

SCHOOL OF CLASSICS

Approach to core hours and flexible working

This document seeks (in the context of the University's core hours policy and our legal commitments in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity) to lay out a set of principles and practical recommendations that should be adopted in relation to the scheduling of meetings, events, and teaching. No such document could hope to anticipate all possible scenarios. The overriding principles that should be followed are:

- the need to show respect for, and sensitivity to, the individual circumstances of, and pressures attendant on, all colleagues (both Academic and Professional Services Staff);
- the smooth functioning of the School: the students' experience of teaching, the enabling of staff research, the efficient functioning of assessment, and – more widely – the maintenance of a friendly, constructive working environment;
- the requirement (on the part of all colleagues) for prompt and clear communication

1. Core hours and school office opening hours

The School's core hours are 10 am to 3 pm, Monday to Friday.¹ Core activities (see below, 3) should not happen outside of these hours *unless by agreement of all relevant staff*.

The School office is open 9-1, 2-5. For reference, the working hours of different professional services staff are as follows:

- Fiona: Monday 9-4, Tuesday 9-1, Wednesday 9-4, Thursday 9-1.
- Jo: Monday to Friday 7.45– 4.

2. Professional services staff

Academic staff are encouraged to respect the hours of work of different professional services colleagues (see above, 2).

- Professional services colleagues may choose to take their lunch break at their desks, but you should leave any questions until after 2pm.
- Please also try to avoid keeping them beyond their agreed hours (e.g. by making a request or asking a question close to the end of their working hours).

3. Core activities

The following are deemed to be core activities within the School for the purpose of this policy:² School Councils, exam boards, committee meetings, subject meetings, Staff-Student Liaison

¹ This exceeds the University's minimum standard for core meeting hours as laid out in the 'Core meeting hours in schools' (9.30am-4.30pm); it is in line with the University's April 2020 target for core hours.

² The University definition of core activities: 'These are meetings within a school which may involve any member of staff. These may be standing small committees or meetings of the whole school. They include, for example:

- Meetings for the development or dissemination of policy and practice, such as Staff Councils.
- Academic process meetings, such as examination boards.

Committees, social activities and networking opportunities intended for the whole staff body (e.g. staff lunches), away-days, and any other meetings at which staff engagement is required.

In practice:

- Meetings of smaller committees or others where only a limited number of staff are required to attend (e.g. SSCCs and exam boards) may happen outside of core hours, depending on the specific list of staff attendees for a given meeting.
- Meeting times should be fixed on the basis of the availability of all staff, in such a way as to allow for the attendance of the maximum number of staff.
- Where meeting times are fixed outside of core hours, this should be done in a way that is sensitive to colleagues' other commitments. No member of staff should be made to feel pressure to attend outside of core hours, or that they should agree not to attend on that basis.
- Every effort should be made to organise the schedule of meetings as early as possible, ideally in advance of the beginning of the University year or the beginning of each semester.
- Last-minute changes to meeting schedules should be avoided wherever possible. Remote attendance at meetings (e.g. via Teams or Skype) should be facilitated in order to accommodate individual circumstances (e.g. disability, caring responsibilities) and to avoid unnecessary environmental impact.

NB: office staff will circulate a request by email in advance of each semester for information on individual staff constraints on meeting times. There is an awareness, of course, that such constraints cannot all be known so long in advance.

4. Non-core activities

The following are *not* deemed to be core activities, for the purpose of this policy, by the University's criteria: research seminars, teaching development workshops, teaching, and other meetings 'important for the intellectual participation and professional development of staff'. The university, nonetheless, requires that even non-core activities should be 'thoughtfully managed'. In particular:

- we should attempt to hold some, if not all, of such meetings within core hours;
- we should not run all meetings of a series in the 'same repeated time slot outside of core meeting hours'³ (see below for research seminars);
- every effort should be taken to ensure that events outside of core hours are advertised with good notice, and support for attendance should be given to those with family/caring responsibilities including the facilitation of remote participation.

4.1 Research seminars

Research seminars are not currently required all to fall within core hours. However, according to the University's core hours policy, the research seminars cannot all run in the same time slot out of core

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- Standing school committee meetings, such as teaching committee, research committee, equality and diversity committee and so on.
 - School social and networking opportunities (lunch is the preferred time for these).
 - Other meetings which may be specific to a particular school, but are considered to be essential for its governance and/or staff engagement.'

³ 'For example, it would be inappropriate for all research seminars to be scheduled at, say, 5pm on Fridays.'

hours (e.g. Friday afternoon). The School continues to experiment with alternative patterns of timings, given the constraints of the timetable and the need to ensure lively attendance.

In addition to the question of timing of seminars, organisers should seek to ensure that opportunities to meet with the speakers should, wherever possible, be made available within as well as outside of core hours (i.e. over lunch or coffee as well as dinner and/or drinks).

4.2 Professional development activities

Where the School is responsible for the timetabling of such activities, these will normally be appended to School Council meetings (i.e. within core hours), or form part of school away-days (again within core hours). Where School-specific Professional Development activities are arranged outside of these contexts, attempts will be made to ensure that they are within core hours and/or that a session is run more than once to allow for different staff members' availability.

