

Timetabling Guidelines

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1. Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide operational guidelines for timetabling at the University. (Please also see University Academic Timetable Principles and Procedures)

2. Scope

The guidelines incorporate the processes and procedures for all timetable activities.

3. Context

Timetabling is a critical function within the University environment involving a number of complex dimensions including people, academic programmes, space and time.¹

4. Academic Programmes

Academic programmes must be delivered in accordance with their approved regulations, teaching and delivery methods. The timetable should be scheduled taking cognisance of the pedagogical needs of the programme. The timetable should avoid conflicts between core and major papers required to complete an approved programme of study. Whenever possible, the timetable should facilitate the availability of the widest range of elective courses for students.

5. Definitions

For definitions go to the “Definitions Document” at https://autuni.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/Tuia/Learning%20and%20Teaching/Resources/AQO-academic-policies/Supporting%20Doc_Definitions.pdf

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The following sets out the roles and responsibilities of key players involved in the timetabling process.

The University Needs to schedule appropriately within the resources it has. AUT University timetabling is carried out by the Space Planning and Timetabling Directorate, within the Estates Division, in partnership with faculty academic and allied staff.

Timetables are prepared using the University’s timetabling software. Data required to schedule teaching activities is gathered, collated, and prepared by University and Faculty Timetablers after discussion with academic and allied staff to determine their requirements. The Space Planning and Timetabling Directorate then prepare and schedule the universities timetable activities after which the faculties have a brief period to make adjustments prior to publication.

6.1. Academic Timetabling Governance Committee

The role of the Academic Timetabling Governance Committee is to ensure that university-wide timetabling guidelines and procedures are established to support the maximum academic choice for students within university regulations and resource constraints.

The Academic Timetabling Governance Committee:

- Facilitates and monitors timetabling policies, guidelines and procedures to ensure that teaching activities are scheduled in a manner that considers the needs of the university community whilst ensuring effective, prudent and efficient use of facilities and resources.
- Advises and receives feedback from Faculties on University timetabling procedures.
- Advises Academic Board on timetabling matters through the University Learning and Teaching Committee.
- Evaluates the effectiveness of the University's timetabling guidelines and procedures to ensure teaching activities are scheduled fairly and equitably for students, staff and departments over successive years.

The Academic Timetabling Governance Committee will include, but need not be limited to:

- The PVC Learning and Teaching or nominee,
- The GM Estates or nominee
- Director of Space Planning & Timetabling (Chair)
- The University Timetabling Services Manager
- an academic representative from each of the Faculties;
- a representative of the Deans or Heads of Department;
- a representative of the Faculty Registrars;
- a representative of the Faculty Managers;
- a representative of Student Services;
- a representative of the Faculty Timetablers.

6.2. Director Space Planning & Timetabling Services Manager

This Directorate is responsible for producing a workable university-wide timetable. The Directorate coordinates the timetabling process from a university perspective. The Directorate has overall responsibility for the final scheduling of the timetable. They co-ordinate across faculty timetablers and oversee the training of timetabling staff, data entry and ensure data in the software is structured to meet the needs of the university. They also oversee the allocation of examination rooms in partnership with the Faculties/teaching departments.

6.3. Faculty Timetablers

The role of the Faculty Timetablers is to coordinate the timetabling process across their Faculty. They are high level users of the timetabling software combining a sophisticated knowledge of the software with an in depth understanding of their Faculty's academic programme structures and scheduling requirements. Faculty Timetablers are responsible for managing the timetabling process in their faculty within university guidelines; liaising with appropriate academic and allied staff to establish the scheduling requirements for teaching activities; setting up programme structures in the timetabling software; data entry; implementing approved changes to the timetable taking cognisance of how the changes will impact on students and staff across the University.

6.4. Teaching Departments

The role of the teaching department is to provide the Faculty Timetabler with accurate and timely information to ensure an effective timetable can be published for students and staff in a timely manner. Each teaching department is responsible for:

- Finalising programme and paper offerings for the following year within the University's programme approval timeframes to ensure accurate information is published in the Academic Calendar and enrolment guides.
- Collecting, preparing, and verifying its programme, papers, staffing and activity data and providing it to Faculty Timetabling for entering into the timetabling system.
- Providing complete assessment information by week 3 of each semester (for standard semester papers) to ensure examinations can be scheduled.

6.5. Head of School or Delegated Authority

The role of the Head of Department (or nominee) is to ensure the teaching department fulfils its timetabling responsibilities. The Head of Department is responsible for:

- Confirming the teaching departments programme and paper and offerings in accordance with the University's established programme approval process and the department's resource constraints.
- Ensuring the teaching department provides the Faculty Timetabler with accurate data when the timetable is being prepared.
- Establishing a process to review the draft timetable and notify reasonable adjustments to Faculty Timetabler in accordance with timetabling deadlines.
- Allocating teaching loads that are consistent with the contractual arrangements of academic staff and approving individual staff members requests for teaching constraints that may limit their availability to teach at specified times.

