Timetabling Policy

Policy for scheduling teaching and learning activities

Contents:

1. Introduction

1.1   This timetabling policy establishes the principles and procedures for creating and managing the teaching timetable at De Montfort University (DMU). The policy aims to ensure the delivery of a student-centred teaching and learning experience, the efficient scheduling of resources, supporting academic staff to manage their academic responsibilities effectively, and the promotion of transparency in the scheduling process. This policy considers feedback from students and staff.

1.2   This policy aims to establish a clear framework for scheduling teaching and exam activities whether in-person or online, optimising the use of physical and digital resources, including teaching spaces and staff availability. It aligns with the university's strategic objectives and seeks to enhance the student experience while fostering inclusivity and accessibility for all students and staff.

2. Scope

2.1   This policy applies to scheduled teaching for taught programmes, including exams & assessments plus room bookings at the DMU Leicester Campus.

3. Glossary

3.1   Home buildings – Buildings that are primarily associated with specific subjects or academic departments, where room allocations are prioritised to keep teaching and learning activities close to their subject's main location.

3.2   Phase Tests - Scheduled, in-semester assessments that take place during teaching weeks to evaluate students' understanding of material covered in a specific phase of a module or course.

3.3   Provisional timetables – A draft version of the timetable shared internally for review and validation. It allows staff to check for accuracy, identify issues and suggest amendments before the final timetable is published.

3.4   Reasonable adjustments - Modifications to the standard timetable made to support students or staff with disabilities, health conditions or specific personal circumstances. These adjustments are designed to remove or reduce barriers to participation and ensure equitable access to teaching and learning. In line with the Equality Act 2010, the university has a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments to avoid placing individuals at a substantial disadvantage.

3.5 Scheduling – The process of assigning resources—such as staff, rooms, and activities—to specific days and times within the timetable.

3.6 Teaching allocation - The total hours of timetabled formal scheduled teaching allocated to an academic member of staff. Formal scheduled teaching hours for each member of staff must not exceed 18 hours in any week or 550 hours in total (pro-rata for pro-rata staff) across the full academic year (see section 8.3).

3.7 Timetable Production Schedule - A structured timeline outlining key milestones, deadlines, and responsibilities for the creation, review and publication of the academic timetable. It ensures coordination across departments and supports timely delivery of an accurate and student-focused timetable.

3.8 Timetabling - The process of planning and organising teaching and learning activities across the academic calendar to ensure a student-centred experience. It involves the efficient scheduling of resources—such as staff, rooms and equipment—while supporting academic staff in managing their responsibilities.

3.9 Unavailability - Specified days and times when particular resources, such as staff, rooms or equipment, are not available for teaching activities and excluded from scheduling.

4. Responsibilities

Academic Board

4.1 Discuss and approve the policy.

University Leadership Board

4.2 Ownership of this policy is for the University Registrar supported by Director of Registry Services.

PVC/Deans and Deputy Deans

4.3 Responsibility for indicating approval or otherwise of post-publication timetable changes and informing the Timetable & Attendance Office.

Heads of School

4.4 To ensure accurate implementation and operationalisation of this policy.

4.4.1. Ensure that school inputs into the timetabling process are completed accurately and in line with the Timetable Production Schedule.

4.4.2. To ensure that full-time staff are aware that teaching may be scheduled at any time during the standard teaching week defined in this policy, and that full and accurate information on staff availability is provided, including staff with a research allowance who need regular periods without teaching.

4.4.3. Ensure all staff check their provisional timetables and teaching loads, to only allow for unanticipated change requests after timetable are finalised.

4.4.4. Ensure individual preferences are not submitted as timetabling requirements (exceptions include reasonable adjustments and approved unavailability).

4.4.5. Ensure all teaching activities have the staff assigned, and any unknown staff resolved before timetables are issued to students.

Faculty Academic Timetable Co-ordinators

4.5   To ensure accurate and timely implementation and operationalisation of this policy.

4.5.1. To provide accurate module delivery information by the dates published in the Timetable Production Schedule issued by the Timetable and Attendance Office.

4.5.2. Check provisional timetables. Notify their Timetable and Attendance Office contact of any changes without delay, particularly any unanticipated post-publication changes, subject to Dean's approval.

4.5.3. Ensure all teaching activities have appropriate staff and locations assigned. Team- teaching should be accurately reflected on staff and student timetables and registers.

4.5.4. If teaching staff have to be changed after timetable publication, explore alternative staff to avoid changing the timetable.

