

Timetabling Policy



This policy sets out the production and operation of the teaching timetable with transparency against a shared purpose. It has begun from current practice, informed and improved via comparison with other institutions and in consultation with individuals involved in scheduling and delivering the timetable.

It remains a live document, which will need to develop and evolve with teaching and learning practice at Brunel, and as the supporting systems and teams progress. The context is for us all to work together, as a community, to provide the best timetable and space usage we can for the benefit of our students.

The **key principles** are:

- The main teaching for taught undergraduate and postgraduate students is between Weeks 1-35, which includes the examination period. Week 0 is also teaching week for postgraduate taught (PGT) students.
- Classes are normally scheduled Monday to Friday and between the hours of 08:00 to 20:00 ('core teaching hours').
- University teaching staff are expected to be available to teach within the full range of the core teaching hours, unless they have specific contractual arrangements, or have specific written agreement, which must be authorised by their Head of Department and approved in line with University policy.
- Full-time students are expected to be available for teaching at any time within the core teaching hours except where specific exceptions are recognised by the University.
- Where possible, full-time students have one day without teaching, with priority for FHEQ level 6 and level 7 students.
- Where possible, part-time student timetables are scheduled into one or two days only, although the actual days may vary.
- The University will strive to ensure all students and staff have equal access and opportunity, but there will be occasions where arrangements cannot be made because of operational constraints.
- Staff and students are expected to demonstrate mutual respect for each other and the University principles, as detailed in "Room User Etiquette" (section 10 of the Appendix to this policy), and in particular to start lectures 5 minutes after the hour and finish 5 minutes before.
- The Term 1 and Term 2 timetables will be published by the end of the first week in September for the 2020/21 academic year.

Main Policy

1 Purpose and Key Objectives

The intent of the Timetabling Policy is to produce a clear, stable and robust timetable, that allows students and staff to plan their work in advance and supports structured learning. However, we need to establish this priority amongst other agendas including support of high-quality research and managing our space in efficient and carbon-aware ways.

2 Key Components

2.1 Core Teaching Hours

Core teaching hours are necessary not only to ensure a sufficient number of large lecture space-hours, but also to enable the complexities of shared modules and programme structures. It also clarifies when teaching takes priority for students, staff and other space users.

University teaching takes place year-round, with the main undergraduate and taught postgraduate activity currently concentrated into the autumn and spring terms, with formal examinations in December/January and May with resit examinations in late August. To manage teaching and space usage across terms, the University year is identified by [week numbers](#), where week 0 marks “Welcome Week”, and week 1 the first teaching week of the autumn term. PGT students have the first teaching sessions in week 0.

In this context, the University currently schedules teaching with the following global parameters:

- a) Main teaching for taught undergraduate and postgraduate students weeks 0-35, which includes the examination period;
- b) Normally on Monday to Friday;
- c) Between the hours of 08:00 to 20:00, although initial scheduling uses 09:00 to 18:00; teaching is not normally scheduled during prayer hour, 13:00 to 14:00 on Friday; undergraduates are not normally scheduled after 13:00 on Wednesdays;
- d) Students and staff must have 1 hour free between 11:00 and 15:00;
- e) *Where possible, all staff have one day without teaching;
- f) *Where possible, full-time students have one day without teaching, with priority for FHEQ level 6 and level 7 students;
- g) *Where possible, part-time student timetables are scheduled into one or two days only, although the actual days may vary year-on-year;
- h) *Where possible, students will have a balanced timetable, with classes spread throughout the week, with a minimum of 2 hours and maximum of 6 hours in any one day. Sessions may be spread out throughout the day leaving gaps for independent study;
- i) We will endeavour to make the best use of the teaching space available and timetable classes that fit into the appropriate teaching space sizes where possible.

Manual adjustment may be permitted over any constraints on an exceptional basis.

* The current timetable system does not enable automated management of the spread of teaching, and corrections depend on the engagement of relevant college and teaching staff to identify potential breaches of the above parameters, as well as the availability of resources.

2.2 Teaching Space and Facilities

As with all University space, college and central teaching space is designated via Estates, and this data will be managed and published via the timetabling system. An annual review of teaching space will be carried out to confirm the capacity of the teaching space and the availability of the rooms for the forthcoming year.

