available where multiple occurrences of teaching activities are offered.

6. Teaching Activity Start Time

Individual classes will normally start on the hour. Normally, classes will be 50 minutes in length, except where otherwise prescribed. Note, staff and students are expected to vacate teaching spaces in a timely fashion to allow subsequent teaching activities to proceed on time.

7. Scheduling of Teaching and Examinations

All undergraduate teaching activities (and where appropriate postgraduate teaching activities), will be centrally timetabled. Every year the University Timetabling Unit will

produce a teaching timetable and room schedule. This will be produced utilising student enrolment data and data provided by academic departments.

Academic departments will provide the following data:

- required semester/s or summer school for the course teaching activity;
- prerequisite, co-requisite and restricted courses;
- a list of all jointly-taught classes;
- the required number of streams for teaching activities;
- required weekly number of teaching activities by course;
- names of staff teaching in individual courses and both start and end dates for each staff member;
- any individual staff teaching constraints;
- the availability of any Erskine or other visitors who are teaching;
- any special teaching space requirements; and
- audio-visual requirements.

Students can expect that all compulsory courses in a degree programme can be attended free of clashes. Students can also expect that a range of optional courses will be timetabled so that they also are free from clashes with required courses. Depending on an individual student's course of study not all optional papers may be available free of clashes.

All undergraduate examinations and centrally-administered tests will be centrally timetabled. This is to ensure that assessment clashes do not occur. Examinations will normally occupy a two week block which follows a one week study and review period at the end of each semester (with the exception of the summer teaching period which will continue with a more flexible assessment approach).

Examinations and final tests will normally be scheduled Monday through Saturday. All departmentally administered undergraduate final tests which are not scheduled at normal class times will be registered in the timetable.

8. Timetabling Priority

In developing the timetable the University Timetabling Unit will generally adopt the following priorities:

- Larger classes will have priority for larger teaching spaces, but regarding teaching times, no class or program will be given priority for the peak teaching hours between 10am-3pm, and every effort shall be made to ensure equitable provision of teaching slots during peak teaching hours;
- Required courses before elective courses;
- Teaching activities of longer duration;

- Regular teaching activities before ad-hoc teaching activities; and
- Term tests, before ad-hoc teaching activities.

9. Priority of Use

As a general rule, any class activities will be treated as having priority over non-class related activities, subject to the [Bookable Spaces Management Policy-Procedures and Guidelines](#). Centrally managed teaching space will therefore prioritise class activities as much as possible. During examination periods the priority of use will be given to centrally administered examinations, followed by teaching activities.

Classes will be scheduled in teaching spaces that are appropriately sized to the course enrolments and teaching delivery mode.

Where conflict between class and non-class activities arises, individual course coordinators are advised to seek informal resolution of the conflict by contacting the University Timetabling Unit. If no resolution can be obtained, the Executive Director, Learning Resources can be approached to exercise its right of veto in consultation with the AVC(A).

Where there is a conflict between classes activities, course coordinators are advised to seek informal resolution by contacting the University Timetabling Unit in the first instance. If a conflict cannot be resolved, course coordinators should advise their HOD/S. The HOD/S can ask for a resolution to be facilitated by the AVC (A), in consultation with the Executive Director, Learning Resources.

Related Documents and Information

UC Policy Library

- [Bookable Spaces Management Policy- Principles and Guidelines \(PDF, 167KB\)](#)
- [Space Charges Procedures \(PDF, 198KB\)](#)

UC Website and Intranet

- [Request a Teaching Constraint for Timetabling \(Human Resources intranet\) \(Staff Only\)](#)

Notes: The course timetabling policy will be reviewed by the Academic Board (or appropriate Committee of Academic Board) annually.

The AVC (A) will annually report to the Academic Board on timetabling activities.

Contact Details

- **Timetable Unit email:** Timetabling@canterbury.ac.nz
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Document History and Version Control Table			
Version	Action	Approval Authority	Action Date
<i>For document history and versioning prior to 2013 contact ucpolicy@canterbury.ac.nz</i>			
1.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversion of document onto new template and document pushed out. • Updated hyperlinks. • AVC changed to DVC in line with current title. 	Policy Unit	Aug 2013
1.01	Minor amendment to core teaching hours.	Policy Unit	Nov 2013
1.02	Document review date pushed out. DVC(A) changed to DVC(A&I).	Policy Unit	Mar 2014
1.03	A/A changed from Chair, Academic Board to DVC(A&I).	Policy Unit	Mar 2014
1.04	Hyperlinks updated, general formatting.	Policy Unit	Jun 2014
1.05	Core timetabling hours updated.	Approval Authority	Aug 2014
2.00	Scheduled review – minor changes, formatting, “Faculty” replaced by “College” change of DVC(A&I) back to DVC(A), removal of “Digital Media Group” and “Estate and Asset Management Group”.	Approval Authority	Oct 2016
2.01	Unscheduled review, major changes to bring the policy in line with delegations around use of space.	DVC(A)	July 2017
3.00	Scheduled review by CO, minor changes, DVC(A) references replaced with AVC (A). Approval Authority changed to DVC	DVC	November 2017

This document remains in force until it is updated.