Timetabling Policy Operational Guidelines

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Timetabling Policy – operational guidelines

Teaching Times

1.1.   Teaching, learning and assessment sessions will normally be timetabled during the standard hours of operation: at present these are 09:00 to 18:00, although there are some activities that are delivered outside these times. Dates and times for undergraduate provision in the School of Medicine and Dentistry may differ, and the requirements for these programmes are not covered in these guidelines.

Out of hours activities

1.2.   Postgraduate teaching and learning activities using general teaching space may be scheduled outside of normal hours of operation. Wherever possible, out of hours activities should be confined to the Bancroft Building, Graduate Centre or Garrod Building.

Allocation of teaching slots to teaching activities (HSS and S&E)

1.3.   Timetabling Support will normally assign teaching slots to all classes. The allocation of teaching slots will be guided by the following key principles:

- optimisation of student preference;
- consideration of teaching staff availability;
- commitment to ensuring the efficient and effective use of the teaching estate.

Student focussed timetables
- Maximising student module choice

1.4.   Student module selection data will be used to generate clash-free timetables for students and enable the maximum potential choice of modules for students.

1.5.   For new students, diet information and historical module selection data will be used to identify the most common module combinations. The requirement to deliver clash-free timetables for students and staff will be the primary determiner in assigning teaching slots to teaching activities.

1.6.   Schools and institutes will be notified of any student module choices that could not be accommodated upon receipt of the draft timetable in early June.

Student focussed timetables
- Reflecting student timetable preferences

1.7.   Further to ensuring clash-free timetables, Timetabling Support will endeavour to ensure that, wherever possible, teaching activities are assigned timeslots that ensure timetables are as reflective of student timetable preferences as possible.

1.8.   Student timetable preference data will be gathered through an annual online survey and used to generate ranked quality metrics that will be used to steer timetable generation through a combination of automated scheduling and manual intervention.

1.9.   In certain circumstances, it may be necessary for teaching activities to be scheduled at specific times due to external factors. In such instances, schools must submit these

requirements during the data submission exercise in Semester 2 of the preceding academic year.

1.10. For some programmes in the School of Medicine and Dentistry it is not currently possible to schedule using metric data or student module information. In such cases suggested days and times, as submitted by the relevant Institute, will be used to timetable teaching activities.

1.11. Where possible, Timetabling Support will use student timetable quality metrics to determine the days and times for teaching activities and when allocating students to tutorials. Schools will be issued with a report outlining the extent to which these metrics have been met alongside draft timetables in June.

Teaching Staff

1.12. Queen Mary is a research-intensive university and as such it is important that the teaching timetable is effective in enabling staff to have the time and space to work on research and other academic or university business.

1.13. Normally, the limits on consecutive teaching hours for teaching staff will be as follows:
Lectures/tutorials: No more than three consecutive hours
Labs: No more than four consecutive hours.

Local practice may vary in exceptional circumstances.

1.14. Heads of School and Directors of Institute are responsible for the availability and teaching load of individual staff members, regardless of contract type.

1.15. Schools and institutes manage teaching staff availability within the timetabling system which provides the definitive record of teaching staff availability in each academic year. All teaching staff availability information must be entered into the system by the published deadline. The accommodation of late submissions cannot be guaranteed.

1.16. As a general rule, staff may expect to have teaching events timetabled during standard hours of operation: 0900-1800h, Monday to Friday during teaching semesters.

1.17. 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 works around the constraints of a published timetable.

Timetable Change Requests

1.18. It is important to recognise that any change request can have a negative impact on the wider timetable. Only exceptional requests will be considered and evidence that other less disruptive solutions have been explored will be required.

1.19. Change requests that would result in timetable clashes for students or staff will not be permitted.

1.20. All change requests must be submitted via the online change request form, outlining the rationale for the request and confirming approval has been given by the relevant Head of

School or Director of Institute.

1.21. Student requests for changes to allocations of multiple-iteration activities will be processed by schools/institutes and according to local policy relating to student allocation change requests. Timetabling Support will not process change requests from individual students.

