Procedure: Timetabling

Purpose

To set out the procedures which identify minimal necessary constraints and within those constraints produce a student optimised University timetable.

General Principles

1. Data inputs required to create the timetable come from several key sources in the University as outlined in the sections of this procedure.

2. Data inputs include analysis such as Program of Study (PoS) to establish common enrolment patterns and conflicts in order to minimise these events for students (see Section Data Required for Timetabling).

3. The combination of these data inputs, including constraints (see Section Constraints) and data analysis create the most optimal timetable for students and staff.

Constraints

4. In the build of the timetable consideration is given to a range of constraints.

5. General constraints include (but are not limited to):
   a. Programs of Study (PoS) used to minimise student clashes determined by a methodology that combines historical enrolment trends, program orders, and expected changes in the upcoming academic year;
   b. fluctuations in enrolment numbers impacting the type of venue allocated;
   c. staff and student access and health and safety requirements;
   d. staff constraints (see Section Teaching Staff Availability);
   e. activities running in all weeks of semester have priority over classes running in a fewer number of weeks in the semester;
   f. activities with large enrolments are prioritised due to less room choice;
   g. teaching activities that require specialised equipment are allocated over those that have standard equipment requirements; and
   h. specialist location, zone and equipment requirements.

6. Additional equity considerations include:
a. the number of 8am starts teaching staff are allocated during the week;
b. to avoid early teaching on a day following late teaching on the previous day;
c. continuous teaching limited to four hours within one day limited for: i) courses that have the most students in common, and (ii) individual staff, unless otherwise requested.
d. two hours attendance for school meetings and adequate time for specific and agreed research obligations approved (see Section Teaching Staff Availability).

Teaching Staff Availability

7. Teaching staff availability is a key factor in producing an optimal timetable for teaching activities.
8. Full time academic staff are allocated the required teaching hours for their courses during the standard teaching hours of the University: 8am-6pm, Monday to Friday.
9. Full time academic staff unable to teach at particular times during standard teaching hours submit a teaching unavailability request with the recommendation of their report line Supervisor/Manager, via the University approved proforma, for consideration of the Associate Dean (Education) of the relevant College.
10. Teaching unavailability requests submitted after the preliminary deadline in the timetable production timeline are additionally considered by the relevant College Dean or Approved Delegate.
11. Reasons for teaching unavailability requests include (but are not limited to):
   a. flexible working arrangements;
   b. pre-approved and inflexible research or teaching commitments (e.g. clinic session, research requirements);
   c. pre-approved inflexible administrative commitments (e.g. school meetings):
   d. University commitments (e.g. ANU Council, boards, committees).
12. Full time academic staff must be available for at least 35 of the 50 standard teaching hours per week out of which teaching time can be allocated, unless there are university-approved contracts that specifically preclude this.
13. Approved unavailability requests are provided by the College to the Timetabling Office.
Timetable Production Timeline

14. The release dates of the preliminary and final timetables will be set to best facilitate planning and robust decision making for students and staff while also allowing sufficient processing time for the timetabling team and dependent teams.

15. A detailed timeline for the timetable production is released by the Timetable Office and aligns with deadlines regarding the notification of course establishment and availability. The timeline specifies deadlines for:

   a. collection of data required for timetabling (see Section Data Required for Timetabling);
   b. release of preliminary timetable;
   c. period(s) of review of the preliminary timetable and deadlines for approved change requests;
   d. publication of final timetable; and
   e. commencement of allocation of students to tutorials by Colleges/Schools.

16. Post publication changes to the final timetable are minimised and only approved in exceptional circumstances (see Timetable Changes below).

Data Required for Timetabling

17. The Timetabling Office source and analyse University data to inform current trends in enrolment patterns and data based on PoS. This information is checked, updated and approved by the Colleges/Schools for use by the Timetable Office.

18. A reference committee is convened annually by the Registrar including timetabling staff, student representatives and Associate Deans (Education) to determine any University wide priorities to be accommodated in the following year’s timetable.

19. Colleges/Schools and Services provide the Timetable Office with the following data according to the deadlines outlined in the timetable production timeline:

   a. PoS in which each course is included, including core courses and electives;
   b. classes on offer for each semester and sessional terms (Summer, Winter, Autumn, Spring terms);
   c. teaching pattern and method of delivery, including contact hours, class sizes;
   d. resource requirements – type of space and technology requirements;
   e. where known, teaching staff;
   f. teaching staff unavailability (see Section Teaching Staff Availability); and
g. recommendations in relation to accessibility considerations for students and for staff

h. room and resources (e.g., AV) availability as it affects the University teaching pool
rooms.

