

Timetabling, Attendance and  
Examination Office

# Academic Timetabling Policy



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## Contents:

1.	Purpose of Scope .....	1
2.	Objectives.....	1
3.	Guiding Principles.....	1
4.	Timetabling, Attendance and Exams Office.....	1
5.	Students and Academics Services .....	2
6.	Heads of Schools and Programme Leaders.....	3
7.	Academic Staff.....	4
8.	Students.....	4
9.	Estates and Facilities .....	5
10.	Disability Services.....	5
11.	Teaching Times.....	5
12.	Timetabling.....	6
13.	Availability to Teach.....	6
14.	Timetable Changes and Changes to Room Allocation.....	7
15.	Ad-Hoc and External Room Bookings.....	8
16.	Equality and Diversity.....	8
17.	Monitoring and Review.....	9

## **1. Purpose and Scope**

- 1.1 This document sets out the University's policy, procedures, roles and responsibilities in respect of academic timetabling.

## **2. Objectives**

- 2.1 To support the delivery of both an exceptional student experience and learning and teaching at the University of Bradford.
- 2.2 To ensure students are taught in teaching accommodation suited to the particular needs of the session, whilst optimising the utilisation of University's teaching spaces.
- 2.3 To achieve a timetable that is consistent, accessible, and sufficiently flexible to meet changing needs, whilst acknowledging stability as a longer-term aim.

## **3. Guiding Principles**

- 3.1 Priorities for the production of the timetable will be the student experience, the staff experience and efficient room utilisation in that order.
- 3.2 An annual timetable will be designed, released, and finalised before the start of semester one each year.
- 3.3 Once the Final Timetable has been agreed there can be no 'changes to the timetable' as distinct from the genuinely unavoidable rescheduling of classes for a particular group of students. Where classes need to be rescheduled, it will remain possible for alternative room bookings to be made but only where these do not have a knock-on effect for any other group.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **4. Timetabling, Attendance and Exams Office**

- 4.1 Plan and co-ordinate the construction and production of the optimal teaching timetable for the University in partnership with the faculties and other stakeholders.
- 4.2 Allocate teaching space in accordance with university policies
- 4.3 Optimise room utilisation
- 4.4 Working with Heads of School and Programme Leaders to produce the timetable to agreed deadlines.

- 4.5 Maintain relationships with Faculty representatives and ensure clear and open lines of communication.
- 4.6 Maintain and develop the University's timetable website and other associated applications.
- 4.7 Manage the University's room booking service.
- 4.8 Ensure the timetable can be made available in different formats to meet the needs of all users.
- 4.9 Facilitate communication of any timetable changes to staff and students in a timely manner.
- 4.10 The Executive Board has the ultimate responsibility for fostering constructive collaborations across the University in the construction of the timetable.

## **5. Student and Academic Services**

- 5.1 Ensure that the Timetable Office is kept up to date with all validation outcomes throughout the year
- 5.2 Ensure that all newly validated modules and updated versions of amended modules are speedily and accurately added to the student record system
- 5.3 Assist academic staff, where possible, with the collation and checking of timetable data
- 5.4 Support Departmental Heads/ Programme Leaders in ensuring that students are notified of any postponement and rescheduling of classes
- 5.5 Share with the Timetable Office relevant information about students with special needs including those arising from protected characteristics (e.g. disability, faith, pregnancy etc.) and other special requirements (eg. caring responsibilities) that are relevant to the construction of the timetable (including room location).
- 5.6 Ensure that Faculties meet published deadlines for formal notification to Registry of module amendments/new modules so that these can then be reflected in the construction of the timetable.

## **6. Heads of School and Programme Leaders**

- 6.1 Manage the timetabling process within department areas and programmes respectively in accordance with this policy.

- 6.2 Alert the Timetable Office to possible module changes in advance of the scheduling process or as soon as possible thereafter.
- 6.3 Ensure that Programme inputs into the timetabling process are completed in a timely and accurate fashion.
- 6.4 Ensure that staff availability to teach is managed in accordance with the precepts articulated in section 7 below, with Department heads accepting responsibility for approval of Staff Teaching Exemption if nominated by Deans to do so.
- 6.5 Ensure that all full-time members of staff, particularly those who are newly appointed, are made aware that any module may be scheduled for teaching at any time during the standard teaching week.
- 6.6 Ensure that full and accurate information on staff availability is provided to the Timetable Office.
- 6.7 Take responsibility for ensuring that teaching is planned well in advance and that any changes from the previous year to programmes (content or delivery) are produced on time for incorporation into the Draft Timetable and that no changes are made to programmes, or to the mode of delivery of programmes, during the course of any academic session if this would result in knock-on effects for the delivery of any other programmes.
- 6.8 Take responsibility for ensuring that space is booked strictly according to proposed usage (e.g. If a Lecture Theatre is to be used by a whole group, is to be followed by seminars for smaller groups book the number of seminar rooms required and vacate the Lecture Theatre rather than holding one of the seminars in the Lecture Theatre) and that teaching space is not booked on a contingency basis for periods longer than are required for delivery.
- 6.9 Take responsibility for liaising with the Timetable Office on behalf of staff in their programmes, and for maintaining excellent relations and clear and open lines of communication.
- 6.10 Any rescheduling of classes necessitated by unexpected staff absences should be achieved with minimum impact on the Final Timetable.
- 6.11 Ensure that affected students are immediately alerted to any such rescheduling

