

POLICY ON THE ACADEMIC YEAR AND TEACHING CALENDAR

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1	Policy on the Academic Year and Teaching Calendar	Education Enhancement	Senate	2019/20

Version 1.0

the place of useful learning

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1. RATIONALE

- 1.1 This policy sets out the agreed principles for the structure of the academic year, the teaching calendar, the relationship with operational timetabling procedures and the responsibilities of staff and students to ensure the effective operation of the teaching calendar.
- 1.2 The aims of this policy are to:
- (i) outline the governance and parameters of the academic year and teaching calendar within;
 - (ii) facilitate the delivery of an enhanced student experience, recognising the diversity of our population; and
 - (iii) provide the parameters for the implementation of the University's timetabling procedures in support of the effective use of the University estate.
- 1.3 Senate has responsibility for determining the shape of the academic year and the teaching calendar therein. Senate delegates responsibility for the implementation of the University's Standard Teaching Calendar to the Strategic Timetabling Group, a sub-group of Learning Enhancement Committee, reporting through Education Strategy Committee.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all campus-based undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision (including co-taught undergraduate masters and postgraduate taught modules) with the exception of Section 5 and Annex A, which currently applies to campus-based undergraduate programmes only.
- 2.2 Postgraduate research provision is delivered within the broad parameters of the Standard Teaching Year, defined in section 3.1, aligned to the requirements of Research Councils and external University partners.
- 2.3 Where possible, online, work-based learning and distance learning programmes will be delivered within the broad parameters of the Standard Teaching Year, however programmes may be aligned to specialist requirements and/or external University partners' requirements through a Specialist Teaching Year¹. Where this is the case, full information on the Specialist Teaching Year will be provided to all students enrolled on the programme, highlighting key areas of divergence with the Standard Teaching Year.

3. TEACHING YEAR & STANDARD TEACHING CALENDAR

- 3.1 The University operates a 52-week academic Teaching Year (TY), with weeks numbered consecutively from week 1 to week 52. These week numbers inform the timetable scheduling within the University's timetabling system, Syllabus Plus. The Teaching Year generally starts at the beginning of August each year.
- 3.2 The Standard Teaching Calendar defines the pattern for teaching across 2 semesters, incorporating the period from Welcome and Development Week to the commencement of the summer vacation period.
- 3.3 Semester 1 of the Standard Teaching Year begins in September with Welcome and Development Week (TY week 7), followed by 11 weeks of teaching (TY weeks 8-18 inclusive). This is followed by a 2-week Formal Assessment Period in December (TY weeks 19-20) and subsequently, winter vacation (TY weeks 21-23). Where programmes follow a Specialist Teaching Year, this is highlighted to students through admission to the programme and through their Programme/School/Department induction.

¹ Specialist Teaching Year is used to describe the study pattern for programmes of study which operate an alternative teaching calendar to align with sector requirements, for example teaching, social work; or to meet partner requirements, for example degree apprenticeships.

3.4 Semester 2 of the Standard Teaching Year begins in January with Consolidation and Development Week (TY week 24), followed by 11 weeks of teaching (TY weeks 25-35 inclusive). This is followed by a 2-week spring vacation (TY weeks 36-37) and subsequently, a 5-week Formal Assessment Period in April and May (TY weeks 38-42 inclusive). The Summer vacation period commences in week 43.

3.5 Resit examinations take place in August each year (TY weeks 1-2).

3.6 The University's Standard Teaching Calendar is as follows:

Standard Teaching Calendar	Duration	TY Week Number ²
Welcome and Development Week	1 week	Week 7
Teaching block 1	11 weeks	Weeks 8 - 18
Formal Assessment Period	2 weeks	Weeks 19 - 20
Winter vacation	3 weeks	Weeks 21 - 23
Consolidation and Development	1 week	Week 24
Teaching block 2	11 weeks	Weeks 25 - 35
Spring vacation	2 weeks	Weeks 36 - 37
Formal Assessment period	5 weeks	Weeks 38 - 42
Summer vacation	16 weeks	Weeks 43 – Week 6

4. STANDARD TEACHING WEEK

4.1 The formal daytime teaching timetable is structured as follows:

Monday	9:00am-5:00pm
Tuesday	9:00am-5:00pm
Wednesday	9.00am-1.00pm
Thursday	9:00am-5:00pm
Friday	9:00am-5:00pm

4.2 Students are expected to attend all scheduled activities during the times noted in 4.1.

4.3 Teaching starts at 5 minutes past the hour and ends at 5 minutes to the hour, to allow students and staff to move on to their next teaching event.