6.6. Teaching Staff

The role of teaching staff is to deliver the academic programme in accordance with the published timetable. Teaching staff are responsible for:

- Advising the Head of Department of requests regarding overall workload allocation and any reasonable adjustments to the timetable so that they may be considered within regulations and operational requirements of the University.
- Advising the Head of Department of any regular non-teaching university business commitments such as attendance at Academic Board and Faculty meetings
- Checking their individual timetable (via Timetable Web Viewer) when the timetable is first published and advise the appropriate person in their school of any issues/concerns.

6.7. Students

Students are responsible for:

- Reading the published timetable and submitting requests for change to their enrolment stream, in accordance with published school procedures, where they may have:
 - clashes between core papers;
 - unreasonable multi-campus travel to attend core classes.

- Students are responsible for advising the teaching department of any clashes in their exam timetable in accordance with published school procedures.

6.8. Hospitality Services and Event Management

Specific conferences and events are run by Hospitality Services, a Directorate within Estates. There are restrictions on the times that events can be scheduled due to exams, issues with building access, parking and room availability. Hospitality Services co-ordinate bookings in the Conference Centres (WA224A and B, AF113A and WG 308) outside standard exam periods. They have access to other general teaching spaces after the timetable is published.

7. Timetabling Procedures

7.1. Timetable Preparation

The timeline for collecting timetabling data and scheduling teaching activities for the following year will normally be issued to faculties and teaching departments by the Central Timetabling Office by the end of February each year. It is incumbent on the Faculty and teaching departments to ensure that information used to prepare the timetable is accurate.

7.2. Teaching Times

Teaching hours are Monday to Friday from 8am and 9.30pm on each campus. When a programme is available in a full-time mode classes may be scheduled at any time during these hours. The following conditions also apply:

- Classes may be held during the evenings or on weekends but, generally speaking, only classes with an activity pattern that specifies these days will be scheduled at these times.
- Morning classes (first class 8am, final class 11am) should commence on the timetabled start time and conclude at 10 minutes before the timetabled end time. Afternoon classes (first class 12.10pm, final class 8.10pm) should commence at 10 minutes after the timetabled start time and conclude at the timetabled end time. This facilitates a 20 minute break in the middle of the day. The published timetable will show classes starting and finishing on the hour or half hour.
- The minimum period for scheduling will be 30 minute blocks.
- Classes for any particular student cohort should normally be spread evenly over a full week. Faculties that adopt patterns of timetabling that do not utilise all days of the week and late afternoons may be given lower priority in room allocation.

7.3. Breaks

- There will be a 20 minute break in the middle of the day from 11.50 am – 12.10pm.
- After automated scheduling has taken place and prior to publishing the university timetable, manual adjustments can be made to the timetable to best place regular whole school / department breaks or days off during semester time.
- Group meal times and meetings cannot be auto-scheduled. Meal breaks are staggered to ensure effective utilisation of university facilities. After auto scheduling has taken place, manual adjustments/analysis can be employed to find optimal meeting times.

7.4. Papers taught across Schools and Faculties

Teaching departments delivering core papers to students in other departments must liaise with the other to

- Confirm responsibility for scheduling of activities.
- Ensure students have sufficient choice of classes.
- Ensure students and staff have minimum need to travel between campuses.

7.5. Publication of Timetable

Timetables for the whole year will be prepared in the preceding year and published by mid-October. The Draft Timetable will generally be circulated during September each year. The timetable will remain in draft form for a period of approximately 2 weeks. During this period, faculties, schools, and departments are responsible for reviewing the draft timetable to ensure that:

- Adequate provision has been made for all papers for the coming teaching periods.
- All details of teaching activities have been entered correctly.
- The required teaching staff are available.
- There are no clashes in standard pathways.

The University timetable is published on the web at arion.aut.ac.nz/timetable. It is updated from Syllabus Plus by interface from the publication date.

7.6. Changes to the Timetable

Changes to the published timetable must be kept to a minimum. It is incumbent on the teaching departments and faculty to ensure that information used to prepare the timetable is accurate, and subsequent changes to the timetable are only made for valid reasons. The overriding principle should be “How does this change improve opportunities for students?” Valid reasons for change include:

- unexpected staff turnover;
- unexpected surge/decline in student numbers enrolled;
- a location that is/becomes a health or safety hazard;

Requests for changes to days and times, and anything affecting teaching activities after the timetable is published need to follow the AUT change process (e.g. deleting a lecture, adding a lecture, moving a lecture to another room, moving any activity to a different day/time). These changes are the ones that most directly affect students' planning and programme choices across AUT, and require a valid reason before being approved.

Requests for change should be submitted to the Faculty Timetabler who will investigate whether the change is possible, and ensure that any consequences of the proposed change for students and the University have been considered.

Changes to non-academic activities can be made by the individual who booked the event, or through the Schools Ad-hoc Room Booker.

During the draft timetable period and after the timetable has been published, a School that initiates a change must follow the AUT change process to minimise clashes and inconvenience to students.

Where changes occur with little notice, schools must advise all students as soon as possible.

