Learning and Teaching Code of Practice

Academic Governance Approval

Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC)

Academic Sponsor

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students)

Professional Services Owner

Assistant Registrar (Quality, Assessment and Partnerships)

Assistant Registrar (Student Records, Operations and Returns)

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# Timetabling

## Purpose and Objectives of Timetabling

A comprehensive timetable is a fundamental building block of a well-designed, and well-delivered curriculum. A planned and structured approach to timetabling is therefore essential for the student learning experience.

A comprehensive timetable is a timetable that includes

* All scheduled teaching and learning events associated with all active modules for the full academic year (Semester 1 and Semester 2)
* Accurate location details for all events
* Accurate lecturer details for all events
* Accurate event types for all events

### Objectives of Timetabling

Timetabling practice at the Royal Agricultural University will be designed to meet the following objectives, in order of priority;

1. To publish a comprehensive timetable to all students 6 weeks before the start of the academic year, with confidence that changes will not be required
2. To timetable events as they are detailed in the approved module specification for each module
3. To accommodate any restrictions arising from academic staff contracts
4. To use space efficiently, targeting 70% utilisation in actively timetabled space
5. To accommodate restrictions arising for practical or pedagogic reasons
6. To accommodate restrictions arising from academic staff preference

Where issues arise within timetabling practice, or within the published timetable, solutions will be identified in accordance with these prioritised objectives.

## The Academic Calendar

The University operates a 52-week calendar (week 0-51). Week 0 begins on the second Monday in September each year.

### Academic Terms

Teaching, learning and assessment activity is scheduled within three academic terms plus the summer. Academic Term dates therefore determine the periods when students are expected to be engaging in their studies full-time.

Dates may vary depending on public holidays however typical term dates are:

* Autumn Term – Weeks 1-13 (13 weeks)
* Spring Term – weeks 17-28 (12 weeks)
* Summer Term – weeks 31-36 (6 weeks)
* Summer – Weeks 37-51 (15 weeks)

Teaching, learning and assessment activity will not be scheduled outside of term dates. Dates may vary depending on public holidays however typical dates are:

* Christmas – weeks 14-16 (3 weeks)
* Easter – weeks 29-30 (2 weeks)
* Induction – week 0 (1 week)

An undergraduate programme, running over three terms, will include 31 weeks of scheduled learning, teaching and assessment activity.

A postgraduate programme, running over three terms plus the summer, will include 46 weeks of scheduled learning, teaching and assessment activity.

### Semesters

Learning, teaching and assessment activity is divided into two equal semesters. Semester dates therefore determine when individual modules will be delivered and assessed.

Semester 1 lasts for 15 weeks (excluding ‘Welcome Week’ activities) and Semester 2 lasts for 16 weeks (including end-of-year activities).

Dates may vary depending on public holidays however typical semester dates are:

* Semester 1 – weeks 1-13 and weeks 17-18 (15 weeks)
* Semester 2 – weeks 19-28 and weeks 31-36 (16 weeks)

### The Teaching Week

The standard teaching week runs from 09:00-17:00 Monday to Friday, except on Wednesdays as follows:

* Monday 09:00-17:00
* Tuesday 09:00-17:00
* Wednesday 09:00-13:00
* Thursday 09:00-17:00
* Friday 09:00-17:00

Where possible, and only in accordance with the prioritised objectives above, teaching will be avoided before 10:00 on Monday and Thursday each week, in response to student feedback.

### The Teaching Day

Teaching events will be scheduled to start on the hour, and should finish 10 minutes before the hour to allow students to move onto their next teaching event, and to allow lecturers to prepare for the next session.

No student, or lecturer will have more than four consecutive hours of timetabled activity without a break.

All students and lecturers will have a one-hour lunch period between 12:00 and 14:00 every day.

Where a bank holiday occurs during term, teaching events will be rescheduled to an alterative day in that week.

Teaching activity in the Laboratory block will be scheduled between 10:00 and 16:00 each day to include a minimum one-hour gap between each scheduled session.

Timetabled activity across multiple sites within a single day will be minimised where ever possible, however, where a student, or lecturer has teaching split across multiple sites (including Harnhill Farm and the RAU Equestrian Centre) reasonable travel time will be incorporated).

## Teaching Space

Timetabled activity will take place in designated teaching spaces.

In order to achieve an efficient use of space, the timetable will endeavour to use the minimum number of rooms possible, targeting 70% utilisation in actively timetabled space.

Actively timetabled space will be determined each year, based on timetabling requirements and the University’s Estates Plan.

