School of Physics and Astronomy - Timabbling 2016-17

Pre-honours lecture times are set by the centre of the University. The School decides which member of staff is lecturing when amongst those slots. That distribution is carried out by the relevant module coordinator with due regard to pedagogic issues and other commitments of the teaching staff involved. The detailed timetables showing what is being lectured in which slot is usually published later in the summer. The time slots are shown from now.

Honours timetables are proposed by Schools. I take responsibility for this for P&A. The University timetabling team, however, agrees or otherwise to our room requests. These requests are made and considered, at least in part, based on module enrolment based on pre-advising data. This is one reason why the University encourages students to pre-advice. Although I publish in July a draft timetable with rooms shown, at this stage these are the requests from me to the central timetabling team.

I start with the general aim of changing the honours timetable as little as is possible, so that last year’s schedule is a decent guide to the coming year’s schedule. For 2016-17 we have module changes including

1) JH Computational Physics reverting back to being semester one only.
2) The introduction of Atomic, Nuclear, and Particle Physics module in SH first semester to take the place of the previous Physics of Atoms and Nuclear and Particle Physics modules.

For most lecture-based honours modules the School runs three timabled slots a week for 15 credit modules and two timabled slots a week for 10 credit modules. We are not permitted to oblige students to attend sessions after 1 pm on Wednesdays (but we may give them the choice to do so). There are not enough slots in the week to have only one scheduled honours class at a time. I aim to put the timetable together to keep as many options open as possible, and to have no clashes amongst compulsory modules taken in the year of study recommended in the School’s honours handbook.

The School of Mathematics and Statistics has many joint degree programmes, and so its timetable is set well ahead of time. I aim to coordinate our timetable with theirs for the benefit of our students. This is the reason why many of our lecture courses have even/odd Mondays followed by a Tuesday and Thursday or a Wednesday and Friday. We typically have 0.5 lectures a week more than Maths for a 15-credit module, which is why you will often see an odd/even week lecture in an afternoon. Where I see in pre-advising (or expect) no overlaps with MT modules I may leave out the Monday morning/another afternoon alternation. For 2016-17 relevant advisers in the School of Mathematics and Statistics have seen our draft timetable and have agreed that it should mesh well with theirs.

The joint degree with Chemistry has students doing only PH modules in SH. While that timetable is within our control, it has to include specified level 3000 and level 4000 modules. I have liaised with the School of Chemistry and amendments have been made to accommodate the pre-advising choices of students in level 5.
I liaise with Philosophy and with Computer Science where appropriate to try to match our timetable to the timetables of PY and CS modules that these students pre-advice into.

Some level 5000 modules are shared with the SUPA Graduate School, and use video-conferencing on a timetable that is agreed across Scotland’s universities. Some level 5000 lectures are taken locally at the same time by MPhys final-year students, taught postgraduate students, and Engineering Doctorate students.

For some modules I spend time searching through the pre-advising systems to check for possible clashes and amending the timetable to suit. Unfortunately, given the wide range of modules that we run, it is not possible to guarantee that a student can do any module combination that they may wish to do.

I publish draft (later, final) honours timetables on the School web site. I do this in two formats. One shows the proposed times and locations of all the honours lectures and lab sessions. The other shows how the timing and choices might work for each of our degree programmes.

Students and staff are welcome to contact me if they see a problem in the timetable.

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