



ROBERT GORDON
UNIVERSITY ABERDEEN

Timetabling Policies

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Aims

Robert Gordon University is committed to delivering accurate timetables to students and staff in a timely manner. Timetables should demonstrate:

1. A student-centric approach as far as possible, including protection of Wednesday afternoons
2. Optimised room utilisation, including use of the whole teaching week
3. Protected time for staff who engage in research and corporate/commercial activities as part of their agreed activity plan

The University will achieve these aims through adherence to the following principles, procedures and guidelines

Guiding Principals

The principals that underpin this policy are:

1. To support teaching and learning across the University by providing a timetable that facilitates a high quality student and staff experience
2. To ensure that students are taught in appropriate learning spaces, and that use of all campus space is efficiently managed and optimised
3. To provide accurate and up to date timetabling information for students and staff
4. To enable predictability and stability in student timetables to communicate attendance requirements and to provide students and staff with the expectation that changes will only be made to timetabled events in unavoidable and unanticipated circumstances

Policies

The following are policies that apply to the timetabling process:

1. That wherever possible each class event for a module should take place in the same timeslot each time it occurs, unless there are particular physical constraints that make consistency impossible. *Policy: Student Friendliness Guidelines*
2. The delivery of quality teaching to RGU Students is our core business, and this will take precedence over any other events or demands on staff time whilst providing protected time for staff who engage in research and corporate/commercial activities as part of their agreed activity plan. *Policy: Timetabling Guidelines*
3. Wednesday afternoons should be kept clear of all scheduled teaching and associated scheduled events for students to allow participation in sports and other activities. *Policy: Wednesday afternoon scheduled events*
4. Once the timetable has been published, scheduled classes may be changed only where the reasons to do so are compelling e.g. genuine business requirements. *Policy: Timetable Changes*

Policy 1. Student Friendliness Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to deliver the best possible university experience to our students by affording them the scope to plan their work/family/study/social life around a consistent timetable, delivering a practical learning schedule that neither overburdens students in a given day nor causes travel and associated costs for too few classes in a given day, and giving consideration to the practicalities of moving around the campus and finding time for rest and refreshment breaks.

To this end, timetables should be constructed in accordance with the following principles and guidelines:

- 1.1. Teaching patterns should be consistent throughout the semester, i.e. as far as possible, classes should be scheduled in the same timeslots each week
- 1.2. Students should not be timetabled for more than three consecutive hours of classes
- 1.3. Students should never be scheduled for a single hour's teaching per day
- 1.4. The gap between classes should not exceed three hours
- 1.5. Wednesday afternoons should be kept free of classes for undergraduate students
- 1.6. Movement between sites/buildings should be kept to a minimum; in particular moving from building A to building B then back to building A should be avoided
- 1.7. To allow time for lunch, students and staff should not have back-to-back classes between 12:00 and 14:00
- 1.8. Classes ought not to start before 09:00
- 1.9. Classes ought not to end after 18:00
- 1.10. Time between classes should be directed to appropriate learning activities through the timetable

Policy 2. Timetabling Guidelines

Course and module changes:

1. Scheduled changes should be formally approved at least 4 months prior to enrolment of the next cohort of students.
2. Exceptional changes may be approved by the Dean of Faculty up to 2 months before enrolment. Exceptions would, for example, relate to issues arising from External Examiners/Assessment Boards.

In practice, for courses following the traditional Academic Calendar, this would require scheduled changes to be approved by the **beginning of May** and exceptional changes by the **beginning of July**.

Course/Subject Leaders must provide School Timetablers with updated course/module and staff information by the agreed deadlines. The Timetabling Manager in conjunction with the School Timetablers will set the deadlines. The Timetabling Manager will retain oversight and will liaise with the relevant Head of School/Associate Dean if deadlines are missed.

Schools must provide Timetabling with complete and accurate timetables by the agreed deadlines. Heads of School/Associate Deans have a responsibility to ensure this deadline is met and that the Timetabling Manager is kept fully informed so that s/he can work with the school in question to resolve the bottlenecks.

Block-booking is not permitted - events should only be timetabled for the precise time, day and weeks required.

Teaching patterns should be consistent such that a series of classes on any module should, as far as possible, take place at the same time each week. This will better enable students to arrange family and childcare commitments, part-time working and study routines around their timetables.

Teaching Space

All teaching space will be recorded in the central timetabling system, CELCAT. Responsibility for this lies with Timetabling.

All booking requests (including rooms assigned to specific Schools) will be made through CELCAT. This is essential for clash checking, the provision of room utilisation statistics and to allow complete timetables to be produced for students and staff.

Rooms will be allocated by Timetabling on the basis of:

- 2.1 Specialist equipment/accommodation required (this includes access/facilities for students/staff with disabilities)
- 2.2 Capacity
- 2.3 Location

Schools cannot request specific rooms but can request specific requirements.

All teaching space (including rooms assigned to specific Schools but excepting certain specialised rooms) must be made available for general usage (where appropriate) once the semester timetabling is complete.

Timetabling will oversee this.

'Open Access' rooms are available for use by any user on an un-booked basis across the University. These rooms cannot and should not be booked.

Class sizes should not exceed the capacity of the room allocated. As such, Schools have a responsibility to convey accurate (or best estimate) student numbers to Timetabling. This must be adhered to for reasons of health and safety as well as the student learning experience.

Teaching Times

Events should start on the hour and finish at 10 minutes to the hour (prior to the next event) to allow time for changeover.

For the purpose of timetable planning 'daytime' teaching hours are defined as Monday-Friday, 9am-6pm and 'evening' teaching hours are Monday-Friday, 6pm-9pm. Weekend teaching remains undefined and fluid according to need but should still be arranged in accordance with these policies. Teaching should however not be timetabled on Wednesday afternoons unless the Head of School/Associate Dean has concluded that s/he has no option. Please refer to the Policy entitled 'Wednesday afternoon scheduled events'.

