



Timetabling Policy

Operational Guidelines

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Timetabling Operational Guidelines

These guidelines demonstrate how the Central Timetabling (CT) team and the Local Timetablers (LT) operate together to produce the best student timetable possible.

1. Student focussed timetables

- 1.1. CT aim to produce clash-free timetables for students and enable the maximum potential module choice.
- 1.2. For new students, CT use historical module selection data to identify the most common module combinations within a programme, so they can ensure these are clash-free.
- 1.3. CT will notify LT of any student module choices that could not be made clash-free, when issuing the draft timetable.
- 1.4. CT will endeavour to produce a high-quality student timetable, based on the metrics from a previous online student survey, the top two things important to students were:
 - Less than 5 days required on campus
 - No more than 4 hours of teaching without a break

If schools have a different measure for a good quality student timetable the LT should approach their CT contact. LT will be issued with a report outlining the extent to which these metrics have been met.

- 1.5. CT will ensure that no whole-cohort sessions (e.g. lectures) are held on Friday at 13:00-14:00, to allow for prayer time. Any sessions with an alternative for those students wishing to pray may be scheduled at this time.
- 1.6. Access for students and staff with a disability is a priority and will be accommodated whenever possible. For any students who complete an Application for Timetable Adjustments form, CT will try to meet their needs and contact the student to say whether these have been met. If it is not possible to accommodate the student's needs, CT will inform the Disability and Dyslexia Service.

2. Scheduling of the timetable

- 2.1. University policy dictates that:
 - Undergraduate teaching, learning and assessment sessions will be timetabled during the standard hours of operation (09:00 to 18:00), except on Wednesdays where teaching stops at 1pm. However, there are some activities delivered outside these times, when requested by a school.
 - Dates/times for undergraduate teaching in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry may differ.

- Postgraduate teaching and learning activities, using general teaching space, may be scheduled outside of normal hours of operation (6-9pm), including on Wednesday afternoons. Wherever possible, out of hours activities should be confined to the Graduate Centre, Bancroft or Garrod buildings.
- 2.2. CT will normally assign teaching timeslots to all classes. The allocation of timeslots will be guided by the following key principles:
- production of a clash-free timetable for students and staff
 - optimisation of student experience;
 - consideration of teaching staff unavailability;
 - commitment to ensuring the efficient and effective use of the teaching estate.
- 2.3. For some programmes in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, it is not always possible to schedule using metric data or student module information. In such cases, suggested days and times, as submitted by the relevant Institute, may be used to timetable teaching activities.
- 2.4. During the data submission period in Semester B of the preceding academic year, LT must submit (on behalf of teaching staff):
- any days/times when teaching staff cannot teach, due to flexible working arrangements or part-time contracts
 - any research requirements of teaching staff, e.g. must have one day free from teaching, ideally leaving the actual research day to be determined by teaching needs.
 - any specific times at which activities must be scheduled, e.g. where external clinicians are involved
 - any specific room (e.g. a particular dentistry lab) where activities must be scheduled
 - any specific equipment required
 - any specific room layout requirements (e.g. collaborative layout or classroom layout)
- 2.5. CT will ensure that activities requiring specialist facilities have priority access to specialist teaching spaces, if the request is made by the submission deadline.
- 2.6. The largest room capacities (those above 130) are shown below, ordered by Campus then by decreasing size:

Campus	Room	Capacity
Mile End	Peoples Palace: Great Hall (600)	600
Mile End	Arts Two: LT (304)	304
Mile End	Bancroft: Mason-LT (294)	294
Mile End	Peoples Palace: Skeel-LT (247)	247
Mile End	Geog: DLT (207)	207
Mile End	Graduate Ctr: Peston LT (200)	200
Mile End	Maths: MLT (144)	144
Mile End	G.O. Jones: LT (138)	138
Whitechapel	Blizard: Perrin LT (409)	409
Whitechapel	RLH Alex Wing: Bearsted LT (210)	210

West Smithfield	RBC: Morris LT (215)	215
Charterhouse Square	John Vane: Willoughby LT (225)	225
Charterhouse Square	Rotblat: G.02 LT (150)	150

If a teaching session exceeds the capacity of the allocated room, CT will endeavour to move it to a larger room. If one cannot be found, then CT will request that it be double taught.

Note the large gap between the rooms of 304 and 600 capacity. Hence any teaching activity exceeding 304 will need to be double taught if a slot cannot be found in the 600-capacity room.

- 2.7. CT will endeavour to reduce travel time between teaching activities, wherever possible, where capacity and other constraints allow. Students should not normally have teaching on different campuses within the same day. Cross-campus travel may be permitted between Charterhouse Square and West Smithfield, due to their proximity, and sufficient travel time will be allowed between teaching sessions in this case.
- 2.8. Wherever possible, real class sizes will be used to ensure that allocated teaching spaces match the teaching activities.
- 2.9. For postgraduate and new undergraduate students, LT will provide 'planned sizes' for all teaching activities, to ensure that teaching is accommodated in appropriately sized rooms. Planned sizes will be matched against actual registrations once they are known and may result in timetable changes due to room requirement changes.
- 2.10. Class sizes should not normally exceed the capacity of rooms allocated. However, in situations where there is no alternative, teaching rooms may be over-subscribed by up to 10% if previous attendance patterns support such an approach.
- 2.11. CT seek to schedule teaching locations within the capacity target of 70-80% full. This level of activity ensures good utilisation of space while enabling flexibility to create student-focused timetables.
- 2.12. LT must inform CT if a scheduled teaching activity is no longer required, as soon as possible.
- 2.13. The key events and approximate dates in the timetable production are listed below:

HSS and S&E events	Dates
CT roll over data from previous year	early February
Diet checking for all HSS/S&E programmes	late February
CT cleanse data and do first data transfer from SITS	early March
Timetabling software access opens to LT for submission of data	early March
Module pre-selection open to students.	mid-March – late April
SBBS/FMD to return BMD requirements for non-Mile End rooms	late March
Timetabling software access closes to LT for submission of data	mid-May
CT check data then schedule timetable	mid-May

Draft timetables issued to HSS and S&E staff	late June
Deadline for timetable change requests to be submitted by LT to CT	mid-July
Final student, staff and module timetables published online for HSS/S&E (Semester 1 confirmed)	early September
Final Semester 2 student (excluding Associate students), staff and module timetables published online for HSS/S&E	late November
Final Semester 2 Associate student timetables published online	early December
Final Semester 3 student, staff and module timetables published online	early March

FMD events	Dates
CT roll over data from previous year	early February
CT issue Timetable Requirement sheets to MBBS and BDS LT	mid-February
CT cleanse data and do first data transfer from SITS	early March
Timetabling software access opens to LT for submission of data	early March
Deadline for BMD, MBBS & BDS (UG) LT to return timetable requirements form	late March
Draft timetable for MBBS and BDS released to staff	mid-April
Deadline for BMD (non-Mile End), and MBBS/BDS timetable changes to be submitted to Central Timetabling	late April
Module pre-selection open to FMD PGT students	late April – early June
CT issue Timetable Requirement sheets to other FMD institute LTs	early May
Deadline for return of FMD Timetable Requirement sheets	early June
Final student, staff and module timetables published online for FMD	mid-June

3. Allocation of rooms to non-teaching events

- 3.1. Non-teaching events during teaching hours will only be booked into rooms, after teaching has been scheduled. This does not apply to University Open Days, Offer Holder Days or VP-approved conferences. For these exceptional events, teaching will be moved out of such rooms as needed.

4. Allocation of students to teaching events

- 4.1. Where allocation of students is straightforward, CT will allocate the students to their activity groups, until the start of the Academic Year. Responsibility then passes to LT. If there are special conditions on how to allocate students to their groups, LT will do the allocations.

5. Teaching Staff

- 5.1. Teaching Staff should expect to have teaching events timetabled during standard hours of operation: 09:00-18:00 Monday to Friday during teaching semesters, noting that individual teaching staff will not be expected to carry out teaching duties across these whole periods.
- 5.2. There may be staff who are unavailable for certain days/times and have one of more of the following:
 - a part-time contract
 - a Flexible Working Agreement
 - research, clinical or administrative duties. Such blocks of time will be scheduled flexibly according to the requirements of the teaching timetable unless the relevant Head of School or Director of Institute determines that they need to occur on a specific day of the week.
- 5.3. Once teaching staff unavailability has been approved by the relevant Head of School/Department or Director of Institute, LT must enter the unavailability into the timetabling system by the published deadline. CT will endeavour to accommodate late submissions, but these cannot be guaranteed.
- 5.4. Timetables will not normally be amended to reflect changes to staffing after the timetable has been published. It is expected that schools/institutes will work to ensure that any reallocation of teaching staff or assistants works around the constraints of the published timetable.
- 5.5. Teaching staff are responsible for adhering to the published seating capacity limits for rooms, as exceeding these limits could result in health and safety risks and impact on the quality of the student experience

6. Publication of timetables and communication of timetable changes

- 6.1. Timetables for all students, staff and modules will be made available online on a single published timetable release date per semester.
- 6.2. LT should communicate the publication of timetables to staff and students and distribute draft timetable information to individual teaching staff as appropriate throughout the scheduling process.
- 6.3. If CT or LT need to make changes to the timetable due to fluctuations in student numbers, they will contact each other as soon as possible. Due to the scarcity of large rooms, over-recruitment by one school may result in the following to allow teaching to have the correct sized room:

- teaching sessions for **that** school having to move room, day or time
 - teaching sessions for **other** schools having to move room, day or time.
- 6.4. If CT need to make urgent changes to the timetable in response to unplanned circumstances, LT will be informed as soon as possible. Where many changes are necessary, e.g., in the case of a building flooding, CT will produce a spreadsheet of affected teaching sessions and communicate this on the Timetabling Forum on Microsoft Teams. LT will then request any mitigation (e.g. move to a different room or move online) in this spreadsheet. CT will make the relevant changes to the session and communicate these on the spreadsheet. Note that CT cannot source external spaces due to the UKVI licence rules.
- 6.5. LT must notify teaching staff and students of any changes to the timetable.
- 6.6. LT must inform CT as soon as possible if teaching is cancelled, to ensure this is accurately reflected on student timetables.
- 6.7. LT will process student requests for changes to group allocations according to local policy. CT will not process change requests from individual students.
- 6.8. Before allowing students to change their module selections, LT must consider the remaining capacity in assigned teaching rooms, to minimise room changes or overcrowding. Some modules may need to be capped according to the capacity of the teaching room allocated.

7. Timetable change requests from schools

- 7.1. Changes which would have a negative effect on the student experience will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
- 7.2. Change requests which would create timetable clashes for students or staff will not be permitted.
- 7.3. Change requests, after the timetable has been published to students, must be submitted via the online change request form, outlining the reason for the request. For change requests submitted by a lecturer directly to CT, approval is needed from the relevant Head of School/Department or Director of Institute, before CT can process it.