



Shared Academic Timetabling Policy

Principles of Operation

- 1.1 All learning and teaching activities (e.g. lectures, tutorials, labs, workshops, etc.), excluding centrally arranged examinations, are timetabled within the timetabling system, including activities taking place in centrally or School/locally managed rooms, learning and teaching outside of “normal” teaching times, learning and teaching that forms part of the Degree Regulations and Programme of Study (DRPS) and non DRPS activity. This includes activity notifiers, where teaching is scheduled but not allocated a room within the timetabling system (e.g. staff offices).
- 1.2 Room allocation prioritises the scheduling of core teaching activities into teaching zones requested by Schools, covering all centrally and locally managed teaching space.
- 1.3 The allocation of School-owned teaching space will be centrally supported through a Service Level Agreement with the School.
- 1.4 Out with designated mid-morning and lunch-time breaks, movement between Timetabling Zones (by students and staff) across consecutive teaching slots will be minimised, but may be necessary in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.5 If booked learning and teaching space is no longer needed, it must be cancelled at the earliest opportunity. Charges may be levied for late cancellations or non-use of booked space.
- 1.6 Except in exceptional circumstances, staff and students should have at least one hour free of learning and teaching commitments between 12:00 and 14:00.
- 1.7 Student requests for study space (and other ad hoc requests for the use of learning and teaching space) are prioritised for a selection of spaces, and supported but subject to restrictions and approval, for other learning and teaching space.
- 1.8 The setup of all learning and teaching activities (including exams) within Timetabling Systems aims to enable the inclusion of these activities in student and staff personalised timetables.
- 1.9 The Timetabling Unit (TTU) will allocate all whole class activities. This process will be carried out as part of a daily allocation exercise in accordance with the TTU Planning cycle. Student Allocation to sub group activities will be conducted in relation to the set out Service Level Agreements with individual schools. TTU will use random allocation as standard. Alternative methods of allocation will need prior approval from the Head of School.

2. Teaching Times

- 2.1 The standard teaching day is from 09:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday. It is recognised that learning and teaching sometimes takes place outside of these hours. For timetabling purposes, ‘morning’ is defined as any time before 13:00, ‘afternoon’ is defined as any time between 13:00 and 18:00, and ‘evening’ is defined as any time after 18:00.



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2.2 The day is divided into 50 minute slots. Within these slots, rooms should be booked for the actual times that they are required (e.g. some may teach for 1.5 hours in a 2 hour slot or for 3 hours in a half-day slot). Teaching rooms may not be booked between 11:00 and 16:00 except for bookings of at least 3 hours. This does not apply to specialist space such as studios and laboratories.

Single	Double	Half Day
09:00-09:50	09:00-10:50	09:00-13:00
10:00-10:50		
11:10-12:00	11:10-13:00	
12:10-13:00*		
13:10-14:00*		
14:10-15:00	14:10-16:00	14:10-18:00
15:10-16:00		
16:10-17:00	16:10-18:00	
17:10-18:00		
18:30-19:20	18:30-20:20	
19:30-20:20		

*variable lunch hour

2.3 Teaching times indicate when the class is scheduled to begin (e.g. a class scheduled at 09:00 starts at 09:00 and not 09:05). Students should be in their seats 5 minutes before the advertised time. There is a 20-minute mid-morning break to facilitate movement between Timetabling Zones. Except in exceptional circumstances, staff and students have at least one hour free of learning and teaching commitments between 12:00 and 14:00.

2.4 The week is divided into slots, each at a given hour of the day, and further subdivided into Monday/Thursday and Tuesday/Friday slots for classes requiring two whole-class sessions (WCS). If three WCSs are required, the preferred extra day to maximise flexibility is Wednesday (for morning classes) or Friday/Thursday (for afternoon classes).

Single	Double	Triple (a.m.)	More
Mon	Mon/Thur Tue/Fri	Mon/Wed/Thur	Any
Tue		Tues/Wed/Fri	
Wed	Triple (p.m.)		
Thur		Mon/Thur/Fri	
Fri		Tues/Thur/Fri	

2.5 Only in exceptional circumstances will core lecture or class slots be scheduled on Wednesday afternoon when no alternative can be found. Scheduling such a class at this time must be approved by the relevant College Learning and Teaching Committee. This does not preclude schools from offering classes (e.g. laboratories) on a Wednesday afternoon, provided that alternative times are offered at other points in the week.



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2.6 Classes that are outside of the normal teaching times or for greater duration (for example weekend working) should ensure that there is no more than 4 hours of consecutive learning and teaching without a break.