4.4 Evening and weekend programmes will define scheduled times within their Specialist Teaching Year.

5. WEDNESDAY AFTERNOONS

5.1 This section of the policy currently applies to undergraduate programmes following the Standard Teaching Year only. Where possible, local departmental/school timetabling coordinators are encouraged to be cognisant of this policy for postgraduate and other taught provision.

5.2 The University is committed to supporting students to participate in extracurricular, skills development and employability opportunities on Wednesday afternoons.

5.3 The policy for Wednesday afternoons encompasses collaboration between all University Departments/Schools to ensure that the University:

² See: section 3.1, week numbering used within Syllabus Plus timetabling system, based on 52-week year.

- (i) supports opportunities for: participation in Sport; engagement in Clubs and Societies; involvement in Volunteering; and many others including employment experience and the development of employability skills.
- (ii) has an appropriate policy for Wednesday afternoons to allow students to engage in extracurricular activities, enhance employability opportunities and develop transferable skills.
- (iii) recognises that these opportunities promote health and well-being, allow for a more holistic and wholesome experience at university; but also increase employability through developing transferable skills, and support students to develop transferable skills which include (but are not limited to): communication skills, leadership, team working, event management, budgeting and resilience.

5.4 The parameters for the policy on Wednesday afternoons and requirements for applying this policy in practice are described in Annex A.

6. ATTENDANCE

6.1 Students are expected to attend all formally scheduled teaching and related events within the parameters of the Standard Teaching Calendar, as defined in section 3.6 or their Specialist Teaching Calendar. This includes events scheduled by Departments, Schools and Faculties within Welcome and Development Week and Consolidation and Development Week. Such weeks are considered to be an important part of the Teaching Calendar, designed to facilitate the delivery of wider developmental activities in support of students' wider education within Strathclyde. Departments, Schools and Faculties are responsible for communicating the programme of events scheduled during these weeks.

6.2 Students are expected to attend all classes /modules scheduled throughout the Teaching Calendar, but may be granted absences in line with section 5 and Annex A for recognised sporting or extracurricular activities. Personal circumstances should be addressed through the University's Personal Circumstances and Academic Appeals Procedure.³ Students are responsible for communicating the reasons for their absence, in line with 1.7 and 1.8 in Annex A. Any absence relating to personal circumstances should be reported in line with that procedure.

7. THE TEACHING TIMETABLE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

7.1 The teaching timetable will be designed based on:

- (i) The primacy of the student learning experience.
- (ii) The pedagogic imperatives as identified by the teaching staff.
- (iii) The need to rationalise and make efficient use of space and resources.
- (iv) The need for equality of access to teaching facilities.
- (v) The need to provide timely and accurate timetabling and room booking information to students and staff.

8. TIMETABLE CONSTRUCTION

8.1 A range of factors will be considered when developing the timetable, including:

- (iv) Accurate data on all teaching activities and teaching rooms
- (v) Central pool and departmental/school teaching facilities
- (vi) Student choice pathways
- (vii) Student and staff availability in relation to the standard teaching week
- (viii) Clustering and distribution of activities across the teaching week
- (ix) Geographic 'zoning' of activities where possible.
- (x) Prioritisation of teaching and other 'bookable' activities.

³ Personal Circumstances and Academic Appeals Procedure.

9. TIMETABLING TIMELINE

9.1 Full details of the University Timetabling Timeline is available online at:

[https://moss.strath.ac.uk/estates/timetabling/Timelines/University Timetabling Timeline 2019-20.pdf](https://moss.strath.ac.uk/estates/timetabling/Timelines/University%20Timetabling%20Timeline%202019-20.pdf)

10. TIMETABLING RESPONSIBILITIES

10.1 The **Head of Department/School (or nominee)** is responsible for:

- (i) Appointing a Departmental/School Timetabling Coordinator (DTC) or DTC team, depending on size of Department/School and delegating authority to them, as appropriate, to manage timetabling activity in the department/school;
- (ii) Determining the allocation of teaching staff to teaching events;
- (iii) Determining constraints on the availability of staff for teaching, in accordance with the Timetabling Policy and relevant guidance from the TT;
- (iv) Resolving any conflicts which may arise at departmental/school level in relation to timetabling;
- (v) Demonstrating the need for a generic departmental/school teaching room to remain as part of the department/school space allocation on an annual basis, as part of the department occupancy survey.

