

Timetabling Policy

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Timetabling Policy

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the University's approach to the planning, delivery and publication of timetabled activities. It establishes a consistent and effective framework for timetabling across the University and ensures that teaching spaces and facilities are managed fairly and transparently.

The policy will be supported by a suite of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). A set of quality measures will ensure that the University reports on, and monitors performance against, the policy and core principles of timetabling.

2. Principles of Timetabling

The University aims to adhere to a set of core principles for the design of the timetable:

- **Student-centric:** The student experience will be prioritised. There will be no timetable clashes, and consecutive long teaching blocks (unless part of programme delivery models e.g., Graduate Apprenticeships) and isolated single classes with large time gaps in between will be minimised. The timetable will seek to protect Wednesday afternoons from formal teaching to enable student participation in sports, societies, and voluntary activities.
- **Teaching quality:** Teaching will be scheduled in appropriate venues (e.g., lecture theatres, labs, seminar rooms) that align with pedagogical needs. Where teaching activities require specialist equipment, they will be scheduled in rooms that provide the necessary facilities.
- **Staff wellbeing:** Fair and equitable scheduling will ensure no timetable clashes, support protection of preparation time and reduction of back-to-back teaching.
- **Accessibility and inclusion:** Accessibility will be embedded in timetabling decisions to support the University's equality commitments. Consideration will be given to reasonable adjustments with respect to timetabling for staff and students with disabilities and documented medical conditions, and caring responsibilities.
- **Space, efficiency and compliance:** The timetable will aim to optimise room occupancy and reduce under-utilisation of teaching spaces. Compliance with health and safety requirements, CMA and UKVI guidance, will be prioritised.
- **Sustainability:** The University's environmental sustainability agenda will be supported where possible through alignment of occupancy with energy efficiency and reduction of unnecessary travel.
- **Consistency and reliability:** Timely and accurate timetabling information will be provided to students and staff to allow them to plan independent study and academic work. Post-publication changes will be minimised.

- **Systems and data accuracy:** The University will seek to enhance the effectiveness of systems for timetabling, ensure a single source of data for teaching activities, and deliver real-time timetable updates.

3. The Teaching Year

The University uses a 52-week academic year, with teaching weeks and trimester periods published in advance by Registry to ensure consistency for staff and students.

3.1 Teaching Week and Timetabling Hours

The University sets and publishes standard teaching times, building opening hours, and core teaching days to ensure consistent delivery of learning and teaching across all campuses.

Term and trimester dates are available on the website at <http://www.gcu.ac.uk/theuniversity/calendar/>

Some programme start dates may be different from the standard term and, where this is the case, Schools or GCU London will publish dates and will notify students of the trimester dates and any specific arrangements in advance.

The University operates a standard teaching week within defined core hours.

Core teaching hours are:

- Monday, Tuesday and Thursday: 0900 – 1800
- Wednesday: 0900 – 1300
- Friday: 0900 – 1700

Teaching may be scheduled outside of core hours, including evenings and weekends, where required to support programme delivery. Such activity must be planned in advance and communicated clearly to students.

Teaching events will be scheduled to start on the hour. Typically, classes will be scheduled in 1-hour units and comprise 50 minutes teaching, starting on the hour finishing 10 minutes to the hour to allow changeover time. Two-hour classes will start at standardised times such as 0900, 1100, 1300, 1500, to reduce the potential for clashes and to ensure optimal space utilisation. In some cases, longer block teaching may be required to meet the needs of programme delivery.

3.2 Wednesday Afternoons

The University is committed to delivering a high-quality student experience and supporting students to participate in sports, volunteering and participatory activities which improve wellbeing, skill development and employment opportunities. Therefore, teaching will not be scheduled on Wednesday afternoons unless by exception.

Any exceptions must be approved by the Dean of School or Director of GCU London, or nominated senior delegate, and notified to the PVC Education in advance of timetable publication.

In some cases, it may be necessary for students to leave before 1300 on a Wednesday for purposes of travelling to sporting competitions. To support such engagement, a University approved letter confirming these activities will be available to students on request from the Students' Association.

4. Teaching spaces and activities

Teaching space is a shared institutional resource. A clear prioritisation framework will be applied to ensure that teaching, core activities and events are allocated space in a fair and consistent manner.