3. Teaching Availability

3.1 Teaching staff are available for teaching at any time during their contracted teaching day(s) except where restricted by individual agreement with Heads of School in accordance with existing Human Resources guidelines.

3.2 Timetabling implementation, through the commitment of staff to the timetabling system, can allow the incorporation of constraints to enable staff within specified groups to share teaching-free times, e.g. to enable scheduling of research seminars, and in recognition of the University's Flexible Working Policy.

4. Room Allocation

4.1 The allocation of the University's teaching space is managed in accordance with core principles and specific allocation factors:

- All space used for general teaching will be centrally managed and supported;
- Specialist space, where appropriate, will be centrally managed in accordance with School Service Level Agreements;
- Provision and maintenance of specialist space will remain the responsibility of individual Schools;
- All users of the system have read-only access to the schedules of other Schools' space, allowing for availability analysis and approach as needed;
- Spare capacity in locally-managed specialist spaces is made available to requests from other Schools/Units as per individual Service Level Agreements drawn up by the Timetabling Unit.

4.2 The allocation of rooms is driven by the following factors:

Factor	Performance Measure(s)	Priority
School Priority and proximity to School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation/utilisation of School-priority spaces during Semester-times • Allocation/utilisation of Centrally managed rooms • Utilisation of rooms within the schools' timetabling zone 	Essential
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All requirements can be accommodated 	Essential
Seating Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % Capacity Allocation 	Essential
Essential Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requested vs Actual 	Essential
Layout and Furniture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requested vs Actual 	Essential
Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed activities accommodated in Licensed Rooms 	Essential

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Factor	Performance Measure(s)	Priority
Travel time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure acceptable travel times between timetabled teaching zones 	High
Preferred Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requests met with required equipment, or mobile alternative 	High
Location Preference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requested vs Actual 	Medium

4.3 Once the timetable has been set for the year, room bookings are confirmed but the Timetabling Unit retains the right to change room allocations in response to evolving resource constraints, such as:

- Changes to course enrolment figures
- Emergence of significant alternative need
- Equality Impact Assessment requirements, or
- Loss of learning and teaching space in the event of an emergency.

5. Planning Cycle for Timetabling

5.1 The planning cycle reflects the need for planning to take place in line with information becoming available from academic planning and our corporate systems.

5.2 The table below confirms the business cycle for the majority of teaching that falls within the standard teaching semester pattern. Variations to this cycle will exist where Schools' teaching falls out with the standard teaching pattern:

Month	What Happens
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed aspects of the current year's course timetable schedule, but not room allocations, are rolled-forward to enable planning for the following academic year
November – March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Timetabling Coordinators collate the requirements for a draft timetable of their own learning and teaching events, including the requirements for centrally managed rooms The Timetabling Unit offers curriculum planning advice throughout data collation/construction
April – June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centrally managed room requests are submitted to the Timetabling Unit which are then prepared for main room allocation Where applicable, School-managed specialist learning and teaching space is booked via School Gatekeepers upon data creation
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The draft shared timetable is published based on estimated numbers of students and after associated rooms have been allocated. This version of the timetable is available to view by applicants/incoming students via DRPS and CTB



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Month	What Happens
July –August	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First year course selection available for programmes starting prior to the main September intake, and Postgraduate Enrolment• Any required changes to room bookings and staff allocation are investigated and applied• The daily student allocation run commences for whole class activities as students feed into the Timetabling system from the EUCLID records system
1 September onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bulk of Undergraduate courses and Postgraduate courses are selected during Welcome Week• Student sub-group allocations commence• Any required changes to room bookings and staff allocation are investigated and applied• Changes to class size or course cancellations are monitored to allow space to be released, should it not be required• Rooms for student study become available for student bookings

5.3 Following the creation of the rolled forward timetable for the upcoming academic year, the oldest timetable on the system is archived.

6. Flexible Learning Week

6.1 Semester 2 is divided into three parts. Teaching blocks 3 and 4 comprise the 11 weeks of standard teaching, and the remaining weeks comprise the exam diet. The Flexible Learning Week, which takes place between Teaching blocks 3 and 4, is booked separately on the Shared Timetabling system according to the following principles:

- 6.1.1 Flexible Learning Week activities;
- 6.1.2 After Flexible Learning Week activities have been allocated, all other bookings are considered;
- 6.1.3 A collection of spaces of different sizes may be blocked-out from an early stage to allow an advance and coordinated room allocation process to be conducted as part of the Festival of Creative Learning (in conjunction with colleagues in the Institute for Academic Development).