10.2 The **Vice/Associate Dean Academic (VDA/AD) or nominee** is responsible for:

- (i) Liaising between the Strategic Timetabling Group and the department/schools within their Faculty, ensuring that department/schools within their Faculty are complying with the University timetabling procedures and managing any conflict which arises either within their Faculty or cross Faculty.
- (ii) All timetabling amendment requests in each Faculty will be processed through the relevant VDA who will prioritise them, give guidance on implementation to the TT, and communicate directly with Timetabling Coordinators in their respective Faculty. Through time it is hoped that some, if not all of these responsibilities can be delegated to the FTCs.

10.3 The **Faculty Timetabling Co-ordinator** is responsible for:

- (i) Working with DTCs and the Timetabling Team to resolve issues at Departmental/School level.
- (ii) Ensuring data on all UG and PG teaching activities from academic colleagues is made available to DTCs.
- (iii) Checking that all UG and PG teaching activities are included in the Timetabling system in accordance with the agreed Timetabling Timeline.
- (iv) Ensuring that Timetabling Timeline and Timetabling deadlines are adhered to.
- (v) Providing information and review RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status of key deliverables throughout the annual Timetable creation process.
- (vi) Intervening to resolve Departmental/School timetabling requests which are contentious or incompatible with the Timetabling policy.
- (vii) Where DTCs are unable to resolve amendment requests, 'adjudicating' on a Faculty basis, with support from the VDA.

10.3.1 Liaison

- (i) Liaising with DTCs, academic staff, year co-ordinators, programme co-ordinators to seek possible resolutions to issues/difficulties and negotiate solutions.
- (ii) Liaising with other FTCs in respect of cross Faculty programme timetabling.

- (iii) Monitoring late change requests from DTCs involving cross departmental, school or Faculty dependencies to ensure that they are not made in isolation.
- (iv) Co-ordinating Faculty response to Timetabling reports which require action, e.g. “rooms booked but not used”, Wednesday afternoon teaching.
- (v) Liaising with Heads of Department or School (HoDs) to ensure that the DTCs have sufficient time and training to be effective in their role.

10.3.2 **Communication**

- (i) Co-ordinating Faculty timetabling communications.
- (ii) Acting as contact point for confirmation and distribution of provisional student intake numbers/target numbers to relevant DTCs in Departments and Schools and to the University’s Timetabling Team.

10.3.3 **Directing**

- (i) Ensure that all relevant Advisors of Studies/Year Co-ordinators have approved students’ provisional curriculum by the relevant deadline date in the timeline.
- (ii) Ensure that students have access to personalised timetables by agreed date in the timeline.
- (iii) Ensure that departments and schools within the Faculty are complying with the University Timetabling Policy.
- (iv) Manage any conflict which arises either within their Faculty or cross Faculty.

10.3.4 **Supporting**

- (i) Supports DTCs in relevant Departments/Schools to ensure they are able to undertake their duties in relation to Timetabling.
- (ii) Ensures all information is available to DTCs at appropriate dates in the timeline.

10.4 The **Departmental or School Timetabling Coordinator (DTC)** is responsible for:

- (i) Collecting data on all UG and PG teaching activities from academic colleagues
- (ii) Checking that all UG and PG teaching activities are included
- (iii) Has knowledge of delivery of activities
- (iv) Has knowledge of student pathways
- (v) Has knowledge of constraints at Departmental/School level
- (vi) Has knowledge of staff availability
- (vii) Has knowledge of Departmental/School teaching facilities
- (viii) Ensuring that all timetabling deadlines are adhered
- (ix) Working with other DTCs, the Faculty Timetabling Coordinator, and the Timetabling Team to develop the draft timetable
- (x) Checking draft timetables at relevant points in the timetable construction process, liaising with colleagues and coordinating their responses as appropriate
- (xi) Liaising between academic colleagues and the Timetabling Team concerning timetabling issues in general and negotiating the resolution of issues
- (xii) Filtering all Department/School amendment requests to ensure that only essential requests are sent to the Timetabling /School Team, and not requests in the ‘nice to have’ category
- (xiii) Is the primary point of contact between the department/school and the Timetabling Team
- (xiv) Is able, empowered and supported to take decisions

10.5 **Academic staff** are responsible for:

- (i) Responding to requests for information from Departmental/School Timetabling Coordinators in relation to the production of the teaching timetable.
- (ii) Alerting Departmental/School Timetabling Coordinators to the presence of disabled students on programmes (however the Disability Service is responsible for provision of advice on the requirements of individual students).
- (iii) Setting class/module timetables in accordance with these guidelines.
- (iv) Notifying Departmental/School Timetabling Coordinators of any specific requirements relating to teaching events, e.g. AV or IT facilities.
- (v) Ensuring that teaching rooms are left in a clean and tidy condition, including cleaning of whiteboards, and that the room is returned to the standard layout where changes have been made during the teaching session.
- (vi) Informing the Departmental/School Timetabling Coordinator of any difficulties arising from teaching activity, e.g. relating to the size of allocated rooms.
- (vii) Reporting any problems with teaching rooms, e.g. relating to equipment, furniture or cleanliness, by e-mail to roombookings@strath.ac.uk.