**Timetabling and Room Allocation**

20. Teaching activities are spread evenly over the week (8am – 6pm, Monday to Friday).

21. Where a course is taught at the Acton campus, at least one class free hour in each
week of semester during the core teaching hours is set aside for student-based
activities which is allocated for 1pm - 2pm Thursday.

22. Intensive classes timetabled for the whole day on Thursdays during semester at the
Acton Campus are required to break between 1pm and 2pm.

23. Timetabling and room allocation for central teaching spaces, shared department, and
departmental teaching spaces agreed to be made available to the Timetable Office, are
the responsibility of the Timetable Office.

24. The University ensures it meets its health and safety obligations, and teaching activities
are not allocated to a room where they exceed the size of the room, unless any of the
following circumstances apply:

   a. a direction is given by the University’s Audit and Risk Management Committee;

   b. teaching activities allocated to a room in a central teaching space can exceed the
      room size (teaching capacity) by up to a maximum of 10 per cent.

   c. teaching activities with a recognised online component (such as an asynchronous
      online echo 360 ‘recording’ or a synchronous online ‘live’ component of dual
      delivery activity) can be allocated to a room sized at no less than 80 per cent of its
      expected total enrolments/allocations for the activity, unless otherwise requested.

25. Where possible, rooms made centrally available by schools are allocated to teaching
activities as first preference for that school unless otherwise specified in the approved
room usage agreement.

26. Time slots for school allocated rooms not required by the Timetable Office are released
back to schools two weeks after semester starts.

**Production and Publication**

27. A working document titled ‘preliminary timetable’ is prepared and published. The
timetable remains in preliminary form for two weeks during which time, Colleges and
Schools are responsible for checking:

   a. adequate provisions have been made for the required activities; and
b. teaching staff are made aware of their required teaching hours.

28. Colleges and Schools are responsible for providing feedback and requesting changes to the preliminary timetable to the Timetable Office.

29. Changes to the final timetable are only permitted as described in the Timetable Changes section for extenuating circumstances and must remain in line with the objective of a student focused timetable.

30. The final timetable is published on the web, accessible for students at the public website and for staff in staff services.

**Student Allocation**

**Semester timetabling (Semester 1 and Semester 2 teaching activities)**

31. Allocate Plus (referred to as MyTimetable), is the official ANU allocation system (from Semester 2, 2022).

32. Opening MyTimetable for student self-allocation:
   
a. The class allocation system opens for student allocation at least 2 weeks prior to semester commencement. An official date for the opening of the class allocation is set for Semester 1 and Semester 2 and is published on MyTimetable for the relevant semester.

b. Timetabled courses not opening for student self-allocation on the official opening date require the approval of the relevant College Dean (or delegate) and are published on MyTimetable prior to the official opening date.

c. Courses which contain only some activity groups or teaching activities not open for student self-allocation do not require College Dean approval but require appropriate messaging/notifications to students in MyTimetable.

33. Closing MyTimetable for student self-allocation:

   a. MyTimetable closes for student self-allocation prior to census date and at the earliest, 2 weeks after semester commencement, at a date set by the Timetabling Office following consultation with schools and colleges.

   b. Upon closure all activity groups are set to ‘read only’. Teaching activities set to ‘read only’ appear on the students’ timetable but are not open for student self-allocation.

   c. School/college staff allocate students on their behalf after closure of student self-allocation, up until the final system closure.
34. Final System Closure of MyTimetable:

- All activity groups are set to ‘off’ at the end of the first week of the semester exam period. These no longer appear on student or staff timetables. Requests for exceptions require the approval of the relevant College Dean (or delegate).

35. Publication of opening & closing dates:

a. Official opening dates, closure of student self-allocation and final system closure dates for Semester 1 and Semester 2 are published for all students and staff in MyTimetable.

b. All approved exemptions from the above dates are published in MyTimetable for students and staff.

36. Auto-Allocation of students:

a. Students who remain unallocated to a teaching activity after student allocation closes will be auto allocated by a bulk action in MyTimetable.

b. The above action will not allow the allocation of students with clashes. These will require individual management between students and their school.

**Sessional Teaching Activities (Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring Sessions)**

37. The Timetabling Office may implement separate processes for sessional activities falling outside of Semester 1 and 2, and will take into consideration best practice within system functionality and optimal outcomes for student and staff when determining these processes.

