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## Course Scheduling and Constraints Policy

Academic Policy Group

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### 1 Purpose

The University seeks to maximise opportunities for students to enrol in courses of their choice while optimising the efficient use of constrained teaching resources, supporting effective use of staff time, and ensuring that teaching formats are appropriate to the nature of each discipline.

This policy provides a framework for determining the layout of the academic year, the consideration and approval of any required constraints on course scheduling and limitations on programme and course capacity, and incorporates these in the annual process for generating the University's academic timetable.

### 2 Organisational Scope

This is a University-wide policy.

### 3 Definitions

For purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

Trimester	One of three equivalent teaching periods that make up the academic year.
School Contact	Staff member to whom the Head of School delegates responsibility for scheduling issues.
Supplementary events	Tutorials, studios, workshops, laboratories or other supplementary teaching events.

*Note: A number of specific terms related to room types and teaching events are employed. Appendix B provides a glossary of timetable terms.*

### 4 Scope

This policy sets out the principles and requirements for:

- (i) Setting the dates that define the layout of each academic year in a timely manner;
- (ii) The scheduling of all lectures in courses except where a variation to the standard teaching dates has been approved under s5.2;
- (iii) The scheduling of some supplementary teaching events, such as tutorials, studios, workshops and laboratories where these are relevant to the lectures;
- (iv) The scheduling of all examinations; and
- (v) Consideration and approval of all constraints on the scheduling of classes, and limitations on the enrolment capacity of courses.

## 5 Teaching Periods

### 5.1 Setting the University Academic Year Dates

- (a) The University teaching year consists of three equivalent trimesters, each involving teaching weeks, a mid-trimester break and a subsequent study/examination period.
- (b) The Provost is responsible for approving the academic year dates.
- (c) Academic year dates for a particular year will be approved two years prior to the commencement of that year.
- (d) In setting the academic year dates, the Provost will:
  - (i) consider the impact on teaching, learning and assessment and make provision for adequate time for examinations and study; and
  - (ii) be guided by the principles set out in the Guidelines for Scheduling the Academic Year ([Appendix A](#)).

### 5.2 Teaching Dates

- (a) Unless a variation to the standard teaching dates has been approved, all courses must be aligned with:
  - (i) the start and end dates for one trimester; or
  - (ii) trimester dates for a consecutive sequence of trimesters in one or at most two university academic years; or
  - (iii) the start and end dates for the November-December period or the January-February period within Trimester Three.
- (b) Any request for a variation to the standard teaching dates for an individual course or programme requires an academic justification and consultation with Student Academic Services regarding timetabling and room allocation issues, and implications for student loans and allowances.
- (c) Variations to the standard teaching dates are recommended by the Head of School and approved by the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) in consultation with the relevant Associate Dean.

*Note: Apart from modular courses and residency components, courses that do not coincide with the standard teaching dates but require timetabled teaching rooms are strongly discouraged. Courses that fall across more than one academic year are also discouraged.*

### 5.3 Teaching Day

- (a) The standard teaching period shall extend from 8am–6pm (Kelburn campus) or 8.30am–6.30pm (other campuses) Monday to Friday.
- (b) The evening teaching period shall extend from 4pm-10pm Monday to Friday, although evening classes will run after 9pm (Kelburn campus) or 9.30pm (other campuses) only in exceptional cases.
- (c) Except as provided in s8.2, it is expected that all full-time academic staff will be available to teach during the standard teaching period.

### 5.4 Class Times

- (a) The standard teaching session is 50 minutes, with a 10 minute break before the start of the next session. Consecutive sessions scheduled for a single class have duration of 1

hour 50 minutes, 2 hours 50 minutes and so on. Any non-standard teaching sessions are at the discretion of the Manager Course Administration and Timetabling.

*Note 1: It is important that every class concludes 10 minutes before the start of the next one to permit movement between classes and equipment set-up.*

*Note 2: A school may request two 80-minute teaching slots within a single 2 hours 50 minute period.*

- (b) Classes on the Kelburn campus will be scheduled to commence on the hour until 12 noon and at 10 minutes past the hour from 1.10pm.
- (c) Classes on the Pipitea and Te Aro campuses will be scheduled to commence on the half hour until 11.30am and at 20 minutes before the hour from 12.40pm.

### 5.5 Modular or Block Courses

Modular or block courses and residency components that require access to teaching spaces shared with trimester-based courses are normally scheduled outside the standard teaching periods during Trimester One and Two teaching weeks as set out in ss5.1-5.3.

*Note: Requirements should be discussed with the Manager, Course Administration and Timetabling.*

## 6 Priorities for Assigning Teaching Spaces

- (a) In Trimesters One and Two, priority will be given to the teaching requirements of scheduled courses.
  - (b) In other periods Course Administration and Timetabling, in consultation with VicVenues, may prioritise some spaces for other activities.
- Note: Refer to [Appendix C](#) and the [Events Management Procedures](#) for information on scheduling conferences and other events in teaching spaces.*
- (c) Timetabling and room scheduling are based on meeting the academic requirements for each course or event.
  - (d) During the examination period at the end of each trimester, priority for the use of specified lecture theatres and seminar rooms will be given to examinations.