4.5.5. Maintain relationships with Timetabling and ensure clear and open lines of communication throughout the process.

Faculty Academic Teaching staff

4.6   To provide all information required for the Timetable Production Schedule deadlines.

4.6.1. Be available for teaching during standard university teaching hours defined in this policy, except where formally approved, see section 5.2.

4.6.2. Check provisional timetables. Notify their Faculty Timetable co-ordinator of any changes without delay, particularly any inaccuracies or unanticipated post-publication changes, subject to Dean/Deputy Dean approval.

4.6.3.   To help ensure teaching spaces are left in a tidy condition and furniture is returned to the standard configuration for the room as posted on the wall, if this has been altered.

Faculty Programme Administration teams

4.7   To ensure accurate implementation and operationalisation of the policy.

4.7.1.   Ensure student registrations and module bookings are completed in time and quality checked to meet the timetable process requirements.

4.7.2.   Maintain relationships with the Timetabling and Attendance team ensuring clear and open lines of communication throughout the process.

Timetable and Attendance team

4.8   To ensure accurate implementation and operationalisation of the policy.

4.8.1.   To ensure the timetable process is delivered efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of students and staff.

4.8.2.   Manage, recommend and oversee continuous improvement of the process.

4.8.3.   Schedule activities and manage room allocations to ensure students are taught in the most appropriate teaching accommodation, as well as optimise room utilisation for both occupancy and frequency levels.

4.8.4.   Provide subject knowledge and expertise for particular Schools/Departments, working with Heads of School, Programme Leaders and Academic Timetable Co-ordinators to produce a clash-free timetable to agreed deadlines. Resolve scheduling conflicts and maintaining the accuracy of the timetable including approved change requests and approved student group changes. Maintain relationships with Faculties and ensure clear and open lines of communication.

4.8.5.   Manage the university room booking process, and support major incidents and campus redevelopments.

4.8.6.   Monitor data integrity of information feeding into downstream systems such as attendance monitoring, and provide management information data regarding timetables as required.

Students

4.9   Students are expected to follow this policy and engage with the processes outlined.

Students must attend all teaching on their personal timetable and be available throughout the standard teaching week. More information is available in the Student Attendance & Engagement Policy

4.9.1. Students should leave University spaces in a clean and tidy condition, disposing of all rubbish and returning any furniture to approved layouts.

4.9.2. Requests to change timetabled groups will only be considered for approved reasons; caring responsibilities, representing the university in sports, or disability and health-related needs. Requests must be submitted via Faculty Student Advice Centres. These changes may over-ride the scheduling guidelines in this policy.

4.9.3. Support for students who are struggling to meet the requirements of this policy is available through the Students' Union Advice Team.

4.9.4. Students can provide feedback on this policy as part of the standard review process via their Students' Union Student Voice Leaders, who are involved in this process.

5. Scheduling principles

5.1   Teaching periods and Scheduling guidelines.

5.1.1. The university standard term dates are available on the Academic calendar. The standard university teaching hours are from 09.00 to 18.00, Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays and university closure days. Occasional evening teaching finishes by 21.00, any evening and weekend teaching is covered by separate policy (see section 9.5).

5.1.2. For most programmes, the teaching year is split into four blocks. Each block has 7 weeks, usually 6 teaching weeks plus 1 assessment week. Teaching timetables are produced for the whole academic year at once.

5.1.3. The university timetabling process is managed by the Director of Registry Services supported by the Timetabling and Attendance Team. The Timetable held on the university timetable system is the master source, copies and local timetables must not be generated.

5.1.4. The Timetabling and Attendance Office publish a Timetable Production Schedule each December. Timetables will be scheduled clash-free and published to staff and students well in advance of the start of teaching.

5.1.5. The scheduling process prioritises optimum use of teaching space, whilst also taking into account disparate teaching patterns and other demands on space. To minimise post-publication changes, all academic and professional services staff involved in timetabling are required to meet the deadlines set out in the Timetable Production Schedule.

5.1.6. Students will be notified of any late changes to their timetabled days and times.

5.1.7. All classes will commence on the hour and finish ten minutes before the scheduled finish time to allow for changeover. For example 9:00 to 9:50, or 9:00 to 10:50 for a 2-hour class. All room bookings should also observe this change-over time.

Wherever possible scheduled teaching will:

5.1.8. Be restricted on Wednesdays after 13.00 for undergraduate students to repeat activities or optional modules only, to allow students to participate in co-curricular activities and sporting activities. Exceptions to this may include activities accommodating or delivered in conjunction with external partners, occasional activities requiring large scale student attendance (such as Phase Tests) or where availability of specialist equipment is highly restricted.

