



University of  
St Andrews

# Academic timetabling and room booking policy

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<b>Purpose</b>	To define the principles, procedures and responsibilities for the construction of the University timetable and the management of teaching space and associated teaching activities.

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1,2	Migration	Approved	Moira Sinclair, Timetabling Services	10/06/2019

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## 1. PURPOSE OF POLICY

To define the principles, procedures and responsibilities for the construction of the University timetable and the management of teaching space and associated teaching activities.

## 2. RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Timetabling Team, part of Registry, has responsibility for the creation and maintenance of a centrally held timetable for each academic year based on modular, curricular and school requirements and facility constraints.
- In cooperation with colleagues in academic schools and departments; IT Services; Accommodation, Conferences & Events (ACE); Estates and the Proctor's Office, the Team aims to provide a timetable that ensures the needs of all stakeholders are met as far as is possible and reasonable.
- The central teaching timetable will be created and maintained in the context of the Policy set out below.
- The Timetabling Team is responsible for the management of the Syllabus Plus software and online room booking system.

## 3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- To enable the effective delivery of learning and teaching across the University.
- To ensure that students are taught in the most appropriate teaching space.
- To ensure visibility of accurate timetabling information to the whole University body as far as is feasible.
- To minimise travel requirements for staff and students between teaching locations.
- To make efficient use of space and resources.

## 4. TEACHING TIMES AND CONTROL OF BOOKABLE SPACE

### 4.1 Teaching times

- The core University teaching week is from Monday to Friday, 09:00 to 17:00, except that on-Wednesdays, compulsory undergraduate and taught postgraduate teaching shall be limited to 09:00 to 13:00.
- In particular instances it may be necessary to use the 17:00 to 18:00 slot for core activities.
- All teaching should utilise maximum 50 minute slots in the hour, starting at 5 minutes past and ending at 5 minutes to the hour, to allow for the necessary movement between classes.

### 4.2 Control of bookable space

Control of bookable rooms in the University is set out the 'Room Booking Control Sheet' published and regularly reviewed by the Timetabling Team and available via

the Timetabling webpage. In summary, the main categories for control of space are as follows:

- **Centrally Allocated Space (no priority):** available for use by all schools and units. Initially controlled by Registry and used in the main central timetabling exercise (includes main Lecture Theatres and a number of other rooms).
- **Centrally Allocated Space (prioritised):** during the initial stages of the annual timetabling process, bookable only by, or with the agreement of, the designated school(s). Thereafter released for use by all schools and units.
- **Locally Allocated Space:** bookable only by, or with the agreement of, the designated school or unit. This includes space bookable wholly through Accommodation, Conferences and Events (ACE) (see also following bullet point).
- In addition to their wholly-controlled rooms, ACE has control over a number of centrally allocated teaching rooms on weekdays after 6 pm, at weekends and during vacation periods. During the academic year, week-day bookings of such rooms that start before 6 pm but extend beyond that time should be made with Timetabling Team in the first instance.

## 5. PRIORITISATION OF BOOKINGS

### 5.1 Teaching bookings

Teaching bookings for credit-bearing modules will have priority in designated teaching space during core teaching times (as defined in Section 4.1 above), followed by other academic activities, e.g. research seminars.

### 5.2 Institutional events

Institutional events such as university examinations and graduation will take priority on bookings at those times.

### 5.3 Non-teaching activities

Non-teaching activities, either on-going or single events, will not be scheduled into centrally allocated teaching space until the main teaching timetable has been confirmed (generally in mid-to late August).

### 5.4 Student bookings

See separate policy.

### 5.5 External bookings

External bookings, or any involving payment, will be dealt with via ACE. Any such use of teaching space during core teaching times must be in consultation with the Timetabling Team.

## 6. ANNUAL TIMETABLING PROCESS

In compiling the central timetable, the Timetabling Team will schedule, as far as possible, all activities flagged by Schools as requiring non-prioritised centrally allocated space (as defined in 4.2 above) within the following context:

## 6.1 Room Allocation

Activities will be scheduled into non-prioritised Centrally Allocated Space on the following basis:

- **Size:** Most appropriate use of that space in terms of activity size (based on planned or actual student numbers).
- **Facilities:** Requirements for particular facilities, such as:
  - access or teaching requirements arising from special needs of students or staff;
  - need for specific or specialist equipment;
  - pedagogical requirements.
- **Location:** Every effort will be made to schedule teaching activities into venues in the general zone of the school concerned (North Haugh or the town centre). However, the limited number and distribution of large lecture theatres in particular means that this may not always be feasible.
- **Buildings:** The location of a School in a particular building does not imply any right to preferential allocation of non-prioritised Centrally Allocated Space in that building, although in line with the above constraints every effort will be made to ensure proximity to the school's main base.
- **Multi-day activities:** Where lectures take place in the same time slot on several days of the week, every effort will be made to accommodate them in the same location throughout. However, competing priorities may necessitate allocation across more than one venue through the week.