Timetabling Order of Precedence

For the matters below, where conflicts arise they should be referred to the Timetabling Manager for a final decision. These policies will be reviewed over time to ensure different pedagogical approaches and course structures are not disadvantaged.

- 2.4 Teaching, including corporate teaching, normally takes precedence over non-teaching events during teaching weeks (excepting key University events such as supported enrolment and graduation).
- 2.5 Semester-long teaching normally takes precedence over shorter periods of teaching (i.e. 1-2 weeks only).
- 2.6 Events with large capacity requirements will normally be roomed before those with smaller capacity requirements.
- 2.7 Events with long durations (i.e. 3 hours) will normally be roomed before those with shorter durations.

Policy 3. Wednesday afternoon Scheduled events

Student Engagement in Sporting, Artistic and Other Social/Society Activities:

- 3.1 University policy is that Wednesday afternoons are not available for **undergraduate teaching** or related activities, e.g. tutorials, workshops etc. (see paragraph 3.6 for guidance on Postgraduate students)
- 3.2 Therefore, teaching or related activities must not be timetabled on Wednesday afternoons unless the full approval process has been completed and accepted.

- 3.3 Students should nevertheless inform their school in advance that they are active participants in sporting/artistic/other social/society activities, so that if teaching has to be considered for Wednesday afternoon the school is aware of it.
- 3.4 Where a change approval is given such that teaching and related activity can be timetabled for Wednesday afternoon, schools should take all possible steps to address any clash with important fixtures/events and make all reasonable adjustments. This excludes final year summative assessments which will normally not be rescheduled.
- 3.5 Events involving elite athletes will be given special consideration over other sporting activity.
- 3.6 It is not possible to be certain that **postgraduate teaching** on Wednesday afternoons can be avoided. Indeed, teaching and related activities on Wednesday afternoons will be unavoidable. Postgraduate students should thus give advance notice to their school of any forthcoming important fixtures/events which clash with teaching on a Wednesday afternoon. Schools should take all reasonable steps to mitigate the impact.

The approval process for Wednesday afternoon scheduling:

All undergraduate teaching and associated activities will not be timetabled unless the following process has been followed:

1. Course leader to explore and summarise all possible alternatives and justify – giving a clear, compelling case - why Wednesday afternoon is the only viable option [pro forma at appendix 1]
2. Head of School/ Head of Department to satisfy herself/himself that appropriate justification is valid before signing off form. In agreeing the case, the HoS/HoD is accepting that **all alternative** options have been examined and that there is no alternative.
3. Signed form submitted to Central Timetabling Team who will then allocate rooms to the class
4. Forms received without clear justification will require further investigation by the Timetabling Manager to ascertain that all steps have been fully followed as above

Policy 4. Timetable Changes

Timetables for staff and students will be published by the Central Timetabling Team four weeks ahead of semester start dates identified in the Robert Gordon University Academic Calendar.

All requests for change to the published timetable after the publication deadline must adhere to one of the following criteria:

- 4.1 Staffing clash exists (where a member of staff is scheduled to attend more than one event at the same time)
- 4.2 Staffing availability issue (staff do not work on the days they are scheduled to teach)
- 4.3 Student clash exists (a student or student group is scheduled to attend more than one **compulsory** module at the same time)
- 4.4 Change in student numbers (requiring a smaller / larger or additional room)
- 4.5 Room unsuitable for purpose (specialist room / equipment needed)
- 4.6 Mobility / accessibility requirements for either staff or students
- 4.7 Staff turnover or absence

All change requests will be monitored by the Central Timetabling Team who may request further additional information to support the request. All requests not falling into one of the above categories will be referred to the Timetabling Manager who will approve or reject the request in consultation with the relevant Head of School/Associate Dean (ad-hoc change requests as opposed to official course change requests which are channelled through Academic Affairs).

Academic Staff must adhere to the centrally published timetable and have responsibility for updating their School Timetabling Team with as much notice as possible when:

- 4.8 A room booking is no longer required
- 4.9 Additional rooming is required
- 4.10 A room is affected by insufficient capacity for the class concerned
- 4.11 Their allocated room is occupied by someone else
- 4.12 Courses, modules, and timetabled events are not running

Wherever possible, we would also ask that Academic staff alert the Central Timetabling Team via their own School Timetabling Team when it is apparent that rooms are booked but not used.

Policy 5. Religious Observance

Students are responsible for informing their Tutor/Course Leader/Programme Leader of any time conflicts between their course timetable and their religious beliefs. Where practical, members of staff can endeavour to accommodate these needs through reasonable adjustments to the timetable.

Where it is known that a particular cohort is likely to have a significant number of students with specific religious observance requirements, whether these occur weekly or on given dates, schools can include such constraints in their requests as part of the regular timetabling process. Where practical, such requests will be accommodated.

Training

In order to ensure that the timetabling process is fully understood, policies are applied and software is used appropriately, the Timetabling Manager is responsible for ensuring that all School Timetablers have received appropriate initial and review training and that supplementary or additional guidance is issued where necessary and appropriate.

Appendix 1



Request for teaching on Wednesday afternoon

Name of staff member requesting change	
School	
Course	
Module name and number	
Number of students in class	
Time slot requested	<i>e.g. 13:00-15:00</i>
Instances	<i>e.g. 12 occurrences</i>
Alternatives explored	<i>e.g. start at 8am, finish at 6pm, delivered by different tutor, etc.</i>
Justification	<i>Why are alternatives not viable?</i>
Signature :	
Date:	
HoS/HoD Authorisation:	
Date:	