5.1.9. Avoid 13.00-14.00 on Fridays to support students and staff with religious observance.

5.1.10. Ensure that students and staff do not have to attend teaching at each end of the day with long gaps, avoid single 1-hour activities on a day, span across no more than an 8 hour range each day, have no more than four consecutive hours of teaching without a break, and have no more than a total of 6 taught hours of teaching on a day.

5.1.11. A 1-hour break will be incorporated into the timetables between 11.00 and 15.00.

5.1.12. Provide students with a consistent day free of teaching each week.

5.1.13. Provide staff with a day free of teaching each week for the undertaking of research, scholarships, knowledge exchange and other duties. This may not be the same day every week. Full-time staff to have no more than 2 evening sessions per week (see section 9.5), and where teaching lasts beyond 18.00, no classes before 11.00 the next day.

5.1.14. Allocate rooms in home buildings, or next closest alternatives. A 10-minute change-over time is included for staff and students to travel between other buildings.

5.1.15. Will take into account staff and student reasonable adjustments, in line with equality, diversity and inclusion.

5.1.16. Ensure students can attend all elements of their timetabled modules.

5.2   Staff availability.

5.2.1   Staff are expected to be available to teach within the standard university teaching hours (Mon-Fri 9am to 6pm), unless a reasonable adjustment is in place, or formal Flexible Working agreement is approved (or other unavailability approved by Head of School/Dean).

5.2.2 Local preferences and informal agreements cannot be considered.

5.2.3 Part-time staff will be available on the basis of their contractual arrangements.

5.3   Post-publication timetable changes.

5.3.1 Changes to the published timetable are considered detrimental to the student experience and should be limited to those that are deemed essential to the delivery of a module or programme and require Dean or Deputy Dean approval.

5.3.2 Management reporting of departmental change requests will be published each year in order to highlight patterns of change and identify areas of student dissatisfaction.

5.4   Examination timetables.

5.4.1   Faculty Academic Teaching Staff

To provide all information required for the examination timetable production deadlines.

Exam question author(s) to be available during examination to resolve queries with the examination office if they arise.

Check provisional examination timetables issued by the examination office capture examination requests as previously notified to the examination office.

Faculty Programme Administration Teams

To ensure accurate implementation and operationalisation of the policy.

The complexity of examination timetabling requires close and frequent collaboration with key stakeholders in faculties and the examination office and the accuracy and timeliness of data is critical to the process of producing examination schedules.

Ensure student and module data for examinations requirements, including resits and all examination documents, are completed and submitted in time and quality checked to meet the examination timetable process requirements.

Maintain relationships with the examination team ensuring clear and open lines of communication throughout the process.

5.4.2   Examination Team

To ensure accurate implementation and operationalisation of the policy and manage, recommend and oversee continuous improvement of the process.

To ensure the examination timetable process is delivered efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of students and staff.

Where possible, the examination timetabling process incorporates all constraints and limitations identified to the examination office by faculties as part of the annual planning cycle and within published deadlines.

Schedule and publish examination timetables and changes to timetables, manage examination rooms, documents and invigilator allocation to ensure students are examined in the most appropriate accommodation, as well as optimise room and invigilator capacities.

Appoint, train and remunerate examination invigilators.

Coordinate individual exam arrangements for students who have completed the application process with the Disability Advisory Service.

Maintain relationships with Faculties and ensure clear and open lines of communication. Work with Programme Administration Teams to produce a clash-free examination timetable to agreed deadlines.

Work with Timetable and Attendance team to manage room bookings for examinations, within required deadlines

Provide management information data regarding examination timetables as required.

Manage on the day examination operations including response to in-exam incidents. Report incidents and suspected cheating offences to Faculty academic module leads.

5.4.3 Examination Scheduling principles

The examination timetabling process is managed by the Director of Registry Services supported by the Examination Team. The examination timetable published on the university system is the master source and local timetables must not be generated.

Dates of the examination periods are available to students from the beginning of the academic year.

The scheduling process optimises use of available examination space to schedule examinations within the fixed examination periods. Post publication changes to the examination timetable are considered detrimental to student's preparedness for the examination and should be limited to those classed as essential only.

To minimise post publication changes all academic and professional services staff involved in examination timetabling are required to meet the deadlines set out by the examination team for each examination period. Local preferences for specific days cannot be considered.

Examinations are scheduled between Monday to Friday during the hours of 09.00 and 16.00. Occasionally there may be examinations of one hour which commence at 16.00. Examination durations are one, two or three hours.