The University maintains central oversight of all teaching spaces, with Estates responsible for managing room provision and Registry responsible for assessing the impact of any changes to teaching spaces. Specialist spaces may be subject to defined access arrangements, and all teaching rooms are expected to meet agreed standards for equipment and usability.

Phased release of estate in respect of different categories of activity to ensure academic teaching activities, examinations, research, key University events such as graduation and registration, and Students' Association engagements are prioritised.

The University requires that all teaching activities are planned, recorded, and delivered in accordance with approved programme documentation and established timetabling processes to ensure a consistent and reliable timetable for students and staff.

5. Teaching Staff

The University policy is that teaching staff are available for teaching throughout the core-teaching day and times. All exceptions, such as agreed part-time working or flexibility for caring arrangements, approved in advance of the timetabling year and authorised by the Dean of School or Director of GCU London, or nominated senior delegate.

6. Publication of Timetables

Teaching timetables will be published in a timely manner and in accessible format to support effective planning for students and staff. Timetables for each Trimester will be published to staff and students no later than five weeks prior to the start of teaching. The University's central timetabling system will publish individual student and staff teaching timetables, as well as composite module and programme timetables.

Any changes to published teaching timetables will be managed through defined processes to protect timetable accuracy, minimise disruption, and maintain a positive student and staff experience.

7. Standard Operating Procedures

The policy will be supported by a suite of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which will clearly set out interdependencies and constraints, room bookings, change control and exemption processes. SOPs will be developed in collaboration with key stakeholders and will be

disseminated appropriately for transparency and to support operational effectiveness and efficiency.

8. Timetabling Roles and Responsibilities

The University assigns clear responsibilities for the planning, creation, checking and publication of timetables to ensure accuracy, fairness, and a positive experience for students and staff.

8.1 Registry Timetabling team

- Overall responsibility for the creation and publication of teaching timetables, based on data via student systems integration and information provided by academic units.

8.2 Deans of Schools and Director of GCU London

- Overall responsibility within their School / Campus that processes for the creation of timetables are completed within agreed timescales. Operationally, this may be delegated to a senior nominee.
- Responsibility for ensuring that appropriate local arrangements are in place and adhered to, including relating to accessibility requirements, and the necessary data are provided.

8.3 Heads of Academic Departments and Director of London or their delegate

- Responsibility for ensuring that programme and module timetable requirements are submitted on time as per the published schedule and reviewing pre-publication timetable change requests.
- Responsibility for approval of staff teaching availability and constraints.

8.4 Programme and Module Leaders

- Responsibility for ensuring that Module and Programme timetabling requirements and other relevant information are provided within agreed timescales. Ensuring that any unavoidable changes are made in due time and clearly communicated to students.

9. Students

The student experience is central to the University's core principles for timetable design.

To ensure timetabling is effective in supporting learning and teaching, it is the responsibility of students to:

- check the accuracy of their timetable and advise Registry of clashes and errors in module and teaching data within a timeframe of one week from commencement of teaching;
- select optional modules using the relevant module enrolment process, noting that optional modules are confirmed on a first come first serve basis;
- communicate changes to choice of modules and seminar groups through their Programme Coordinator.

10. Governance

A Timetabling Group with membership comprised of academic and professional services staff, the Students' Association and student representatives will ensure appropriate governance for the Timetable Policy. The Group will report to UET and through the University's academic governance structures to Senate.

The Group will agree a set of quality measures to allow reporting and monitoring of performance against the Policy and the core principles of timetabling.

These measures will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- i. instances of consecutive long teaching blocks of 3-4 hours (unless part of programme delivery model);
- ii. instances of isolated single 1-hour classes with large time gaps in between;
- iii. extent of protection of Wednesday afternoons;
- iv. publication of the timetable no later than five weeks prior to the start of teaching; and
- v. scale of post-publication changes.

The Group will support an annual timetable review informed by the quality measures, space and resource utilisation data, and student and staff feedback.

Key contacts

Key contacts for students with timetable queries:

timetabling@gcu.ac.uk or Programme Co-ordinator

Key contacts for staff:

timetabling@gcu.ac.uk or nominated School / Campus lead