Timetabling Policy

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) The scheduling of classes and allocation of resources are important elements in the University of Newcastle's (University) efforts to support students and meet operational needs. The University has therefore adopted a structured approach to the timetabling of classes and the attendant booking and allocation of facilities. This policy sets out that approach. It should be read in conjunction with the Timetabling Procedure.

Section 2 - About this Policy

Intent

(2) This Policy provides the framework within which the University will timetable classes and allocate the teaching and learning spaces and other facilities recorded in the University Timetabling System.

Objectives

(3) To schedule classes in a way that best meets the needs of students and staff within the constraints of available resources.

(4) To optimise the use of the University's teaching and learning spaces in line with good pedagogical practice.

(5) To provide a framework for decision making in relation to timetabling.

(6) To advise staff and students where and how teaching and learning space allocation and timetabling issues should be dealt with and by whom.

Scope

(7) This policy applies to:

a. the timetabling of classes and the allocation of teaching and learning spaces which have been designated by Infrastructure and Facilities Services as available for teaching and which are recorded on the University Timetabling System; and
b. all University teaching and learning activities for all onshore campuses.

(8) This policy does not apply to the allocation and use of University space by external parties except to indicate the preference given to the University's core activities over the activities of external users.

Section 3 - Principles

(9) The timetable will be produced in collaboration between Timetable Officers and School staff, with a student focus, and provide for the fair, reasonable, and inclusive treatment of students and staff.

(10) Timetabling practices will be guided by four fundamental principles to ensure high quality student-centred teaching and learning:

a. Timeliness - the early release of timetables will provide students with informed choices regarding unit selection and scheduling commitments.
b. Stability - timetable clashes for core units will be avoided, and student enrolment into a reasonable range of elective units will be facilitated. Minimal changes will be made after the timetable is published to students.
c. Equity - access requirements and reasonable adjustments of staff and students will be taken into consideration, including but not limited to family responsibilities, religious beliefs, and disabilities.
d. Efficiency - the utilisation of teaching resources and facilities will be aligned with good pedagogical practice and the minimisation of staff resources required for timetable development and maintenance.

(11) No Division, College, School or individual person has absolute control or ownership over any building, room or area within the University.

(12) The following key principles will be adopted by Timetable Officers when timetabling and allocating teaching and learning spaces:

a. activities requiring particular teaching facilities (e.g. media equipped lecture theatres) will be given priority in the allocation of those spaces;
b. larger classes will have priority access to larger teaching and learning spaces over smaller classes;
c. full term teaching periods as defined in the curriculum management system will have priority over courses that are taught only in part of the term;
d. classes will have priority over facility hire bookings by external parties;
e. preferences for space allocation will only be considered based on the functionality of the allocated teaching and learning space; and
f. allocation of spaces to classes is based on the best use of resources including capacity, equipment and technology.

(13) Students are required to regularly check the online timetable for class changes.

(14) The University's core requirements for rooms and facilities take precedence over their use by external persons, groups, or bodies. No adjustments to the academic timetable are to be made to accommodate external use unless in exceptional circumstances as approved by the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global).

Timeliness

(15) Timetable details will be provided in sufficient time to enable students to make informed decisions and to make personal arrangements required by a particular study timetable.

(16) Classes will be scheduled at times and locations that will facilitate student attendance and avoid staff and students having to attend, wherever possible, more than one campus on the same day.

Stability

(17) The number of changes made to the timetable after the deadline set by the University Registrar will be kept to a minimum. Changes requested after the deadline set by the University Registrar must be endorsed by the Head of School, or nominee, and approved by the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global).

Equity

(18) The timetable will be prepared in a way that takes account of the specific cohorts of students and ensures that

students:

a. can access all course resources regardless of delivery; and
b. have a reasonable selection of electives from which to choose in accordance with the relevant program structure.

(19) To meet the needs of students timetabling will:

a. make every effort to accommodate the needs of students with a disability on the advice of the AccessAbility and Support; and
b. have sufficient class choices available within the full span of teaching hours.

(20) Back to back teaching will be delivered in the closest appropriate teaching and learning spaces possible and factored into the timetable.

(21) Consideration will be given to staff's availability and nominated preferences for specific days and times.

(22) Consideration will be given to accommodating staff with a disability or a special need in an appropriate room.

Efficiency

(23) The University will optimise the use of its teaching and learning spaces by applying the following principles to timetabling:

a. classes will be timetabled to accord with information in curriculum management system;
b. preference will be given to scheduling classes on working days and within core teaching times;
c. classes will be scheduled to make use of teaching and learning spaces over the entire span of working days and University approved core teaching times;
d. classes may be held on Saturday or Sunday when advised in course documentation;
e. classes should be conducted within the scheduled times and the allocated teaching space, as shown on the timetable;
f. classes will normally commence 5 minutes past the hour and conclude 5 minutes before the hour;
g. a limited number of teaching and learning spaces (e.g. laboratories, workshops) may be defined as ‘specialist’ teaching and learning spaces by Schools, Colleges or Units in consultation with Infrastructure and Facilities Services. These specialist teaching and learning spaces will appear on the University Timetabling System but must be timetabled by direct arrangement with the relevant School, College, or Unit.

Section 4 - Roles and Responsibilities

(24) Student Central has primary responsibility for timetabling.

(25) The University Timetabling Coordinator is responsible for:

a. managing and maintaining timetabling information on the University timetabling system;
b. rolling over relevant timetable data in preparation for the following year;
c. supporting Timetable Officers;
d. publishing of the teaching timetable;
e. arranging regular audits of teaching space and usage; and
f. actioning outcomes from audits.

(26) Timetable Officers, in consultation with School staff, are responsible for the initial and ongoing process of timetabling classes within the University Timetabling System. Timetable Officers will consult with the relevant Associate Dean (Education) when timetabling disputes require resolution.

(27) Infrastructure and Facilities Services are responsible for notifying the University Timetabling Coordinator of:

a. changes to availability of teaching and learning spaces including new, refurbished and closed spaces;
b. building work in progress and estimated times of completion;
c. furniture and physical infrastructure located in each teaching and learning space;
d. designation of specialist teaching and learning spaces; and
e. setting utilisation targets for teaching and learning spaces.

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Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Belinda Yourn Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global)
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Class" - When referring to a class attended by Students, a class is any teaching and learning activity of a course. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Core teaching times" - Are between the hours of 8am – 9pm.

"Working day" - Any day other than Saturday, Sunday, or a public holiday in Newcastle, on which business may be conducted.

"Campus" - means any place or premises owned or controlled by the University, but may also specifically refer to a designated operating location such as the Callaghan Campus.

"Course" - When referring to a course offered by the University, a course is a set of learning activities or learning opportunities with defined, assessed and recorded learning outcomes. A course will be identified by an alphanumeric course code and course title. Course types include core courses, compulsory courses, directed courses, capstone courses and electives. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Program" - When referring to learning, a program is a sequence of approved learning, usually leading to an Award. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"School" - An organisational unit forming part of a College or Division, responsible for offering a particular course.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"Unit" - When referring to an academic unit, unit means the proportional amount of academic credit allotted to a course. This term is used to define the requirements for a program award of the University and indicate a student's enrolment load. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"College" - An organisational unit established within the University by the Council.