## 7. **Academic Staff**

- 7.1 Ensure availability for teaching during all University teaching hours except when Deans or the Department heads as Dean's nominee has approved exemption (on the basis, for example, of a disability, caring responsibilities or religious/belief commitments). In considering exemptions, Deans or nominees will act sensitively and in accordance with the guidance in Section 13. They are responsible for indicating approval or otherwise and informing the Timetable Office.
- 7.2 Plan teaching delivery well in advance
- 7.3 Adhere to the Final Timetable
- 7.4 Start on the hour/half-hour and finish sessions promptly five minutes before the end of the scheduled session to allow for a smooth changeover.
- 7.5 Ensure teaching spaces are left in a clean and tidy condition and furniture is returned to the standard configuration for the room if this has been altered during the session.

## 8. Students

- 8.1 Check published timetable as it appears on the University publication resources (e.g., Publish or SWS), including following alerts relating to any changes.
- 8.2 If notified of an emergency postponement of a class, maintain contact with the faculty with regard to rescheduling.
- 8.3 Students are expected to be available throughout all teaching weeks and for all scheduled teaching.
- 8.4 Students will not be scheduled to attend classes beyond 18:00 unless this has been made clear in advance in published programme documentation.
- 8.5 Students requiring special arrangements should make their needs known to their Programme Leaders ahead of the production of the timetable to ensure any special arrangements can be accommodated. Where possible such information will have been collected as part of the enrolment process.

## 9. Estates and Facilities

- 9.1 Undertake regular checks of room usage in liaison with Timetable Office and Department heads where there appear to be significant anomalies to verify that usage accords with timetable.

- 9.2 Ensure all teaching spaces are fit for purpose with a view to enhancing the quality of the student experience and reducing the justification for staffing preferences for particular teaching space.
- 9.3 Establish in consultation with Department heads the optimal configuration for teaching rooms, to which furniture should be returned after each class, and ensure that rooms where this may be in doubt are provided with a diagram indicating the optimal layout.
- 9.4 Ensure, via IT services, that media provisions in teaching rooms are fit for purpose.
- 9.5 Ensure that timetabled teaching rooms meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 in terms of access for staff and students with a physical disability. Where certain rooms have poor access alternatives will be found where required.
- 9.6 Lead on increasing overall space utilisation performance within the parameters of this policy.
- 9.7 Where essential location developments are required, the Timetabling Office is kept informed in planning; and that adequate notice is provided in advance of the timetable design period.

## **10. Disability Services**

- 10.1 Ensure that the Timetable Office is made aware as soon as possible of any student whose disability should be accommodated in finalising the timetable.

## **11. Teaching Times**

- 11.1 The normal teaching week takes place Monday to Friday. The standard teaching day is 09:00 to 18:00 with the exception of Fridays where no teaching will occur between 13:00 to 14:00 for attendance for Prayers, also on Wednesday when teaching hours are 09:00 to 13:00 for both postgraduate and undergraduate students
- 11.2 Patterns of teaching outside the standard teaching day (e.g., only evenings or weekends) will be set out in the validation documents and published programme information.
- 11.3 All rooms should be vacated by five minutes before the hour/half-hour to allow time for students to vacate the room and enable the following session to start on time. This timing allows for interchange of students and installation of any required equipment.



## 12. Timetabling

- 12.1 Teaching activities take precedence over non-teaching activities other than where specified (e.g., Open Days, Exams and Graduation)
- 12.2 Regular, full semester taught activities take precedence over infrequent general teaching taught sessions.
- 12.3 All teaching activities must be timetabled, and rooms must be reserved via the Timetable Office.
- 12.4 Timetable clashes must be resolved prior to the publication of the Final Timetable.
- 12.5 In the initial stages of constructing the timetable the following criteria will apply:
  - Depending on usage, minimum occupancy will normally be 70% - there will clearly need to be exceptions in some, particularly practical-related, areas. (This minimum only applies in initial stages; lower occupancy may be unavoidable if large rooms are all that is available towards the end of the process);
  - Specialist space will be allocated in the first instance on the basis of specialist need but thereafter can be allocated for general teaching unless there are Health and Safety risks attached.
  - Consistency will be a priority where teaching permits (same time, same room every week).
  - Activities that occupy large consistent blocks of time will be scheduled before those that occupy smaller blocks of time.
- 12.6 Access for students with disabilities is a priority
- 12.7 Class sizes should under no circumstances exceed the size of the room allocated.
- 12.8 In order to avoid overcrowded rooms, modules that have historically been subject to increases should initially be timetabled into rooms with some capacity for such growth.
- 12.9 While timetabling should strive to provide viable student pathways and student choice, the timetable should not be constructed on the basis of individual student choices: the emphasis will be on the production of programme timetables into which student choices are made.