**Recordings and Clashable activities**

38. Live Activities with a recording available:

- Lectures and Lectorials are clashable timetabled activities by default in MyTimetable, with the assumption that these activities offer students a recording (echo360 or other means).

- Teaching staff wishing to opt out of a recording for lectures or lectorials seek approval from the Associate Dean (Education) and notify the Timetabling Office, for the activity to be set to ‘unclashable’.

- Teaching staff may request additional individual activities to be clashable, where a recording is offered to students.

39. To allow flexibility and better timetable management, specific activity types (in addition to lectures and lectorials as mentioned in the previous clause) are set up in MyTimetable as ‘clashable’. These include non-mandatory teaching activities such as drop-in sessions and Public Holiday make up classes.
**Timetable Changes**

40. The following change requests with little impact to students are accepted without approval:

Change in location (within the Acton Campus or within the Mt Stromlo campus)

   a. Additional teaching activity options for students to select from. This does not include additional mandatory activities.
   
   b. Change in staff (with no resulting change to teaching activity)

41. Requests for change resulting in a change to teaching activity patterns (e.g. timing, duration and/or weeks on offer) are approved by the relevant College Dean (or delegate) where extenuating circumstances exist. Impact to students must be minimised and detailed in the request. Late Courses/cancellations already approved in line with Course/Class Cancellation Procedure do not require a second approval. Reasons include (but are not limited to):

   a. unexpected decline in enrolment numbers;
   
   b. unexpected staff turnover;
   
   c. mandated changes to research requirements unknowable at time of initial availability submission;
   
   d. other unexpected events outside of the control of the College/School;
   
   e. creation of a new course (clash-free scheduling cannot be guaranteed and depends on available resources); and
   
   f. disestablishment of course.

42. All requests for changes are submitted to the Timetabling Office along with the relevant approval.

43. All change requests require the following information:

   a. Reason for change (e.g. enrolment numbers, staffing etc.);
   
   b. Type of change (e.g. activity deletion, duration change).

44. The Timetable Office notifies the College/School timetable coordinators and the original change requestor of the outcome of the request in writing.

45. Colleges/Schools notify all students enrolled in the affected courses of any changes to the timetable after final publication. Once MyTimetable is opened for student allocation, allocated students receive automatic system generated notifications of changes resulting in a change in their timetable.
46. Requests for timetable changes after student allocation have a high impact on students. For this reason, change requests (other than those with minor impact identified in clause 40) are only made in extenuating circumstances and require the approval of the relevant College Dean (or delegate). Information provided to the approver includes the number of students impacted and proposed solutions for students. If the change involves rescheduling of a teaching activity to a different time, consideration is given to determine the optimal time with least impact on students with reference to MyTimetable context grids.

Escalations

47. The Timetable Office is responsible for ensuring that clashes are avoided where possible and resolving timetable issues in the first instance. The proposed resolution seeks to minimize impact on students and staff, while optimising room utilisation.

48. For requested changes:
   a. the Timetable Office seeks to resolve any requests with the requestor and indicate any reasons why the change cannot be accommodated as requested; and
   b. any timetable change requests that cannot be resolved by the Timetable Office are referred to the Registrar in the first instance and thereafter to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

Non-Teaching bookings

49. Teaching events take priority in all University teaching spaces over other approved activities. If a teaching space is not in use for timetabled activities, it maybe booked for other purposes subject to University policies and procedures. Please refer to relevant booking policies and procedures at: https://services.anu.edu.au/campus-environment/venues-functions/anu-teaching-learning-commons-tlc-venue-hire

Reporting

50. Reporting is submitted each semester to the Senior Management Group (SMG), the Teaching and Learning Development Committee, and Director, Facilities and Services demonstrating adherence to the Timetable Policy. The report contains data on the following:
   a. compliance to deadlines set by the Timetable Office for each College; and
   b. number and type of change requests processed by College/School.
Title: Timetabling

Purpose: To provide a student focused timetable that will support face to face teaching and learning with minimal clashes while optimising the use of available teaching spaces, resources and facilities.

Audience: Students, Staff- Academic

Category: Academic

Topic: Students

Subtopic: 

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Responsible Officer: Registrar, Student Administration (registrar@anu.edu.au)

Approved By: Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Academic) (dvc.academic@anu.edu.au)

Contact Area: Division of Student Administration and Academic Services (policy.regs@anu.edu.au)

Authority: Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000

National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021

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