The greater number of requirements for room facilities and locations specified by Schools, the narrower the range of suitable rooms for an activity. Requests for specific rooms are discouraged, but where valid reasons are provided the Timetabling Team will attempt to fulfil such requests.

## 6.2 Prioritisation

Within teaching activities, a balance of the following priorities will normally apply where there are competing needs for space:

- Access for students and staff with a disability is a priority.
- Larger classes will take precedence over smaller classes.
- Regular, full semester bookings will take precedence over bookings for a single week or irregular week-patterns.
- Where the week patterns are the same, activities with a longer duration will take precedence over shorter duration activities.
- Activities where students have no opportunity to attend an alternative slot (e.g. compulsory lectures) will be given priority over particular instances of, for example, sub-group tutorials.
- Student module combinations – e.g. to minimise travel distance for large numbers of students between compulsory activities in adjacent slots.
- In Semester 1, where other factors are evenly balanced, priority will be given to securing the most convenient location for Level 1 modules.

### **6.3 Use of Locally Allocated and prioritised Centrally Allocated Space**

Schools are expected to maximise, where possible, the use of any Locally Allocated and/or Prioritised space available to them before designating teaching activities to be scheduled into non-prioritised Centrally Allocated Space.

### **6.4 Non-use of booked space**

Schools should not block-book space unnecessarily. Where a particular room is no longer needed as a result of changes in teaching structure, smaller enrolments, staff illness etc., the space should be freed up by cancelling the relevant booking through school administrative staff or the Timetabling Team.

Based on results of the Estates Utilisation surveys, the Timetabling Team will analyse information to establish where there is frequent and repeated non-use of booked space. This analysis will be reported to the School(s) concerned and others as necessary.

### **6.5 Planned module timetables**

Core module activities will be scheduled, as far as possible, according to the approved planned class hours as contained in the Course Catalogue.

Where the constraints of the available space and facilities make it necessary to vary from this, the Timetabling Team will consult Directors of Teaching and others as appropriate to ensure, as far as possible, a clash-free timetable for all module combinations being pursued by students as part of their degree requirements.

### **6.6 Change Requests**

Requests for changes to the published timetable after the start of the relevant semester should be kept to a minimum. It is the responsibility of each school to ensure that information used to prepare the University timetable is accurate and subsequent changes are made only for valid reasons. These include:

- unexpected increase/decline in student enrolment numbers;
- unexpected staff changes;
- adjustments to accommodate students and staff with special needs;
- a location becomes a health or safety hazard;
- technology failure;
- the knock-on effects of changes arising from any of the above.

Staff preference should not ordinarily be used as the reason for a change request.

### **6.7 Process after release of school-prioritised Centrally Allocated Space**

Following release of school-prioritised Centrally Allocated Space, these rooms will be available for booking by all schools or units either via Syllabus Plus or the Web Room Booking system subject to designated time/availability constraints.

### **6.8 On-going scheduling**

During the academic year, prioritisation of bookings will continue, where necessary, in line with the factors set out in paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 above, unless the lateness of the request will involve undue disruption to existing bookings.

## **7. PUBLICATION OF TIMETABLES**

## 7.1 Staff

A draft timetable for the coming academic year shall be made available to staff via web timetables three weeks before the start of teaching in Semester 1. Adjustments to accommodate all teaching activities may be made until the start of the teaching semester. All staff have a responsibility to adhere to the published timetables for timings and location of activities.

## 7.2 Students

Students may access web timetables for comprehensive information on scheduled teaching and other activities. Personal Timetables for designated Core (whole group, module-related) Activities are available to registered students via MySaint and other web-based applications after their module enrolments have been confirmed through the Advising process. Access to Personal Timetables is by semester - those for the second semester will become available after the end of Semester 1.

Further information on split-group activities (e.g. tutorials, alternative lecture sessions) may be available from the relevant school, MMS, or learning platforms.

## 8. CENTRAL SOFTWARE

Syllabus Plus timetabling software will be used in the creation and maintenance of the central timetables, under the control of the Timetabling Team.

Syllabus Plus shall provide the golden source of data relating to teaching room bookings during teaching time, as well as timetabled activities. Details contained within the web and personal timetables are derived from this system.

All bookings in teaching space, **regardless of whether they are in Centrally Allocated or Locally Allocated rooms**, must be made via Syllabus Plus in order to support the publication of full and accurate timetabling information to staff and students and to provide comprehensive information about space utilisation. For the former reason, core activities held in staff offices should also be recorded in Syllabus Plus as far as possible.

The central Timetabling Team will ensure all designated users have access to and relevant training and support on Syllabus Plus. Each school or department shall have at least one named user of the software in order that they can input relevant data and schedule into any local rooms directly.

## 9. REPORTING

Utilisation surveys will be carried out in conjunction with the Estates department, ordinarily four times a year. The resulting data will be used to inform statutory external returns as well as any other internal analysis and reporting, including to Court and relevant University groups, with appropriate contextualisation as required.

Data within Syllabus Plus may also be used for reporting purposes.

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