- 12.10 The following “hard constraints” will apply in the construction of the timetable:
- No one session may last longer than 4 hours without an identified 30-minute resource break
  - Staff and students must have a least 30-minute break every 4 hours.
- 12.11 Tutorial activities will be included in a timetabled module only where such activities require learning processes in particular spaces and the faculty specifically requests this.

### **13. Availability to Teach**

- 13.1 Full time staff and students will be expected to be available to deliver/attend teaching within the standard University hours, 09:00-18:00. Where there are exceptions, these will be agreed through discussion between the Department heads and the Timetable Office
- 13.2 It is acknowledged that staff may have certain needs that impact on their ability to be available for teaching between the specified hours. A teaching exemption process is available for those staff who have needs relating to a disability, practicing a religion, or regular childcare responsibilities that need to be considered in preparing the Timetable. Staff who consider they have such a need should submit their requirements to their Dean or nominee prior to the data collection phase for the Timetable production. The Dean or nominee will consider the request, seeking professional advice from the HR department as required, and if approved will submit the appropriate information to the Timetable Office.
- 13.3 In the case of a member of staff with a disability, guidance will be sort by Disability Services to identify what reasonable steps are necessary to provide support. Professional advice will be sought from Occupational Health where required.
- 13.4 The University will make every effort to accommodate reasonable requests in the construction of the timetable but once the timetable has been finalised any exceptional requests can only be accommodated by arrangements for cover being made within the faculty. The Final Timetable will not be changed although classes may be rescheduled, if this is wholly unavoidable, provided there are no knock-on effects for students in any other programme.
- 13.5 Restrictions imposed by external commitments should be considered carefully by Deans or nominees and, if approved,

should also be notified to the Timetable Office in advance of the timetable design period,

- 13.6 Availability of part-time staff should be notified to the Timetable Office in the data collection phase and may not be amended during the course of the academic session if any change would impact on the Timetable in such a way as to impact on students taking any other module.
- 13.7 Department/Programme Heads may take account of Faculty preferences (e.g. in relation to research leave) in identifying staff availability but the Timetable will not be built around predetermined 'research days'.

## **14. Timetabling changes and changes to room allocation**

- 14.1 Once the Provisional timetable has been issued (see the published timetable schedule each year), requests to change the timetable as a result of changes to teaching personnel or to the personal circumstances of staff declared available to teach will not be accommodated if there is any consequent adverse impact on the timetable as a whole (such as the need to change the timetable for another programme)<sup>1</sup>. It will be expected that such events will be managed by the Dean/Department head through reallocation of existing resources.
- 14.2 Once the Provisional timetable has been issued no changes will be made as a result of changes to methods/teaching patterns where such changes would have a knock-on effect for students on other programmes. This includes changes to patterns of staff teaching if this would require the timetable to be altered resulting in an adverse impact on the timetable.
- 14.3 Once the Final Timetable has been issued, requests to change the timetable as a result of changes to teaching personnel or to the personal circumstances of staff declared available to teach will not be accommodated. It will be expected that such events will be managed by the Deans and Department Heads through reallocation of existing resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Exceptions to this will be considered if a member of staff develops a disability in year, again ensuring that there are no knock-on implications for students on any other programme.

- 14.4 Timetable sessions may, where unforeseen circumstances occur, be postponed but must *not* be cancelled.

## 15. Ad-Hoc and External Room Bookings

- 15.1 Ad-hoc room bookings during teaching hours will not be confirmed until after the Final Timetable has been published
- 15.2 Rooms that are not scheduled for use during the timetabling process may be booked for ad-hoc purposes provided there are no Health and Safety or specialist equipment implications.
- 15.3 The University's requirement for rooms and facilities takes priority over external groups or organisations. No changes will be made to the University's Final Timetable to accommodate external use.

## 16. Equality and Diversity

- 16.1 The University will make every effort to accommodate staff and students needs resulting from, for example, disabilities, carer responsibilities and religious beliefs
- 16.2 Members of staff requiring special arrangements should make their needs known to their line manager ahead of the production of the timetable (as per Section 13 of this Policy) to ensure their needs are discussed and accommodated where possible.
- 16.3 Students requiring special arrangements should make their needs known to their Department Head ahead of the production of the timetable to ensure any special arrangements can be accommodated. In the case of first year students, any disability-related or religious needs will be identified at the application stage and a discussion will take place before they commence their studies at the University.

## 17. Monitoring and Review

- 17.1 The implementation of this policy should be monitored by the Deans, where their individual Faculties are concerned, and by the Academic Registrar. Any disputes should be arbitrated by the Academic Registrar working with the relevant Dean
- 17.2 The implementation of this Policy should be reviewed at least every three years following review of its operation.