6.2 Booking applications for unique spaces, such as the James Clerk Maxwell Building (JCMB) Teaching Cluster, are adjudicated by College Deans or their representatives. Once the main coordinated allocation process has been run (see above), other bookings are considered on a first come, first served basis.

7. Course Conflicts

7.1 Conflicts in the timetable due to clashing conflicts in courses are resolved between School Timetabling Coordinators, any academic staff involved in the organisation of courses and the Timetabling Unit. Any timetabling conflict that cannot be resolved is escalated to the Heads of School in the first instance.



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7.2 If required, the Timetabling Unit will suggest potential solutions based on curriculum planning scenarios. Ultimately if the conflict cannot be resolved between Schools and the Timetabling Unit, then the conflict is further escalated to the Head(s) of College(s).

8. Room Conflict Resolution

8.1 Where there is a conflict in availability of a centrally managed room this is resolved between the Timetabling Unit and the parties concerned. Irreconcilable conflicts are escalated for resolution to the Head of Timetabling & Examinations in the first instance. Conflicts will subsequently be escalated through College Offices and, if necessary to the designated owner of teaching space (currently Assistant Principal of Research-led Learning).

8.2 A detailed escalation path process can be accessed via: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/timetabling/staff/timetabling-policy>.

9. Ad Hoc Bookings

9.1 Non learning and teaching events (such as College and School committee meetings) and ad hoc booking requests for learning and teaching spaces can be submitted at any time, but are normally only agreed once the main learning and teaching timetable has been published. A two-stage process runs, with Semester 1 request-status made available at an earlier stage than Semester 2. Timing is decided on an annual basis, allowing for necessary fluctuation in response to annual demands and availability.

9.2 During “vacation time” Edinburgh First (including the Festivals Office) has priority for bookings, on a pre-agreed selection of rooms, followed by other users of space in the summer e.g. learning and teaching outside the standard academic year, summer schools, Centre for Open Learning etc.

10. Changing/Cancelling Bookings

10.1 Late changes to the published timetable are often detrimental to the student experience and should be largely avoided by the construction of a timetable based on timely and accurate data. Following declaration of the annual published timetable, all necessary changes should be managed through the Timetabling Unit. Unavoidable changes are then to be carried out in the Shared Timetabling System and only be made in the following exceptional circumstances:

- 10.1.1 New accessibility requirements become known;
- 10.1.2 Change in staffing for unavoidable reason (e.g. staff illness);
- 10.1.3 Staff double booking;
- 10.1.4 Student double booking;
- 10.1.5 Approved change in staff availability;
- 10.1.6 Actual number of students exceeds room capacity;
- 10.1.7 Actual number of students is much smaller than expected, hence would fit in a smaller room freeing a larger room for a larger activity which cannot otherwise be accommodated;
- 10.1.8 Location becomes unavailable.

10.2 The Timetabling Unit is to be informed at the earliest opportunity if:



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- 10.2.1 Courses are cancelled;
- 10.2.2 A room booking is no longer required;
- 10.2.3 An allocated room is no longer appropriate for the booked event's requirements;
- 10.2.4 Learning and teaching cannot proceed in an allocated room as someone else is occupying it (i.e. double booked);
- 10.2.5 There is a lack of required equipment;
- 10.2.6 Maintenance is needed.

11. Room Allocation

11.1 The table below outlines the factors that need to be considered when allocating rooms for learning and teaching events.

Factor	Description	Priority
Seating Capacity	Learning and teaching rooms are allocated on a 'best fit' basis, with a target seating capacity	Essential
Essential Equipment	Room requests for specialist or essential learning and teaching equipment are allocated to classes requiring that equipment first. Specialist equipment includes lab equipment, IT Networking, specific software etc.	Essential
Locality (Proximity to School)	Rooms managed by the School delivering the learning and teaching are allocated as first preference; then Centrally managed rooms within their zone and then rooms managed by other Schools or outside the School's zone.	Essential
Layout and Furniture	The room layout should match that of the learning and teaching session or be configurable to the requirement of the session.	Essential
Accessibility	Where there is a known disability requirement only appropriate rooms are allocated Where such information is brought to light late on in the timetabling process changes to the timetable need to be accommodated and existing bookings re-homed	Essential
Licensing	Rooms with specific licensing are only allocated to appropriate event types (e.g. anatomy and research for VAT exempt rooms).	Essential
Continuity	Regular (full-semester or longer) bookings and short fat (e.g. 5 ½ days back to back learning and teaching) take precedence over single or sporadic bookings	Essential
Location	Ideally all classes are scheduled in the same Timetabling Zone. Where travel cannot be avoided, the room is to be within a traversable distance of the other classes a student or member of staff is required to attend, given the time constraints for travel between locations	High