## 7 Courses

- (a) For each course the relevant Head of School is responsible for determining whether it is to be offered in the following academic year, and if so:
  - (i) In which trimesters(s) it will be offered;
  - (ii) The number of streams to be offered;
  - (iii) Whether it is to be offered in the standard or evening teaching period. If three or more streams are offered in one trimester, at least one must normally be scheduled early in the day or in the evening teaching period;
  - (iv) The number and type of class sessions per week and in total. This includes details on the duration of class sessions; the format of each (lecture, seminar, laboratory, tutorial etc); any supplementary events such as tutorials, studios, workshops or laboratories. Supplementary events that need to be scheduled in conjunction with lectures must be identified, and details provided as the same time as information on the main class sessions.

*Note: Information on supplementary events that do not need to be scheduled in conjunction with lectures is requested at a different time.*

- (v) Specifying any particular equipment or facilities (audio-visual equipment, studio spaces etc) that are required for each class session;
- (vi) Identifying other courses with which it must not clash so that students are able to access cohesive sets of courses; and

*Note: Large sets of courses that must not clash impact significantly on the functionality of the timetable. Courses should only be included in the set where a clash would be likely to prevent students being able to enrol in a cohesive set of courses or if there is evidence of strong demand for concurrent enrolment in the combination of courses. Courses with multiple streams do not normally require any non-clashing courses to be identified.*

- (vii) Allocating staff to teach the course.

*Note: An academic staff member is not normally expected to teach in more than two trimesters per year.*

*Note: the process for considering and approving other constraints is set out in s8.*

- (b) The Head of School is responsible for ensuring this information is provided to Course Administration and Timetabling in accordance with the deadlines (*see s9.1*). The Head of School may delegate this responsibility to another staff member within the school (the School Contact).
- (c) The Head of School (or School Contact) may inform Course Administration and Timetabling of the times scheduled for school and faculty meetings, and request that as far as possible these do not clash with timetabled classes for relevant staff.

## 8 Scheduling Constraints and Course Enrolment Limitations

### 8.1 Responsibility

- (a) Each year, all timetabling constraints, and programme and course enrolment limitations except those specified in s7(a) must be recommended by the relevant Head of School and approved by the Vice-Chancellor in consultation with the PVC.
- (b) The recommendation for any constraint or limitation must include a brief justification.
- (c) The PVC will ensure that both Course Administration and Timetabling and the relevant Head of School are advised of approved constraints and limitations.

### 8.2 Scheduling Constraints

Timetabling constraints may be requested where:

- (a) The availability of an academic staff member during the standard teaching period is constrained because:
  - (i) They are part-time;
  - (ii) That is required by the provisions in their employment agreement;
  - (iii) That is required by the provisions in a research contract;
  - (iv) They are members of a University committee or represent the University on an external body, and are regularly required to attend meetings on specific days;

*Note: Except where a staff member has a role that means their attendance at school or faculty board meetings is essential, availability for such meetings is dealt with under 7(c).*

- (v) They are required to undertake teaching during the evening teaching period;

- (vi) Other exceptional circumstances.

*Note: An exceptional circumstance will usually be one that is beyond the control of the staff member and which would result in undue hardship if a teaching constraint was not imposed.*

- (b) Classes must be scheduled at specific times or on specific days or in particular teaching spaces on the basis of:
  - (i) Pedagogical requirements of the course (eg students need time between studio sessions to develop their work in the context of the material addressed in one session, in preparation for the next, or students are required to be working in a clinical environment alongside their on-campus classes, and need clear days to allow that); and/or
  - (ii) Specialised facilities or resources that are required for the nature of the course.

### **8.3 Enrolment Limitations**

- (a) A limitation on the number of students permitted to enrol in a programme or a course offering may be requested where it:
  - (i) Involves external activity with limited capacity (such as field trips, internships or professional placements);
  - (ii) Requires access to specialist equipment, facilities, qualified staff or other resources that are limited (such as technical equipment, staff with specific expertise, or resources held by an external organisation); or
  - (iii) Involves an intensive teaching format or has other pedagogical requirements that are essential in the context of the discipline and cannot be adequately supported beyond a specified class size.
- (b) All proposals for enrolment limitations must specify the selection criteria that will be applied to applicants, and as well as the justification required in s8.1(b), should include any other explanatory comments or relevant information such as alternative arrangements that may be possible.
- (c) Where enrolment in a course unexpectedly rises above the capacity of the largest available teaching space, or in other exceptional circumstances, a late limitation may be requested after other options, such as offering a second stream or video link have been explored.

## **9 Creating the timetable**

### **9.1 Responsibility**

- (a) Course Administration and Timetabling is responsible for compiling the timetable each year.
- (b) Each year Course Administration and Timetabling will set the timeframe for the timetabling process so as to allow a reasonable time for schools to prepare the data as specified in ss7-8 and obtain the necessary approvals, and for a draft timetable to be prepared and discussed with schools. The timetable is to be finalised and published online by 1 October for the following year.