7.7. Staff Allocation

Where staff are allocated to events as part of the automatic scheduling process, constraints will be applied pursuant to applicable university regulations and employment conditions.

The scheduling process can only take into account staff clashes and specific needs if staff are entered in Syllabus Plus prior to scheduling. The practice of manually adding staff later can lead to unforeseen clashes, timing issues and to less than ideal allocation of hours which will be the responsibility of the schools to resolve. This leads to unnecessary additional work. As the timetable becomes active each semester, all staff must have been entered in Syllabus plus to meet emergency management needs and to fulfil university requirements to be able to provide accurate reporting data.

7.8. Scheduling Priorities

In scheduling academic teaching activities, the following principles shall be used:

- activities that require multiple rooms at the same time on different campuses will need to be scheduled ahead of other activities;
- larger classes will be scheduled prior to smaller classes;
- activities which run for whole semesters will be scheduled prior to those which run for shorter periods;
- teaching activities will be scheduled ahead of examination, ad-hoc or open access activities;
- specialist teaching space will be used for its designated purpose. If this space can safely be used for other bookings, it will be made available after the scheduling process in consultation with Faculty Timetablers;
- activities requiring specialised teaching facilities (e.g. media-equipped lecture theatres) have precedence over those requiring standard facilities, provided that activity size matches the room size.
- Scheduling constraints should be minimised to most effectively utilise Syllabus Plus scheduling engine capacity to provide optimal university outcomes.
- Where possible constraint preferences will be taken into account. However it is not physically possible, for example, to have all of the universities lectures precede tutorials. Where teaching space limits this, tutorials are aimed to be scheduled either before or after a lecture.

NOTE: Entering needed constraints will provide the most, and best, options for paper placements. “Nice to have” constraints should only be applied after core scheduling has taken place.

7.9. Ad Hoc Bookings

After the first Monday in November, rooms that are not already scheduled may be booked for ad hoc purposes. Some rooms can be booked using Web Room Booking (<http://timetabling.aut.ac.nz/webroombooking> or easily accessible through iEstates at bottom left of AUT’s login page), for others they must contact a school staff member with extended access to Web Room Booking in the first instance or, if they are not available, their Faculty Timetabler, and explain their requirements. They will verify room availability and make the booking. Staff may not use a room unless it is properly timetabled for a class, or there is an authorised ad hoc booking.

If a legitimate booking has been made in a room and other staff or students are found to be in the room without a booking they will be required to vacate the room.

Students requiring bookings must go through the AUSM office. Only official AUT clubs and groups will be able to book rooms in this way.

Ad hoc bookings will not be made for on-going teaching activities.

Bookings for conferences, high profile events or events with food and drink must be booked through AUT Hospitality Services.

7.10. Bookable Space

All the universities bookable spaces must be booked. The Syllabus Plus system is the one truth of what space has or has not been booked. Currently other booking systems such as Outlook for meeting rooms or events management systems used by specific areas of the university will “check” or “default” to Syllabus Plus to ensure clash free demands.

Teaching spaces identified as *Specialist* space or *Department Computer* rooms will initially be scheduled for use by classes conducted by the specialist school. Other Departments/Schools wishing to use specialist space or Department Computer rooms must make arrangements with relevant Faculty Timetabler before timetabling the space. All activities must be booked in Syllabus Plus, including “self-directed learning” times, even if they are in Specialist rooms.

After the university’s timetable is published in October, supporting university activities and ad-hoc bookings can be booked into Syllabus Plus.

A limited number of rooms/facilities will be able to be booked by staff (after the timetable is published) to meet ad-hoc “one off” purposes during the year. Self-bookings can be made through WRB (Web Room Booking), accessed through the iEstates portal (see AUT Logon page at left).

It is important for the university to account for all people/activities for emergencies and its general business as usual reporting requirements, and to be able to collect accurate data for planning purposes.

Note: The entity that has booked a space takes precedence in any dispute. Removing a booking requires direct negotiation with the original booking’s owner. This provides surety of booked space.

All space is managed by the Space Planning and Timetabling group who is responsible for the efficient utilisation of university space through timetabling and room allocation.

8. External Hirers

The proposed use of University facilities by individuals, groups or organisations external to the University must be compatible with the University's mission and goals and must comply with any relevant University policy and related procedures. Any enquiry of this type must be referred to AUT Hospitality Services (Event Services).

9. Examination Timetabling

The Syllabus Plus Examination Scheduler module operates in a similar way to normal timetabling in that it is rule driven and automates scheduling. All controlled assessments during the university exam periods will be scheduled using this software.

10. Associated Documents

AUT Calendar

Academic and Associated Staff Members Collective Agreement

Exam Scheduling Guidelines

Examination Supervision Guidelines

Managing Examination Clashes

Faculty/School/Programme handbooks or equivalent

Guide for students with disabilities.

Health and Safety Policy

Programme Approval Policy, Procedure and Guidelines

Student charter

Workload Policy

12. Document Management and Control

Prepared by: Space Planning and Timetabling Directorate

Approved by: Timetable Steering Committee

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