4.3 Conferences and workshops

In scheduling one-off conferences and workshops, the conference organiser (working with the Director of Research, and the Conferences Secretary) should be sensitive to the variety of constraints on attendance of staff, students, and visitors, including in relation to weekends, school holidays and half-terms, religious feast-days.

It is acknowledged, however, that – given the range of possible attendees, and the practical constraints of timetabling – it is impossible to make allowance for every factor. In practice, thought should be given above all to the likely/desired constituency for a given event.

It is recommended that you should, wherever possible:

- avoid scheduling the events over weekends, or during the exam season (for one-day workshops, Monday during teaching semester is a possible alternative);
- give a long period of notice to potential attendees;
- when advertising your conference or workshop, make clear the accessibility of the event to those with disabilities, and the possible availability of other support (via the Accessibility Fund) in the event of obstacles to attendance;
- be aware of the implications for accessibility of plans for food and drink, and other detailed aspects of organisation. (For more detailed information, see the University's Event and Meeting Inclusion Guide, [https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/hr/edi/eventmeeting/.](https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/hr/edi/eventmeeting/))

4.4 Teaching

The university's core hours policy does not apply to teaching.⁴ However, the School will, where possible, attempt to accommodate the constraints of individual staff, and in a number of areas timetabling can be sensitive to colleagues' daily or weekly schedules:

- the timetabling of sub-honours tutorial groups;
- the timetabling of Honours modules;

⁴ 'This guidance has no bearing on the scheduling of teaching or research activities. Where it would be helpful we encourage schools to develop collaborative, team-based approaches to support flexibility in these areas.'

- the scheduling of individual lectures or blocks of lectures/seminars in co-taught (UG and PGT) modules, where possible and not pedagogically counter-productive (Coordinators of co-taught modules standardly circulate the schedules of lectures/seminars to all participating colleagues in advance of the finalisation of the module booklet; colleagues will have the opportunity at this point to request some adjustments or timetable swaps. All colleagues should check their own timetables carefully to avoid timetable clashes, esp. between UG and PGT modules)
- the scheduling of individual meetings with dissertation students, PGT and PGR students, as well as with personal tutors
- the scheduling of class hours for modules, where applicable.

NB: the days and times at which UG and PGT modules are scheduled are fixed. Class times should not be varied, or individual sessions moved except where a staff member has a formal agreement for flexible working (in which case, the variation in class hour would be clearly advertised from the beginning of the semester), or in the event of unforeseen circumstances (such as illness).

4.5 Examinations

The examination period is very tight, and requires all marking and moderation to be undertaken in a timely fashion.

All staff need to be available by email and phone if not in person during the exam period. If you plan to be away for research purposes or for external examining for significant periods of time during the examinations period, or if you have other constraints on your physical presence in St Andrews to collect or return hard copies of scripts, please notify the Examinations Officer and Taught Courses Secretary before the marking distribution is finalised, so that they can, where possible, make adjustments. A draft version of the examinations booklet will be distributed to allow for staff to raise any practical concerns.

Where there are reasonable constraints on their physical presence in St Andrews during the examination period, staff may make a request that the hard copies of exam papers be scanned electronically or sent by secure delivery to another address (the latter is subject to the university's current review of its obligations under GDPR). The cost of scanning or delivery should be borne by the staff member. Depending on the pressures on office staff, or the availability of PGs to undertake scanning, this will not always be possible.

4.6 School holidays and half-terms

Staff with childcare commitments who anticipate pressure during periods when school half-terms and holidays overlap with University teaching term may take a number of steps to ensure flexibility in their teaching schedules:

- In the case of co-taught modules, they are encouraged to consult with module coordinators to see how their contributions can be distributed in other parts of the semester (see above, 3.4);
- In the case of sole-taught modules, they might consider applying to the Accessibility fund to support the cost of a guest lecturer-slot during these periods;
- in the case of other possible adjustments to sole-taught modules, they should discuss any such measures with the Director of Teaching and Head of School.

Any such adjustments should be made in sufficient time to allow for plans to be finalised in advance of the module booklets being published.

Similar principles would apply in the event of other circumstances that might prove to be constraints (e.g. religious obligations, chronic illness or medical treatment, IVF, gender reassignment). In any such circumstances, colleagues should again discuss possible adjustments with the Director of Teaching and Head of School.

5. Formal Flexible Working

In addition to the opportunities for flexibility outlined above, it is also possible to make a formal change to staff working patterns. For further details of the University policy and how to make an application, see <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/hr/edi/eia/engagement/flexible-working/>

6. Evening and weekend activities

Staff may, from time to time, be expected to take part in events outside of ordinary working hours or at the weekend. Examples include weekend visiting days, individual applicant visits, and receptions for parents. It is appreciated both that there are some for whom particular activities are going to prove problematic, and equally that there is a danger that such activities might end up representing a particular burden on other staff.

The approach taken in the School is: whilst avoiding a minutely accounted workload model, and relying on staff's continuing willingness to volunteer for such activities, to monitor the distribution of such 'soft workload' activities and to make adjustments in terms of workload where the burden of such events falls excessively on particular staff.

The hope is that, with confidence that their contributions will be acknowledged, colleagues will continue to feel able to volunteer wherever possible, and that e.g. those unable to undertake commitments at weekends will be able to do so at other convenient times.

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