

## TIMETABLING GUIDELINES

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### OVERVIEW

These guidelines supplement the [Timetabling Policy](#) and [Timetabling Procedures](#) and [Procedures: Roles and Responsibilities](#) and should be read in conjunction with them. The guidelines describe the various activities which are required to take place in order to build the Provisional Timetable as well as providing information on variation to teaching staff hours.

### SCOPE

These guidelines apply to all University staff involved with Timetabling and to those who use the Timetable System, either directly or via the web room booking system.

### DEFINITIONS

Definitions have the same meanings as set out in the [Timetabling Policy](#). Additional definitions include:

**Base Timetable Data** means the data from the Timetable System that is retained from year to year including Teaching Activities, Students Sets, Activity Templates, but does not include variable data such as the time or location of a Teaching Activity.

**Course Components** (as configured in PeopleSoft) means the type of class e.g. Lecture, Seminar etc. that will be timetabled. It also includes the contact hours, size of the component and Timetable System templates required. It equates to '**Activity Template**' in the Timetable System.

**Constraints** are rules, requirements or preferences applied to Teaching Activities, and which affect the availability of resources and scheduling outcomes. Constraints may be **Soft Constraints** which indicate a preference or **Hard Constraints** which indicate a requirement.

**Named Availability** is a Constraint in the Timetabling System that determines the span of weeks in which a course may be taught and which must match the course's term/session as defined in Course Catalogue. It also determines the census date for a course.

**Student Set** (also known as "Pathways" in the Timetable System) is a combination of courses which must not clash due to program requirements, or a combination of courses for the most common enrolment patterns taken by students.

**Suitabilities** are factors that indicate the nature of a Teaching Space, the pedagogic possibilities and the teaching equipment available

### 1. Preparing Base Timetable Data

- a) Base Timetable Data will be rolled over each year in order to provide a foundation for building the following year's Timetable.
- b) The University Timetable Coordinator will create a new timetable database by 1 August in each year in order that Base Timetable Data can be rolled-over and will synchronise the new database with PeopleSoft prior to opening it for user access.

- c) The University Timetable Coordinator will make all necessary updates to locations, academic organisation, and user access required for the scheduling to occur.

## 2. Base Timetable Data Activities

Faculties will carry out the following Base Timetable Data activities before scheduling commences:

- a) Review all Course Offerings and Course Components in Course Catalogue and make any required changes ensuring that the estimated enrolment total:
- i. is only changed after considering historical trends, learning and teaching requirements and the current year's actual enrolments;
  - ii. does not exceed 110% of the current year's enrolments unless the course has become a core course or the range of courses on offer within a program has reduced.
- b) Consider what Constraints are required (if any) and enter them into the system taking into account the following:
- i. Constraints must only be used for their dedicated purpose and not to predetermine the day or time of a Teaching Activity;
  - ii. The use of Hard Constraints should be kept to a minimum wherever possible and shall only be used if they relate to:
    1. Specialist Facilities;
    2. individual staff availability provided that approval for such availability has been approved in accordance with the [Timetable Policy](#); or
    3. the location/day/time where the Teaching Activity is part of the Critical Activity Group;
  4. Hard Constraints must be applied to the location or staff member rather and not to the Teaching Activity;
  5. Hard Constraints will not be included in the Base Timetable Data rollover unless they relate to the factors set out in 2bii above;
  6. Soft Constraints may be used to influence desirable outcomes;
  7. Locations must be set to 'wildcard' where a General Purpose Facility is requested.
- c) Allocate Student Sets taking into account the following:
- i. Program Rule restrictions;
  - ii. Student Sets will reflect a realistic combination of student enrolment choices and contain any core or compulsory courses (modules);
  - iii. The number of courses in a Student Set must not exceed the number of courses required to make up the equivalent full-time load for a student cohort in a Term;
  - iv. The optimum number of courses in a Student Set is four (4) to six (6);
  - v. The optimum planned size of a Student Set will generally be between seven (7) and ten (10);
  - vi. There should be sufficient Student Sets to ensure that all tutorials do not clash with the lecture;

- vii. Faculties are not permitted to un-allocate Student Sets (even for their own courses) where the Student Set belongs to another faculty and for which service teaching occurs. Student Sets can only be un-allocated after appropriate consultation;
  - viii. If a change requires the removal of a Student Set which includes modules from another area, the other area must be consulted prior to removing the set.
- d) Allocate Named Availability to each Course Offering ensuring that:
- i. Course Offerings must be attached to a valid Named Availability i.e. one that provides the correct term/session code for the Course Offering.
  - ii. The Course Offering 'Named Availability' determines the allowable span of teaching weeks i.e. term, available for all components of the course.
  - iii. The Course Offering Named Availability also determines the session that all Teaching Activities for the Course Offering will be associated to in PeopleSoft (the session controls the period of time class adds can occur and also the outcomes of class drops – e.g. drop delete, withdraw no fail, withdraw fail).
  - iv. Teaching Activities or Activity Templates do not require a Named Availability and where not applied, will either 'inherit' the Course Offering's Named Availability, or the Teaching Activity or Activity Templates may be set to 'none' and the week pattern may be manually selected however it cannot include weeks outside of the Course Offering week pattern.
  - v. Where a Named Availability is attached to an individual Teaching Activity, it may have different teaching weeks than the Course Offering Named Availability, however it cannot include weeks outside of the Course Offering's week pattern.
- e) Ensure that:
- i. As a minimum each Teaching Activity must include 'campus' and 'room type' as a Suitability.
  - ii. Suitabilities are not applied to avoid rules regarding Constraints.
  - iii. Where the instructor/tutor is known prior to scheduling, then staff must be applied as a Resource to the Teaching Activity.
  - iv. Activity Template types must correspond to the course components listed in PeopleSoft.
  - v. The Activity Template Host Key extension must match the activity type.
  - vi. Only rooms of a comparable size are selected (where the currently scheduled venue is not otherwise available). Rooms cannot be selected if they are greater than 110% of the activity size without approval from the UTC.

### 3. Building the Provisional Timetable

- a) Before Timetabling commences the University Timetable Coordinator will:
- i) Rank all Teaching Activities in accordance with the priorities in the [Timetable Policy](#);
  - ii) Sort all Teaching Activities into 10 priority groups;
  - iii) Build the Provisional Timetable in accordance with the [Timetable Policy](#).

- b) The University Timetable Coordinator will build the Provisional Timetable in three (3) rounds to ensure that Teaching Activities are scheduled in accordance with the priorities set out in the [Timetable Procedures](#) and to allow the Provisional Timetable to be built in a manageable way, allowing for corrections and adjustments:
  - i) Round 1 will include all Critical Activity Group Teaching Activities, intensive courses, special needs (as determined by the University Timetable Coordinator) and priority group 1 & 2:
  - ii) Round 2 will include priority groups 3, 4, 5; and
  - iii) Round 3 will include priority groups 6-10.
- c) The Timetable System will be closed to all faculties during the scheduling of each round although faculties will be able to access the Timetable System and make any required changes in between each round.

#### **4. Changes to the Published Timetable**

- a) Changes to allocated Teaching Spaces can be made at any time and locations may be 'pre-set'.
- b) Faculties may use the 'set time' function to pre-set day/time of all published Teaching Activities.

#### **5. Variations to Weekday hours of 8am to 6pm**

- a) Heads of School who wish to approve a variation to a teaching staffs hours of availability due to their personal circumstances or caring responsibilities may do so entirely at their own discretion and in accordance with local area processes.
- b) Where a variation is approved, it must be approved in writing and an auditable record must be maintained.