Timetabling Policy – Introduction

The intention behind this timetable policy is to provide a broad framework and guidelines for those colleagues involved in the creation of the annual University teaching timetable and the allocation of space to teaching events.

The policy document, whilst conceiving of a 'standard' or conventional method of teaching delivery, also recognises that across many Departments and Programmes within the University, a non-standard pattern of delivery exists. The process of timetabling should, and can, take into account such variations, but it would be inappropriate to attempt to detail all such exceptions within a policy document such as this.

The policy, as it develops operationally, will be supplemented by further documentation which will address in more detail the variations in timetabling practice which may arise.
This policy has been circulated to Faculties within the University and comments received.

<p align="center">The University of Sheffield</p>

Timetabling: Policy and Principles

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide the rules, guidelines, priorities and responsibilities for the production of the University of Sheffield's annual teaching timetable and for general room allocation. The document will also set out expected standards for teaching space and support available for the use of space and for the construction of the timetable.
Specifically the policy aims to:

- Encourage efficient and effective use of student time
- Encourage efficient and effective use of staff time
- Encourage efficient use of University resources, especially teaching space

General principles

- Support high quality delivery of teaching and learning
- Ensure that students are taught in appropriate, high quality teaching accommodation
- Timetables are up to date and accessible
- All teaching events should have suitable space/facilities
- All activities and space recorded on the central timetable
- Support staff in the construction and production of the timetable using a single corporate system (Facility CMIS)
- Provide personal timetables for students and staff
- Minimise travel across campus
- Maximise student choice
- Lecturer unavailability to be approved by HoD
- Events shall be roomed on a 'best-fit' basis
- Optimisation of space utilisation
- Respond to needs of individual lecturers
- Plan for new deliveries and developments

Ownership and governance of policy

Timetabling policy will be the responsibility of the Learning Infrastructure & Space Management Group. Governance will be provided jointly by Estates and Capital Sub-Group & Learning Teaching Committee.

Timetabling

Where possible the teaching timetable will be rolled forward each year in order to achieve a level of continuity, however, every three years the timetable shall be constructed from scratch to ensure fairness in the allocation of popular/unpopular times.

Teaching times

Teaching events shall normally be scheduled within the customary University teaching week:
Monday-Friday   09:00-18:00

Teaching events shall normally be booked on the hour and shall finish at ten minutes before the hour.

Teaching start times are:

9:00, 10:00, 11:00, 12:00, 13:00, 14:00, 15:00, 16:00, 17:00

However, it is also recognised that some areas of the University, for example TiLL or MLTC, will deliver teaching outside of these customary hours. The completed timetable will also incorporate such exceptions.

Wednesday afternoons shall normally be kept free from undergraduate teaching in order to accommodate other activities such as students' sports and societies. This period may also be used for regular upkeep and maintenance of equipment and rooms and Departmental staff meetings.

Teaching events shall normally be scheduled within the University's semester framework; the teaching year runs from week 1-52 and begins with week 1 (last week in September)

Semester 1   End of September – Christmas vacation (typically weeks 1-12)

Semester 2   End of January – mid May (typically weeks 20-34, including Easter vacation).

There will however, be exceptions to the above, for example though not exclusively, Programmes that start/finish outside the standard academic year or evening teaching. The completed timetable will also incorporate such exceptions.

In general terms, teaching events will not specify the day/time that they are to be taught but will fit within the range of days/times indicated above.

Teaching activities will normally take precedence over non-teaching activities however, exceptions may be made for certain business critical activities. Examples include:
- Exams
- Degree Ceremonies
- Public Lectures
- UCAS days

Restrictions & Constraints

The timetable shall allow the recording of restrictions to the availability of resources and staff, for example, research leave and other restrictions as agreed by Head of Department/line manager.
- Staff and students will not normally be scheduled continuously between the hours of 12:00-14:00.
- Staff and students will not normally be scheduled for more than three hours consecutively for Lecture activities.

Note: such constraints will need to be agreed and may vary locally

Teaching staff, shall normally be available to teach at any time within University teaching week, however, specific contractual arrangements will be recognised e.g. part-time staff.

Departments may provide information about the agreed availability of staff or other resources. By recording such information the Facility CMIS software can be used to achieve effective workload planning and reporting.

The University will strive to meet the different needs of students and staff; for example, disability, caring responsibilities, religious faith. Such needs have to be notified to Departments in advance of the production of the annual timetable.

Travel Times

Travel times between Buildings will be recorded within Facility CMIS. This will reduce instances where staff and students are scheduled at unreasonable distances consecutively.

Teaching space

All teaching space, and its use, shall be recorded in the University's central timetable record (Facility CMIS)

- All teaching events to be recorded in order to produce personal timetables via Google calendar and mobile devices
- All room use to be recorded in order that the University can provide accurate usage figures as required by HEFCE

Teaching space falls into two distinct categories

- General space – including Lecture Theatres and Classrooms
- Specialist space – including Computer rooms, Laboratories and Workshops

Management of teaching space falls into two distinct categories

- Centrally managed – general space managed by Room & Parking Services and Computer rooms managed by CiCS
- Locally managed – specialist space managed by an Academic Department

In addition, some centrally managed teaching space may be allocated to an Academic Department or Programme on a 'first call' basis, but shall be available to all Departments otherwise.

Centrally managed teaching space shall be maintained to a standard appropriate to the delivery of high quality teaching and shall contain appropriate equipment for that delivery, to include:

- The physical fabric of the space
- Computer and AV equipment
- Fixtures, fittings and furniture

Teaching space shall be surveyed regularly to assess whether it is meeting agreed standards. Room & Parking Office will maintain and up to date list of all teaching space together with equipment and facilities available together with information about the condition of such teaching space to inform an annual rolling refurbishment plan.

Room allocation

Rooms shall be allocated on a best fit basis determined by the size of the event to be scheduled. Classes will not be scheduled in rooms smaller than the size of the event; should enrolment mean that the allocated room is too small then the class will be moved to an appropriate size room and may be rescheduled.

Requests for central space shall be generic rather than for a specific room, although it is recognised that occasionally requests for specific rooms must be made.

Where possible, rooms will be allocated in proximity to the home Department to reduce extensive travel across campus.

Priorities for room allocation

Rooms will be allocated according to the following general principles:
- Teaching events requiring a specific room (labs etc)/specific time
- Large lectures/lectures on Dual Programmes/lectures delivering to multiple programmes
- Smaller/single Programme lectures
- Other teaching on Dual Programmes
- Remaining teaching activities
- Non-teaching activities/ad hoc bookings

Timetable publication

The target date for publication of a draft roomed timetable is 1st July this will give staff and students time to plan other activities. The timetable will however be subject to change e.g. to incorporate increased student intakes.

1 July	Publication of draft timetable (with rooms allocated)
1st week September	Final publication of timetable

The period between July and September should be used by Departments to make final checks on the timetable and appropriate adjustments/changes made.

Exact target dates will be published annually.

Changes to timetable/room allocation

Changes to the timetable/allocated room after publication should be kept to a minimum to avoid unnecessary disruption across other Departments. Reasons for changes can include:
- Changes in teaching staff – new appointments/leavers
- Increased student numbers (where the room is now too small)
- Access to a room for students/staff with mobility problems
- Serious faults/problems with a room

Ad hoc Bookings

Rooms not required for teaching may be booked by staff/students for ad hoc purposes

Ad hoc bookings during term time will be scheduled after the production of the teaching timetable.