## 9.2 Principles

- (a) The timetable is scheduled afresh each year based on the updated information provided by Heads of Schools and PVCs as set out in ss7-8, together with data on enrolment numbers in previous offerings of the course, to optimise good management of resources in the best interests of students and staff.
- (b) No staff member's teaching will be spread over more than an eight-hour period in a single day.
- (c) Where possible, each academic staff member will be provided with one day a week free from teaching.

*Note: Specific teaching-free days may only be requested as a scheduling constraint under s8.2(a).*

- (d) Where possible, the times for school and faculty meetings will be kept free of scheduled teaching for relevant staff.
- (e) Except where identified in s7(a)(iv) as requiring scheduling with lectures, supplementary teaching events, such as tutorials, studios, workshops and labs will be scheduled after the lecture timetable is published.

*Note: Class tests requiring rooms beyond those used for scheduled class sessions are often scheduled in the evening.*

## 10 Amendments to the Published Timetable

- (a) The Head of School (or School Contact) may request a change to the published timetable where:
  - (i) Enrolment numbers mean the capacity of the room(s) allocated to the course is inadequate, or additional streams are required;
  - (ii) There is a late decision to offer a course;
  - (iii) There has been a change in the academic staff allocated to the course, or unexpected circumstances have constrained the availability of the staff member;  
or
  - (iv) There has been an unexpected change in the availability of anticipated equipment or other resources.

*Note: Cancellation of a course offering (including changing the trimester in which a course is offered) must be carried out in accordance with s17 of the [Academic Approvals Handbook](#).*

- (b) Where the issue may be addressed by changing the allocated room, Course Administration and Timetabling may make the change.
- (c) If the published class times are to be changed, or if an additional stream is to be offered at a different time, the PVC must review the request and confirm that appropriate consideration has been given to managing the impact on students.
- (d) On the recommendation of the Head of School, the PVC may request a change to the published timetable in other exceptional circumstances.
- (e) Course Administration and Timetabling will consult with relevant Heads of School (or School Contacts) on any consequential amendments to other courses.
- (f) The Head of School is responsible for advising enrolled students of any change to their course timetable. Course Administration and Timetabling is responsible for updating the online timetable and course finder.

- (g) In the event that a Head of School is not satisfied with the outcome of a request to change the published timetable for a course, the outcome may be appealed in writing through the PVC to the Vice-Provost (Academic and Equity).

## 11 Scheduling Examinations

- (a) Examinations are held Monday - Saturday during the examination periods at the end of each trimester, and are scheduled in either two or three sessions per day, with each session being of either two hours or three hours duration.

*Note 1: See the [Assessment Handbook](#) for further details on the requirements for, and management of, examinations.*

*Note 2: In accordance with s5.1, Trimester dates are set to include a study period of at least four days between teaching and the examination period at the end of the first and second trimesters. This study period should be as close to one week as possible for a viable timetable.*

- (b) After each trimester has started, Course Administration and Timetabling will schedule examinations so as to ensure that:
- (i) any student enrolled in a course is able to sit the examination free from clashes with the examination of any other course in their programme of study;
  - (ii) no student is required to sit more than two examinations in a single day; and
  - (iii) no student is required to sit more than three examinations in two consecutive days.
- (c) The examination timetable is published no later than six weeks prior to the start of the examination period, and once the timetable is published, there can be no further changes.
- (d) Faculty Student and Academic Services Offices must advise Course Administration and Timetabling whenever an amendment to course assessment is approved that involves the addition or removal of a requirement for an examination (see the [Academic Approvals Handbook](#)).
- (e) If a course requires a specific date for an on-campus examination, this request must be supported by a valid reason and be approved by the relevant Head of School and Faculty Manager before being submitted to Course Administration and Timetable.
- (f) Where a non-examination assessment event has been approved to run during the examination period under the provisions in the [Assessment Handbook](#), the Head of School (or School Contact) may, at the discretion of Course Administration and Timetable, request that the event be scheduled using the examination timetabling system.

## 12 Legislative Compliance

The University is required to manage its policy documentation within a legislative framework. The legislation directing this policy is the Education Act 1989.

## 13 References

[Academic Approvals Handbook](#)

[Assessment Handbook](#)

[Events Management Procedures](#)

Course Finder, available at [www.victoria.ac.nz/courses](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/courses)

## 14 Appendices

[Appendix A: Guidelines for Scheduling the Academic Year](#)

[Appendix B: Glossary of Timetabling Terms](#)

[Appendix C: Scheduling Conferences and Public Events in Teaching Spaces](#)

## 15 Approval Agency

Academic Board

## 16 Approval Dates

This policy, which replaces the [Timetable Policy](#) and the [Limitations on Courses and Programmes Statute](#) was originally approved on:

4 August 2015

This version incorporates the [Academic Year Dates Policy](#) and takes effect from:

19 October 2016

## 17 Policy Sponsor

Vice-Provost (Academic and Equity)

## 18 Contact Persons

The following may be approached in relation to this policy:

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