



Timetable Policy

Introduction

1. Purpose and scope

- 1.1. This policy sets out the agreed aims and principles, roles and responsibilities, and procedures for timetabling and room booking.

Aims and principles

2. Aims

- 2.1. To support the delivery of an exceptional student experience and exceptional learning and teaching at York St John University.
- 2.2. To ensure that students are taught in teaching accommodation suited to the particular needs of the session and students in question, and to optimise the utilisation of the University's teaching space.
- 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. Key informing principles

- 3.1. In order of precedence, the priorities for the production of the timetable will be:
 - the student experience;
 - the staff experience; and
 - efficient room utilisation.
- 3.2. The timetable for the first semester of each academic session will be finalised as early as possible in the previous session and not later than 31 July for the first semester and 15 December for the second semester.
- 3.3. Once the timetable has been finalised there can be no changes, with the exception of the 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

- 4.1. Plan and coordinate the construction and production of the optimal teaching timetable for the University in partnership with Schools 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 Subject Directors produce the timetable to agreed deadlines.
- 4.5. Maintain excellent relationships with School representatives and ensure clear and open lines of communication.
- 4.6. Maintain the University's timetable website.
- 4.7. Manage the University's room booking system.
- 4.8. Ensure the timetable can be made available in different formats to meet the needs of users.
- 4.9. Facilitate the communication of any timetable changes to staff and students in a timely way. More detailed information on communicating session changes to students is set out in the document 'Postponement of Teaching'.

5. Other areas within Registry

- 5.1. Ensure that Timetabling 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 (SITS).
- 5.3. The Academic Registrar has ultimate responsibility for fostering constructive collaborations across the University in support of the effective construction of the timetable.

6. Heads of School and Subject Directors

- 6.1. Manage the timetabling process within Schools and subject areas respectively in accordance with this policy.
- 6.2. Alert Timetabling to possible module changes at the time of scheduling 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 8 below.
- 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 Timetabling.

- 6.7. Ensure 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.
- 6.8. Ensure 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.
- 6.9. Ensure that space is booked strictly according to proposed usage (e.g. if performance space 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 performance space rather than holding one of the seminars in the performance space) and that teaching space is not booked on a contingency basis for periods longer than are required for delivery.
- 6.10. Liaise with Timetabling on behalf of staff in their programmes, and seek to maintain excellent working relationships and clear and open lines of communication with them.
- 6.11. Seek to ensure that any rescheduling of classes necessitated by unexpected staff absences is achieved with minimum impact on the final timetable.
- 6.12. Ensure that affected students are immediately alerted to any such rescheduling. See also the document 'Postponement of Teaching'.

7. School Administration Unit

- 7.1. Support Heads of School and Subject Directors in ensuring that students are notified of any postponement and rescheduling of classes.
- 7.2. Share with Timetabling relevant information about students with additional requirements including those arising from protected characteristics (e.g. disability, faith, pregnancy etc.) and other special requirements (e.g. caring responsibilities) that are relevant to the construction of the timetable (including room location).

8. Academic Staff

- 8.1. Ensure availability for teaching during all University teaching hours except when your Head of School has approved exemption (on the basis, for example, of a disability, caring responsibilities or religious/belief commitments). In considering exemptions, Heads of School will act sensitively and in accordance with the guidance in Section 14. They are responsible for indicating approval or otherwise on the Staff Teaching Exemption form and informing Timetabling.
- 8.2. Plan teaching delivery well in advance.
- 8.3. Adhere to the final timetable.
- 8.4. Start sessions on the hour and finish promptly five minutes before the hour to allow for a smooth changeover.
- 8.5. 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.

- 8.6. If, exceptionally, you are leading a session which is scheduled for longer than 3 hours, you must ensure that you allow for appropriate breaks during the session.

9. Students

- 9.1. Check the published timetable as it appears on the University website, including following alerts relating to any changes.
- 9.2. If notified of an emergency postponement of a class, maintain contact with the School Administration Unit with regard to rescheduling.
- 9.3. You are expected to be available throughout all teaching weeks and for all scheduled teaching. Permission from academic staff to be absent from teaching events on Wednesday mornings in order to travel to sporting fixtures will not be withheld without good cause. It is your responsibility to make-good for any such absences.
- 9.4. Students will not be scheduled to attend classes beyond 8.00pm unless this has been made clear in advance in published programme documentation.
- 9.5. If you require special arrangements, you should make your needs known to your Subject Director ahead of the production of the timetable to ensure that any special arrangements can be accommodated. Where possible such information will have been collected as part of the enrolment process.

10. Estate Management and Development

- 10.1. Undertake regular checks of room usage in liaison with Timetabling and Heads of School where there appear to be significant anomalies to verify that usage accords with timetable.
- 10.2. Ensure that all teaching spaces are fit for purpose with a view to enhancing the quality of the student experience and reducing the justification for lecturer preferences for particular non-specialist teaching spaces.
- 10.3. Establish in consultation with Heads of School 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.
- 10.4. Ensure, in conjunction with ILS, that media provision in teaching rooms is fit for purpose.
- 10.5. 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.
- 10.6. Lead on increasing overall space utilisation performance within the parameters of this policy.

11. Student Services

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

12. Teaching Times

- 12.1. Teaching takes place Monday to Friday. The standard teaching day is 9.00am to 8.00pm with the exception of Wednesday when teaching hours are 9.00am to 1.00pm for undergraduate students.
- 12.2. Patterns of teaching outside the standard teaching day (eg. only evenings or weekends) will be set out in the validation documents and published programme information.
- 12.3. All rooms should be vacated by five minutes before the hour to allow time for students to vacate the room and enable the following session to start on time on the hour. This timing allows for interchange of students and installation of equipment.