Refurbishment and scheduled maintenance of rooms and facilities, such as audio visual (AV) equipment, will also be “booked” and so published via the timetabling system.

2.2.1 Operational Maintenance

Teaching space is cleaned thoroughly once per week and should be litter picked the remaining 4 days (litter meaning crisp bags, chocolate wrappers, drinks bottles etc). Layout is only managed in spaces used for nonteaching activities, where it requires setup for multi-use. Between times, the state of the rooms depends upon all users being responsible for removing their own litter and returning rooms to their original state.

Problems within central teaching space should be reported to Estates-Helpdesk@brunel.ac.uk (01895 267800) for correction, with a copy to Timetabling@brunel.ac.uk (01895 267024) and, for college teaching space, the College Services Managers, so that any consequences for subsequent classes can be managed.

2.2.2 Designation and “Ownership”

Where space is designated as “college teaching space”, the relevant college will have priority to book and use it. However, where such space is not required for that college’s use and does not constitute specialist facilities not suited to multi-use, it may be booked and used by other departments/colleges. This will ensure efficient

use of space, and on occasion may relieve busy periods or enable other activities outside the main University teaching period.

On occasions, space not usually identified for teaching may be used to hold classes, to manage an unusual requirement or meet unusually high demand.

3 Timetable Production and Publication

The Central Timetabling team will produce and disseminate an annual production cycle timeline each autumn. This will include deadlines for programme and module changes, for data collection, entry and checking, and, for delivery of draft and final teaching and examination timetables. It will also incorporate dates for release of module confirmation and selection tasks to students.

Timings and activities will be refined to accommodate any general changes within the academic cycle and to take account of feedback and any opportunities for enhancement. Timetabling contacts will need to manage operations to meet all deadlines. Programme Leads (in collaboration with Quality Assurance Managers) will manage any curriculum review process ensuring that deadlines for timetabling purposes are met. Problems affecting delivery of activities will be reported to the College Vice Provost and Deans and Education Managers as early as possible, so that any consequences can be mitigated.

Because the timetable is maintained within a corporate data system, teaching and examination timetables are available to all approved system users most of the time. Web access, for staff and students, will also be provided at key time points:

- Initial draft timetables will be made available to timetabling contacts via the main timetabling system and staff Outlook calendars.
- Later drafts will also be published to all staff via web access to the live system. These will include programme and module timetables as well as an individual timetable for teaching staff; timetabling contacts should disseminate the information to all relevant teaching staff.
- Final versions will be published to students (and staff) via the web. Initially each year, students are advised to use module level timetables until all group allocations are populated, usually by the third week of term.

To ensure the timetable is complete and stable by the point of final publication, no subsequent changes to the date or time of any timetabled session should be made without specific authorisation from the College Vice Provost and Deans following consultation with Deputy Deans (Academic Affairs), Central Timetabling and the relevant Programme Lead. Consideration must be taken regarding the adverse consequences of any changes, including the number of students affected both on the module in question and on any other modules that would need to move as a result of the proposed change.

3.1 Communication

The publication of the timetable is dependent upon adherence to published deadlines and clear communication between Central Timetabling and academic partners.

To streamline the process, it is expected that individual academics would liaise with the named departmental timetabling contacts regarding any changes or constraints to the teaching timetable.

3.2 Constraints and Applications

[Global constraints](#), including those above, are applied as part of the initial database preparations for autoscheduling of teaching activities. In addition, departments are able to provide approved staff constraints, subject to the limitations outlined below, and individual activity constraints (such as linking or ordering lectures, classes, practical etc).

Where the staff member is known, authorised lecturer availability will be included by limiting the times a class might be scheduled.

Constraints limit scheduling possibilities, and as such limit the timetable construction. Consequently, all constraints need to be scrutinised and approved by Head of Departments to ensure they are only included where required, and that the limitation applied is no more restrictive than necessary. For example, if all the teaching sessions for a part-time course need to take place on the same day of the week, in specifying

a single day it should not be fixed to a specific day of the week; if an event needs to follow a lecture, an ordering can be set but not to a specific time gap.