1.22. The teaching timetable will not normally be amended in order to accommodate changes to student module selections after the timetable has been published. In order to minimise timetable changes or overcrowding, schools must consider remaining capacity in teaching rooms before allowing students to change their module selections. Some modules may need to be capped according to the capacity of the teaching rooms allocated to activities.

Publication of timetables and communication of timetable changes

1.23. Timetables for all students, staff, programmes and modules will be made available online on a single published timetable release date.

1.24. It is the responsibility of schools and institutes to communicate the publication of timetables to staff and students, and to distribute draft timetables to individual teaching staff as appropriate throughout the scheduling process.

1.25. In the event that Timetabling Support have to make changes to the timetable due to fluctuations in student numbers or in response to unplanned circumstances, school/institute contacts will be informed as soon as possible.

1.26. It is always the responsibility of the school or institute to notify teaching staff and students of any changes to the timetable.

1.27. In the event of cancelled teaching or a change to the schedule schools and institutes must inform Timetabling Support at the soonest opportunity in order to ensure that this is accurately reflected on student timetables.

Effective use of the teaching estate

1.28. Schools and Institutes are responsible for ensuring that any specific teaching requirements regarding equipment, location or type of teaching space are accurately recorded during the data submission exercise in Semester 2 of the preceding academic year.

1.29. Activities requiring specialist facilities will have priority access to specialist teaching spaces if the request is made by the submission deadline.

1.30. In order to reduce travel time between teaching activities, wherever possible teaching will be contained within designated zones on Mile End Campus. It is intended that this will also support a sense of familiarity and identity for students with their home schools. Where constraints around capacity and specific teaching requirements allow it, activities will be zoned according to the owning School and as follows:

Mile End West (for SBCS, SEMS, EECS, SMS)
Maths Building
ITL Building
Engineering Building
People's Palace
Fogg Building
Bancroft Road Teaching Rooms
Graduate Centre

Mile End Centre (for SEF, Geog, SPA, SEFP)
Geography Building
Queens' Building
G.O. Jones Building
People's Palace
Graduate Centre

Mile End East (for SBM, SLLF, SPIR, Law, SED, History)
Bancroft Building
Arts One
Arts Two
Laws
Scape East

Mile End North (for non-modular teaching)
Scape Canalside

This does not apply to postgraduate teaching in HSS and S&E. The Graduate Centre will be the default location for all postgraduate teaching activities on Mile End campus.

Efficient use of the teaching estate

1.31. All teaching space on all campuses, however it is designated and managed, will be included in the single timetabling system used at Queen Mary.

1.32. Wherever possible, real class sizes will be used to ensure that allocated teaching spaces and teaching activities are as accurately and closely matched as possible.

1.33. For postgraduate and new undergraduate students, 'planned sizes' will be provided by schools for all related teaching activities. This information will be used to ensure that teaching is accommodated in appropriately sized rooms. Planned sizes will be matched against actual registrations once they are known.

1.34. 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.

1.35. The user is 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.

1.36. Timetabling Support will seek to schedule teaching locations within the agreed Frequency Rate target of 70-80%. This level of activity ensures good utilisation of space while maintaining contingency for unplanned events and enabling flexibility to create student-focussed timetables.

1.37. Schools and institutes must inform Timetabling Support if a scheduled teaching activity is no longer required as soon as possible. Room audits are conducted during each teaching semester and a report of room usage is considered by the Space Management and Capacity Planning Group.

Cross-campus travel

1.38. Students should not be normally expected to have teaching on different campuses on the same day.

1.39. Due to the close proximity of the two sites, cross campus travel may be permitted between Charterhouse Square and West Smithfield. Sufficient travel time must be factored in between teaching sessions in these circumstances.

Students and staff with a disability

1.40. Access for students and staff with a disability is a priority and will be accommodated.

1.41. The Disability and Dyslexia Service will inform Timetabling Support and contacts in schools/institutes of any special requirements for students at the earliest opportunity.