13. Timetabling

- 13.1. Teaching activities take precedence over non-teaching activities other than where specified (e.g. Open Days and Visit Days).
- 13.2. Regular, full semester, bookings take precedence over ad-hoc or sporadic teaching.
- 13.3. All teaching activities must be timetabled and rooms must be booked via Timetabling.
- 13.4. Timetable clashes must be resolved prior to the publication of the final timetable.
- 13.5. 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 performance-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 (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.
- 13.6. Access for students with disabilities is a priority.
- 13.7. Class sizes should under no circumstances exceed the size of the room allocated.
- 13.8. In order to avoid overcrowded rooms, modules that have historically been subject to unexpected increases (e.g. from international study abroad or exchange students) should initially be timetabled into rooms with some capacity for such increases.
- 13.9. 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.

- 13.10. The following long-standing “hard constraints” will apply in the construction of the timetable:
- Normally, no one session may last longer than 3 hours without an identified 30 minute break. Scheduling of activities longer than 3 hours is exceptionally permitted, but there must be a sound pedagogic reason as determined by academic staff delivering it.
 - Staff and students must have a least a 30 minute break every 3 hours. Staff are encouraged to take regular appropriate breaks including having the ability, for example, to take a lunch break of normally one hour between the times of 12.00 noon and 2.00pm.
- 13.11. Supported Open Learning (SOL) activities will be included in a module timetable only where such activities require group learning processes in particular spaces and the School specifically requests this. Academic staff names will not be assigned to such timetabled SOL activities unless there are very specific reasons for doing so (e.g. health and safety).

14. Availability to Teach

- 14.1. Full time staff and students will be expected to be available to deliver/attend teaching within the standard University hours, 9.00am to 8.00pm. Where there are exceptions, these will be agreed through discussion between the Head of School and Timetabling.
- 14.2. The core working hours for academic staff are notionally 37 per week. Whilst normal ‘office’ hours are 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am to 4.30pm on Friday, teaching may be required from 9.00am to 8.00pm.
- 14.3. Staff should be available for scheduled teaching during any session within the working week and may not exclude themselves from teaching on particular days of the week other than through agreement of their line manager. Exceptions may, for example, be appropriate to enable flexibility with domestic arrangements, religious or other personal circumstances. Due to the nature of part time working, by agreement, part time staff may not be available on each day of the working week. Staff who consider that they have such a need should complete the Staff Teaching Exemption Form after discussion with their line manager, and submit this to their Head of School or nominee prior to the data collection phase for the timetable.
- 14.4. Where time is worked in the evening or at weekends this will be managed within the context of an overall professional contract. The allocation of working hours during the evening and at weekends should be transparent, equitable and fair.
- 14.5. The number of late teaching sessions (after 5.00pm) should be limited to no more than 2 per week where possible, and should not include Fridays, unless by mutual agreement.
- 14.6. Other than in exceptional circumstances, staff will not be timetabled to teach the first session of the day and then the evening session. Normally, staff will not be timetabled to teach the last i.e. evening session of the day and then the first session on the following day.

- 14.7. In the case of a member of staff with a disability, reference will be made to the University's Support for Disabled Staff Policy to identify what reasonable steps are necessary to provide support. Professional advice will be sought from Occupational Health where required.
- 14.8. 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 School. The final timetable will not be changed although classes may be rescheduled, if this is wholly unavoidable, provided that there are no knock-on effects for students in any other programme.
- 14.9. Restrictions imposed by external commitments should be considered carefully by Heads of School or nominees and, if approved, should also be notified to Timetabling via a signed Staff Teaching Exemption form.
- 14.10. Availability of part-time staff should be notified to Timetabling 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.
- 14.11. Heads of School and Subject Directors may take account of School preferences (e.g., in relation to research leave) in identifying staff availability but the timetable will not be built around predetermined 'research days'.

15. Timetabling changes and changes to room allocation

- 15.1. Once the provisional timetable has been issued (see the published timetable schedule every year), requests to change this timetable as a result of changes to teaching staff 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)¹. It will be expected that such events will be managed by the Head of School and Subject Director through reallocation of existing resources.
- 15.2. 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 on individual lecture courses if this would require the timetable to be altered resulting in an adverse impact on the timetable.
- 15.3. 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 Head of School and Subject Director through reallocation of existing resources.
- 15.4. Timetable sessions may, where unforeseen circumstances occur, be postponed but must not be cancelled. The procedures for communicating

¹ 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. Reference will be made to the Support for Disabled Staff Policy.

unforeseen changes to students and for University monitoring of such changes are set out in the document 'Postponement of Teaching'.

16. Ad-Hoc and External Room Bookings

- 16.1. Ad-hoc room bookings during teaching hours will not be confirmed until after the final timetable has been published.
- 16.2. Rooms that are not scheduled for use during the timetabling process may be booked for SOL or other ad-hoc purposes provided there are no Health and Safety or specialist equipment implications.
- 16.3. 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.

17. Equality and Diversity

- 17.1. In line with the University's Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Policy, the University will make every effort to accommodate staff and students requirements resulting from, for example, disabilities, carer responsibilities and religious beliefs.
- 17.2. Members of staff requiring special arrangements should make their requirements known to their line manager ahead of the production of the timetable (as per Section 13 of this Policy) to ensure that their requirements are discussed and accommodated where possible.
- 17.3. Students requiring special arrangements should make their needs known to their Head of School ahead of the production of the timetable to ensure that 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.

18. Monitoring and Review

- 18.1. The implementation of this policy should be monitored by Heads of School, where their individual Schools are concerned, and by the Academic Registrar. Any disputes should be arbitrated by the Academic Registrar working with the relevant Head of School.
- 18.2. The implementation of this Policy should be reviewed at least every three years following review of its operation.

Document history

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