Constraints will be applied during the initial automated scheduling routines. Manual adjustments made to improve the overall timetable and to room the remaining teaching activities will follow, with adjustments made centrally. These adjustments may sometimes necessarily vary the constraints applied. This may be in response to local requirements (for example part-time student arrangements, or learning needs, practical classes), which may dictate a more flexible arrangement, or may be a consequence of limited resources or complexities of programme offerings.

3.3 Scheduling Constraints - Staff

University teaching staff are expected to be available to teach within the [core teaching hours](#), as listed above, unless they have specific contractual arrangements (e.g. they are part-time working on given days of the week or they are contract staff or similar) or they have a specific written agreement authorised by their Head of Department. Guiding principles by which Heads of Department might make such arrangements are listed below but the impact on the timetable and associated programmes must be considered.

Exceptions include:

- Contractual arrangements, for example where part-time staff have specific working days identified within their contract;
- Additional needs, for example where additional support is only available at fixed times, relevant procedures or appointments are fixed at specific times, or the nature of the additional need includes a requirement for specific breaks or space;
- Other equality and diversity issues, for example religious observance, in accordance with University equality and diversity policy;
- Specific external demands, for example where regular meetings with remote research or industry partners take place on a given day, requiring the non-teaching day to be fixed.

Flexible working requests, for purposes of child or other carer responsibilities, should be addressed via the University's "Flexible Working policy" and line managers should keep records of any such agreements.

3.4 Scheduling Constraints - Students

Full-time students are expected to be available for teaching at any time within the [core teaching hours](#). However, some specific groups may also have additional constraints, such as Sports Science students.

Individual adjustments may also be required to meet additional needs. Where known, these will usually be addressed in the later stages of timetable production. On occasion, it may also be necessary to make late changes after publication or even after the start of a teaching term, for example, where individual needs alter.

4 Managing Additional Needs

The University strives to ensure all have equal access and opportunity, but there are inevitable practical difficulties in ensuring the best provision for those with specific requirements against the broader needs to everyone. In particular, there can be difficulties resolving issues for given individuals where information is limited and/or received late in the production cycle.

Difficulties should be reported to departments and to the Central Timetabling team. Resolutions can then be sought to provide the best outcome for the individual or sub-group and the overall group involved.

In addition, academics need to be sensitive and adaptive, where reasonable, to those expressing specific issues. However, the following will not be considered as valid reasons for requesting changes:

- Long gaps in the day between teaching events;
- Starting too early/late to account for a commute;
- Only having one teaching event in a day.

5 Room Booking

Unused teaching rooms and multi-use space may be booked for internal non-teaching activities.

Those regularly making such bookings will be given access, guidance and training to use a self-service booking system, via the web. In using this system, users must observe the guidelines regarding which rooms are available for self-service booking and ensuring that teaching has first priority. Where a class is scheduled into the same room across most weeks of a term, we would not usually move it for a one-off event.

Others should contact Timetabling@brunel.ac.uk to request room bookings, giving date, time, duration, number of participants and nature of the meeting. Where local procedures for room bookings have been agreed, colleagues should follow prescribed practice. Where space is available, a room will be booked.

Any external events need to be arranged with Conference@brunel.ac.uk (01895 267026), who will be able to arrange accommodation, function space, special AV or other technical support and catering, as required. Charges will apply for space usage and other services.

6 Health and Safety Issues

The Central Timetabling team will work in conjunction with Estates and the Health and Safety office to ensure room capacities and layouts comply with safety legislation and guidelines.

Emergency procedures will be agreed with Health and Safety, and where appropriate with Security, and guidance will be posted in all central and college teaching space.

Teaching staff must make students aware, and all users must adhere to any supplementary guidance given regarding access and use of special facilities, which may involve additional hazards.

Appendix

Guidance and Responsibilities

1 Guidance and Responsibilities for College Vice Provost and Deans, Heads of Departments, and College Education and Service Managers

- Establish the importance of working collegiately to produce a clear, stable and robust timetable, that allows students and staff to plan their work in advance and supports structured learning;
- Ensure that opportunities for improvement are identified to better serve the overall student experience, and that they are noted and raised in the appropriate forums for onward reporting and further development;
- Ensure that college/departmental input and checking is carried out in timely fashion, according to the published production cycle;
- Manage and sign-off exceptional lecturer constraints;
- Ensure that programme developments are managed in time to fit the production cycle.
- Meet the required deadlines unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed by the Vice Provost and Dean College or delegated authority to the Deputy Dean Academic Affairs.