Wherever possible examination timetables will:

• Avoid Friday afternoons to support students with religious observance

• Avoid Sundays, UK Bank Holidays and Eid

• Aim to provide one clear day between examinations, where feasible

• Aim to schedule no more than one examination per day for students, where feasible

• Avoid examinations taking place in the evening

5.4.4 Students

Students are expected to be available to attend their examinations and to check the examination timetable.

Students are expected to comply with regulations and rules that govern the examination environment and follow the guidance and instruction of university appointed examination invigilators.

5.5 Room Bookings.

5.5.1 General student room bookings, such as for Sports & Societies, are to be made via the Student Union (DSU). Requests should be submitted via online form to the DSU Opportunities Team. Bookings are not complete until confirmed by the Timetable & Attendance Office.

5.5.2 The DSU Opportunities Team are responsible for all checks and arrangements required including 'out of hours' access with Security and any risk assessments.

5.5.3 Use of rooms for teaching takes priority over other activities, with the exception of annual pre-booked university activities, such as examinations and open days

5.5.4 University staff can book rooms for non-teaching university activities such as meetings and events once the final teaching timetable has been published. Where events are booked on behalf of external organisations, these must be made by contacting the Estates Conferencing team.

5.5.5 Teaching must not be booked using the room booking system. Changes to teaching must follow the Timetable Process Schedule or post-publication change approval process.

5.5.6 All room users must familiarise themselves with the any Fire Safety notices in rooms.

5.5.7 Non-teaching room bookings may be reviewed by Estates and Security. In some instances, more information around the event may be requested from the booking party.

5.5.8 Booking requests should include all information regarding the event type, named contact details, total number of delegates and any external attendees.

5.5.9 Room bookers must familiarise themselves with the University's Prevent guidelines in the Counterextremism strategy

5.5.10 In the event of unexpected circumstances requiring emergency maintenance to a room or equipment, bookings may need to be rearranged. The affected booking party will be notified as soon as practicable, including any alternative rooms available.

5.5.11 Rooms must be returned to their original layout and left in an appropriate condition for subsequent users. Where portering or catering is required for the room booking, the requests must be made to the relevant team by the person requesting the booking. The booking must include time for any resetting of rooms or removal of catering. All rubbish must be removed. Catering is not allowed in Lecture Theatres.

5.5.12 Bookings must not be made for the purpose of 'holding' rooms. Such overbooking prevents available resources from being utilised fairly and equitably for other staff. Should a booking no longer be required it is the bookers responsibility to cancel the booking and all associated arrangements.

6   Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed each year. Key Performance Indicators will be used to measure timetable quality including space utilisation against sector benchmarks.

The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the Registrar. Any disputes will be arbitrated by the Director of Registry Services.

7.   Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

This policy aims to ensure fair and accessible scheduling for all members of the university community. The following will be considered as part of the timetabling process.

7.1   Accessibility of teaching spaces including physical and digital resources, wheelchair access, hearing loops, and assistive technologies. Allocate rooms with facilities for individuals with specific needs.

7.2   The University is aware of major religious observances and will consider these where possible to avoid scheduling critical activities e.g. assessments which clashes with them.

7.3   Flexible scheduling to incorporate provisions for part-time students, mature students, and those with caregiving responsibilities, to allow equitable access to programmes and resources.

7.4   Student and staff consultation by involving students and staff in the timetabling process to identify barriers and accommodate diverse needs effectively. Also, regularly collect and analyse feedback to improve inclusivity.

7.5   Continuous monitoring of attendance patterns to identify groups who may face barriers due to the timetable and adjust the scheduling policy accordingly.

8.   Sustainability

8.1   Make use of more energy-efficient buildings and avoid underutilising spaces and scheduling classes in larger spaces if smaller rooms are available to reduce energy consumption.

8.2   Encourage digital access to timetables through apps or online platforms to avoid the use of printed schedules.

8.3   Consolidate room usage to reduce and cleaning and maintenance requirements.

8.4   Create timetables that minimise long gaps for students and staff, encouraging energy savings and enhanced well-being.

8.5 Adapt in response to unforeseen events, minimising disruptions while supporting safety and sustainability goals.

8.6 Incorporate feedback from students, faculty, and staff on sustainable timetabling needs, such as preferred commuting times and resource accessibility.

9. Related policies and standards/documentation

9.1 Student Attendance & Engagement Policy

9.2 Counterextremism strategy on Campus

9.3 Guidance on Academic Workloads

9.4 Procedure for Allocating Staff Duties and Timetables

9.5 Evening and Weekend Working – Teaching Staff Lecturers in Higher Education

9.6 Room Booking Conditions

10. Appendices

Appendix A: Teaching Timetabling Process Schedule 2025/26
Appendix B: Examination Process Schedule 2025/26

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