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Factor	Description	Priority
Preferred Equipment	Rooms allocated should have the preferred equipment required to allow staff to conduct their teaching. For example, Wireless Network Access, Audio Visual, White/black Boards, Desktop PCs, lecture capture and clicker response systems. Where fixed equipment is not available, Schools should liaise with LTSTS regarding possible portable alternatives.	High
Use Type	Priority is given to whole class sessions, then Non WCS Tutorials, Labs and other required activities.	High
Preference	Where a preference has been indicated, and strong justification given, for a specific room, this is booked unless overridden by one of the higher priority factors.	Medium

12. Timetable Publication

12.1 Timetables are made available on various media and applications to those who need them. The University aims to provide complete, accurate and up-to-date personal timetables, with elements published in advance of the start of the academic year and on course selection. These are maintained and made available through the appropriate University portals.

12.2 The Timetabling system will retain 3 years of timetabling information that can be accessed in the normal manner (i.e. the timetable in planning for the upcoming year, the current year's timetable and the previous year's published timetable).

12.3 At the end of each planning cycle the oldest year's timetable is archived away from the timetabling system but retained in a format that could be accessed for reporting purposes.

12.4 Those who need access to current and upcoming timetables include:

- 12.4.1 Teaching staff;
- 12.4.2 Students (current and prospective);
- 12.4.3 Administrative staff;
- 12.4.4 Building Managers;
- 12.4.5 Servitors (so they can open buildings and organise room and AV);
- 12.4.6 Premises Managers and other E&B staff for maintenance programming;
- 12.4.7 Events and conferencing staff in Edinburgh First/Accommodation Services;
- 12.4.8 EUSA events staff;
- 12.4.9 Any other user that can request University rooms.

12.5 Those who need access to previous years' timetable include:

- 12.5.1 School Timetabling and Gatekeeping Staff;
- 12.5.2 Timetabling Unit Staff.

12.6 Those who need access to archived years' timetable include:



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12.6.1 Timetabling Unit staff.

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Appendix 1: Timetabling Roles and Responsibilities

The Head of Timetabling and Examination Services is the senior manager within Student Systems and Administration responsible for the day to day operation of the Shared Timetabling system. The responsibilities of the Head of Timetabling & Examination Services and the supporting Timetabling Unit include:

- Data management within the shared academic timetabling system
- Liaising with Information Services for software maintenance and upgrade
- Issuing detailed timetabling guidance to Schools
- Supporting schools in the submission of timetable requirements
- Publishing draft and final versions of the shared timetable
- Ensuring the successful, clash-free, allocation of students to all teaching activities, using a standard random and even allocation method, except in circumstances where a manual allocation has been identified and approved
- Advising on resolution of conflicts over room bookings
- Ensuring that all learning and teaching room information and availability (for both Centrally and School/Locally managed space) is accurate and up to date
- Ensuring that maintenance requirements and use for non-learning and teaching events are accurately reflected in room availability
- Reporting to CSPC, TSOG, Space Strategy Group, Estates Committee and other interested parties on the effectiveness of Timetabling Policy and implementation
- Collecting, measuring and reporting accurate data on space utilisation. Offering/seeking guidance on more efficient use of learning and teaching space and predictions of required space provision
- Ensuring flexible timetabling through curriculum-based timetable planning
- Reviewing the timetabling process and outcomes and initiating continuous improvement; which will include a regular review of processes relating to the University's Equality outcomes and duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Specific Duties 2012

School Timetabling Coordinators

School Timetabling Coordinators are the primary contacts for timetabling within their School responsible for liaising with the Timetabling Unit to confirm timetabling requirements, book centrally managed rooms, and resolve timetable conflicts. The responsibilities of School Timetabling Coordinators include:

- Coordinating timetable design and production across undergraduate and postgraduate programmes within their School
- Ensuring that collection, collation and timely recording of information on courses is carried out, including: classes, room requirements and number of students and any constraints on staff availability
- Confirm School student allocation rules to the Timetabling Unit
- Carrying out timetabling tasks as required by the stated deadlines
- Notifying the Timetabling Unit of any changes to the established timetable and room cancellations



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- Reporting additions, deletions and modifications in locally-managed learning and teaching room information to the Timetabling Unit

Teaching Staff

Teaching staff within each School have responsibility for fulfilling published timetable commitments and keeping their School Timetabling Coordinators informed of cancellations or other changes. Teaching staff also report any problems with their timetable or learning and teaching rooms they use so that this information can be used to improve the overall operation of timetabling at the University. Teaching staff responsibilities include:

- Providing information for, and reviewing their timetable within designated deadlines;
- Fulfilling their published timetable commitments;
- Advising their School Timetabling Coordinators of cancellations or other changes;
- Reporting any problems with their timetable or the learning and teaching rooms they use.