10.6 **Students** are responsible for:

- (i) Electing optional classes/modules, using the relevant class/module choice process, in a timely manner; Viewing and checking the teaching timetable regularly
- (ii) Notifying Disability Service as early as possible of any individual requirements relating to disabilities, in order that they can be taken into account during the timetabling process.
- (iii) Attending all formal scheduled teaching and developmental events, as outlined within 6.1 and take responsibility for communicating any reasons for required absences, in line with 6.2.

Annex A: Wednesday Afternoon Policy

1.1 The Wednesday Afternoon Policy applies to undergraduate on-campus programmes only. The following exclusions apply:

- (i) Programmes with formal requirement to undertake a credit bearing placement as part of the curriculum, which may require to be scheduled on a Wednesday afternoon.
- (ii) Postgraduate Taught programmes.
- (iii) Apprenticeship or work based learning degree programmes.
- (iv) Fully online programmes.

1.2 It is the policy of the University of Strathclyde that:

- (i) Teaching activity shall not be scheduled on Wednesdays after 1pm.
- (ii) Staff should understand that students may be required to leave before 1.00pm on Wednesdays in respect of sporting opportunities within the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) and Scottish Student Sport (SSS) framework and approve absences, where possible (see Note 1, below¹).
- (iii) Staff should understand that students may be required to leave before 1.00pm on Wednesdays in respect of other recognised extracurricular activities, where appropriate, as outlined within section 1.3 (Annex A).
- (iv) Staff will avoid scheduling mandatory activities within classes/modules on Wednesdays, unless there is no other alternative. These include (but are not limited to): class/module tests, peer-review classes/modules and labs without alternatives.
- (v) Students and staff should make arrangements to ensure that any material missed due to absence agreed within the context of this policy should be made available to ensure students catch up on any missed classes/modules and content.

1.3 The scope of sporting or extra-curricular activities which may be considered as valid for an approval of absence include:

- (i) Sporting fixtures within the BUCS framework and those supported by SSS
- (ii) Extracurricular activities contributing to a student's wider achievement, for example: Volunteering, representation, University internship, academic non-credit bearing competition, recognised peer mentoring programme, recognised community engagement programme, recognised employability focused and outreach activity.

1.4 In the first instance the local timetabling coordinator/key contact will endeavour to ensure that no mandatory activities within modules are scheduled on Wednesdays, through co-ordination with the class/module co-ordinator.

1.5 In cases where timetabling challenges could impact on a student's ability to participate in BUCS and SSS activity the student should contact their programme leader / director who will in most cases be able to resolve the situation in a manner that is supportive of the student.

1.6 Where matters cannot be resolved by this process the case should be referred to the Vice Dean Academic (VDA) to establish a final outcome.

1.7 No more than 3 absences will normally be permitted per semester. This is to avoid undue adverse impact on the student's academic performance within the module. In all cases students are expected to discuss potential absences with module leaders. In addition, where sporting commitments mean that a student will be absent from a class/module more

than 3 times across the semester, this should be discussed with the programme leader / director.

1.8 Students should take responsibility for contacting their programme leader / director prior to committing to regular external engagements scheduled for a Wednesday afternoon.

ⁱ Sporting fixtures within the British Universities & Colleges Sport framework and those supported by Scottish Student Sport

Students may be required, on occasion, to travel to fixtures on Wednesday mornings or Tuesday evenings. A greater degree of academic flexibility is required for all students participating in high level sport (not only those formally supported by the Performance Sport Scholarship Programme).

This note will provide guidelines to allow students to compete in these fixtures and still fulfil academic requirements; recognising the outstanding student experience available through curricular and extracurricular activities should be supported.

1. It is the policy of the University of Strathclyde to approve absences between 9am and 1pm on Wednesdays, where appropriate and in accordance with the guidance provided above.
2. Students who are required to leave before 1.00pm on the Wednesday should contact all staff of the class(es)/module(s) they will be missing.
3. The staff should then approve the absence from class/module on the understanding that the student commits to catching up with any work missed.

While it may not be possible to grant all absence requests, every effort should be made to support the student.

Further information on the BUCS framework and SSS supported fixtures is available from the [University of Strathclyde Sports Union](#).