2 Guidance and Responsibilities for Programme Leaders

- Support the culture of working collegiately to produce and fulfil the best timetable for students' learning experience, within the available resource;
- Ensure that programme and module developments and changes are managed so that approvals are completed on time to fit the production cycle, and so enable timely completion of module selection activities as well as supporting timetabling;
- Work with the department timetabling contacts and Central Timetabling to support data collection and checking activities, ensuring they are carried out accurately and in timely fashion, according to the published production cycle;
- Ensure the timetable remains stable, and that any essential updates are communicated to Central Timetabling and to students, once published to students.
- Meet the required deadlines unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed by the Vice Provost and Dean College or delegated authority to the Deputy Dean Academic Affairs.

3 Guidance and Responsibilities for Academics

- Check draft timetables for your students and for yourself, and notify the programme leader or college/departmental timetabling contact of any problems or preferences, including any known additional requirements for staff or students; college/departmental timetabling contact should then liaise with Central Timetabling. Staff are expected to be available during the [core teaching hours](#) as described above;
- Meet the required deadlines unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed by the Vice Provost and Dean College or delegated authority to the Deputy Dean Academic Affairs;
- Adhere to the final version of the timetable, as published to students;
- Timetabling contacts should inform Central Timetabling of any cancellations or additional teaching sessions, as soon as they arise, to enable appropriate timetable updates and communication;
- Support data collection and checking activities, when requested, ensuring they are carried out accurately and in timely fashion, according to the published production cycle;
- Be sensitive and adaptive to individuals reporting difficulties or requirements due to disability or religious observance. Where necessary report issues or problems to college/departmental timetabling contacts who will in turn contact the Central Timetabling team, so that a satisfactory compromise and solution can be found;
- Observe the "[etiquette guidelines](#)" - for example, starting and finishing teaching promptly to allow changeover; using appropriate board pens, and ensuring teaching space is returned to its original setup, with staff and students removing any litter.

4 Guidance and Responsibilities for Students

- Check the published timetable and advise the college or department of any clashes;
- Notify the department or Student Wellbeing of any additional requirements that need timetable adjustments;
- Regularly check the published timetable to check for any updates;
- Attend the teaching sessions as scheduled; students are expected to be available during the [core teaching hours](#) as described above;
- Inform the department of absence, as appropriate;
- Observe the “[etiquette guidelines](#)” - for example, arrive promptly, help return teaching space to its original setup, and take litter away.

5 Guidance and Responsibilities for College/Departmental Timetabling Contacts

- Support the culture of working collegiately to produce and fulfil the best timetable for students’ learning experience, within the available resource;
- Provide liaison between the Central Timetabling team and the college or department;
- Cascade relevant information from the Central Timetabling team, and return data, input and feedback from the college or department;
- Work with the relevant college/department staff and ensure that data collection and checking activities are carried out accurately and in timely fashion, according to the published production cycle;
- Work with college and department staff and the Central Timetabling team to resolve problems, both during timetable production and operation, including adjustments required for those with additional requirements;
- Report progress and relevant problems to senior college/departmental staff and the Central Timetabling team, as appropriate;
- Ensure the timetable remains stable once published to students;
- Maintain the timetable data with any essential updates, and ensure changes are communicated to all relevant staff and students;
- Meet the required deadlines unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed by the Vice Provost and Dean College or delegated authority to the Deputy Dean Academic Affairs.

6 Guidance and Responsibilities for Programme Administrators

- Support the culture of working collegiately, to produce and fulfil the best timetable for students’ learning experience within the available resource;
- Work with the relevant academics to provide programme data and input activity data for all relevant modules within the agreed timelines for timetable production;
- Ensure changes and planned changes are effectively communicated to the Central Timetabling team, so that the impact of changes can be managed well;
- Work with Central Timetabling to allocate students to activities where specific groupings are required;
- Meet the required deadlines unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed by the Vice Provost and Dean College or delegated authority to the Deputy Dean Academic Affairs.