School Directors of Professional Studies (DoPS)

School DoPS are responsible for management of resources (e.g. staff, budget, space) within the School. Their responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that the School Timetabling Coordinators and support team carries out the timetabling tasks required by the stated deadlines.

Heads of School

Heads of School are responsible for academic leadership and overall management and strategy of the School including development of academic and resource plans, promotion of research activity. The responsibilities for Heads of School include:

- Negotiation and agreeing any limitations on staff teaching availability;
- Helping to resolve timetabling conflicts impacting on the School;
- Heads of School are ultimately responsible for ensuring that disabled students' support requirements are implemented.

Students

Student responsibilities include:

- Providing details of accessibility requirements as soon as possible. If a student is being supported by the Student Disability Service, these may be communicated via the student's learning profile. The School and the Coordinator of Adjustments have associated responsibilities;
- Reviewing their published learning and taught timetable as soon as possible and alerting their Student Adviser to review course registrations;
- Adhering to centrally defined procedures for requesting a change to a timetable allocation;
- Making appropriate use of any student study spaces bookable through the shared timetabling system.

Accommodation Services (commercial and academic-relating booking)

Accommodation Services' responsibilities include:

- Carrying out their normal duties with relation to events booking and ensuring that the Timetabling Unit is aware of any events booked and kept up to date on any cancellations;



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- Keeping external customers up to date on any changes/conflicts with their booking.



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Appendix 2: Guidance on Timetable Implementation

In order to achieve all of the benefits identified, the following guidance should be followed by School Timetabling Coordinators and the Timetabling Unit.

Guiding Principles for Effective Timetable Construction

- All learning and teaching activities are to be scheduled in the Shared Timetabling system.
- Learning and teaching activities taking place off-site should also be included where students will benefit from having the activity as part of a personal timetable; and/or recording the activity aids staff in scheduling other activities for clash-free timetabling. Any learning and teaching delivery that forms part of the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study (DRPS) is scheduled before other non-DRPS requirements.
- Wherever appropriate, timetabling is to match learning and teaching to locally managed rooms or suitable rooms within their priority or requested Timetabling Zones.
- Whole Class Sessions (WCS) where course events are delivered to all students at once are given first priority when allocating learning and teaching space. Additional activities such as tutorials and lab sessions (that are divided into multiple slots to sub-groups of students) are fitted in around WCS.
- As far as possible, the same learning and teaching space is used for recurring classes.
- In order to limit the impact of travel between zones, movement between zones should normally take place during the specific time-slot: 10.50-11.10; and during the lunch period, although travel-time constraints will be monitored against all taught students to help identify flexibility of travel-time throughout the teaching day/week
- When class numbers are known, any booked resource that is no longer required is cancelled as soon as possible.
- By way of ensuring data quality and consistency, normally, all core, course-related timetabled events are carried forward from year to year provided this doesn't restrict efficiency or flexibility in the curriculum.
- Early production of timetable information is strongly encouraged to enable efficient scheduling of courses in different Schools.

Teaching Availability

Schools may decide to establish and incorporate constraints within the system to ensure that wherever possible individual learning and teaching commitments are suitably blocked and not overly dispersed.

The Shared Academic Timetabling system enables all agreed learning and teaching constraints to be recorded with the system by the School Timetabling Coordinators/Timetabling Unit and used to inform timetabling decisions.



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Appendix 3: Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
Whole Class Session (WCS)	A class or learning and teaching event that requires all students to attend.
Class Exam	An examination that is organised within the school and possibly not during the central examination times (i.e. at semester end)
Main Diet Exam	An examination that is organised centrally and takes place at the end of semester.
Centrally Managed	Room or Learning and Teaching Space that is bookable via the Timetabling Unit
School Managed	Room or Learning and Teaching Space this is bookable via a School/Unit Timetabling Coordinator (or Gatekeeper)
Timetabling Zone	A geographical zone which divides the University Estate into collections of buildings. Zones are defined in such a way that any two buildings, where the travel time between them exceeds 10 minutes, are in different zones.
Sub-Group	A course subset of students: e.g. Tutorial, workshop, practical etc.
TSOG	Teaching and Spaces Operations Group
DoPS	Director of Professional Studies
RAP	Room Allocation Process – main annual process of allocating teaching rooms to core academic activities
TTU	Timetabling Unit