7 Guidance and Responsibilities for Room Bookers

- Ensure rooms are booked in accordance with current guidelines, including the current list of rooms available for ad hoc bookings and timescales to fit timetable production priorities;
- Cancel any bookings no longer required;
- Check bookings ahead of the date of a meeting, in case of errors.

8 Guidance and Responsibilities for the Central Timetabling Team

- Encourage the culture of working collegiately to produce and fulfil the best timetable for students’ learning experience, within the available resource;
- Provide liaison with and between college/departmental contacts and other relevant staff, ensuring adequate access to the timetable system;
- Provide liaison with support service providers, ensuring adequate access to timetable and room use data;

- Produce and publish production cycle timelines with sufficient notice for colleges and departments to plan their contribution;
- Provide clear guidance, via college/departmental timetabling contacts, regarding the data collection and checking required at key points through the timetable production cycle;
- Work with the relevant college/department staff, providing training and support to enable accurate data collection and activity data input;
- Work with college/departmental timetabling contacts and other staff to resolve problems, both during timetable production and operation, including adjustments required for those with additional requirements;
- Report progress and relevant problems to Senior Timetabling staff, college and directorate staff, as appropriate;
- Maintain the timetable data with any essential updates, and ensure changes are communicated to all relevant staff and students;
- Ensure relevant staff have adequate access, including training, to use the timetabling system to book space for maintenance etc, or to provide appropriate support to teaching activities.

9 Guidance and Responsibilities for Estates Management Teams

- Support the culture of working collegiately to produce and fulfil the best timetable for students' learning experience, within the available resource;
- Ensure adequate liaison with the Central Timetabling team;
- Report problems to the Central Timetabling team, and any other relevant service or college/department, so that both the immediate problem can be managed and any adjustments to prevent further incidents can be made;
- Work with Central Timetabling to ensure consistent and sufficient room stock availability to meet teaching demands for the academic year.

10 Room User Etiquette

Given the amount of teaching and extra-curricular activity (in term time there are over 5000 teaching sessions every week), we need everyone involved to act with community spirit and ensure that they take account of others using the rooms after their class. In particular:

- Eating in teaching spaces is not allowed;
- Drinks, other than water, should not be brought into teaching spaces;
- Chewing gum must not be discarded anywhere on the campus, other than in the bins provided;
- To allow for changeovers, teaching should finish 5 minutes before the end of the timetabled period (most teaching sessions are scheduled to finish on the hour). Lecturers, event leaders and students should also be prepared to begin 5 minutes after the timetabled start time to allow for the changeover when using a larger classroom or lecture theatre.

Students need to:

- Arrive punctually and allow the previous class to leave a room before entering;
- Help return a classroom to the original layout if tables and/or chairs have been re-arranged;
- Remove all their belongings and any litter (cups, water bottles, discarded papers) on finishing the class;
- Leave the class promptly to make way for the incoming class.

Lecturers need to:

- Arrive punctually and encourage a courteous changeover of students;
- Bring a supply of water-soluble pens if working with whiteboards;
- Clean the board and ask students to return a classroom to the original layout if furniture has been rearranged;
- Log out from any console PC used;
- Ask students to take all belongings and litter with them, and ensure all extra paperwork is removed;
- Report any problems with the teaching space so that problems can be rectified.

Essentially, we ask everyone to treat each other with respect, as they would like to be treated.

Space Usage Auditing

Space utilisation audits usually take place throughout the teaching terms. Staff should cooperate with room counters, who in turn will be instructed to collect data as unobtrusively as possible.

The collected data is made available, and analyses will be reported as appropriate. In addition, the data will be used to identify timetabled sessions that are regularly not taking place. Such instances will be reported to College Vice Provost and Deans. It is expected that colleges should review the data and instruct Central Timetabling to remove redundant classes from the timetable to avoid confusion and release space.

Occasionally, room users may be asked to complete brief census forms to provide additional usage data. Such requests should not require much time or effort and room users should make every effort to complete them.