Commercial events will not be scheduled in actively timetabled space without the prior permission of the Director of Academic Services. However, any teaching space which is not considered actively timetabled space for a given academic year, will be made available for commercial use.

The following spaces are designated teaching spaces;

[Table to be finalised]

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Room | Building | Campus | Room type and Layout |
| EJ01 | Emrys Jones | Cirencester |  |
| EJ03 | Emrys Jones | Cirencester |  |
| EJ06 | Emrys Jones | Cirencester |  |
| EJ07 | Emrys Jones | Cirencester |  |
| EJ09 | Emrys Jones | Cirencester |  |
| EJ10 | Emrys Jones | Cirencester |  |
| EJ12 | Emrys Jones | Cirencester |  |
| EJ13 | Emrys Jones | Cirencester |  |
| EJ14 | Emrys Jones | Cirencester |  |
| FG01 | Frank Garner | Cirencester |  |
| FG02 | Frank Garner | Cirencester |  |
| FG03 | Frank Garner | Cirencester |  |
| FG08 | Frank Garner | Cirencester |  |
| FG09 | Frank Garner | Cirencester |  |
| FG10 | Frank Garner | Cirencester |  |
| FG57 | Frank Garner | Cirencester |  |
| PLT | Library | Cirencester |  |
| L01 | Laboratory Block | Cirencester |  |
| L05 | Laboratory Block | Cirencester |  |
| L07 | Laboratory Block | Cirencester |  |
| S1 | RAU Swindon | Swindon |  |
| S2 | RAU Swindon | Swindon |  |
| S3 | RAU Swindon | Swindon |  |
| S4 | RAU Swindon | Swindon |  |
| S5 | RAU Swindon | Swindon |  |

## Event Types

Events will be categorised by event type:

### Scheduled Learning and Teaching

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Event Type | Description | Appearance in Timetable | Typical Room Allocation |
| Lecture | Teaching is predominantly one-way and is delivered in-person, to all students. | Scheduled in the timetable as event type ‘LECTURE’ | Standard teaching rooms; |
| Online Lecture | Teaching is predominantly one-way and is delivered live, online to all students. | Scheduled in the timetable as event type ‘ONLINE LECTURE’ | No room required. |
| Seminar | Teaching is predominantly two-way and is delivered in-person to all students, or a sub-group of students. | Scheduled in the timetable as event type ‘SEMINAR | Standard teaching rooms;Laboratory rooms; computer rooms |
| Online Seminar | Teaching is predominantly two-way and is delivered live, online to all students, or a sub-group of students. | Scheduled in the timetable as event type ‘ONLINE SEMINAR’ | No room required |
| Field Work | Teaching takes place on location but at a location that is owned or maintained by the University. | Scheduled in the timetable as event type ‘FIELDWORK | RAU Equestrian Centre; Harnhill |
| Study Visit | Teaching takes place on location but at a location that is not owned or maintained by the University. | Scheduled in the timetable as event type ‘STUDY VISIT’ | No room required; meeting location only |
| Scheduled Assessment | A scheduled period in which a written exam, or practical assessment may take place. | Scheduled in the timetable as event type ‘SCHEDULED ASSESSMENT’ | Standard teaching rooms;Laboratory rooms; computer rooms |
| Structured Online Study  | Structured study activities provided either pre- or post- another teaching event as preparation or consolidation. For example, pre-recorded lectures, pre-reading, or online quizzes | Not scheduled in the timetable. | No room required |

### Programme-related Events

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Event Type | Description | Appearance in Timetable | Typical Room Allocation |
| Academic Tutorial | An individual, or small-group session led by an Academic Personal Tutor | Scheduled in the timetable as event type ‘ACADEMIC TUTORIAL’ | Standard teaching rooms; |
| Careers Event | Events organised by the Enterprise and Employability team | Scheduled in the timetable as event type ‘CAREERS EVENT’ | No room required. |
| Welcome Week | Introductory events organised during Welcome Week (week 0) | Scheduled in the timetable as event type ‘WELCOME WEEK’ | Standard teaching rooms; |

## Timetabling Practice

There are five stages to the timetabling process

* Data collection (1-2 weeks)
* Draft timetable construction (4weeks)
* Release of draft timetable for comment (1-2 weeks)
* Final timetable construction (1-2 weeks)
* Publication of final comprehensive timetable

### Data Collection

A data collection spreadsheet, and instructional email, will be circulated to Heads of School and Programme Leaders.

Academic staff are responsible for filling in the following information within the data collection spreadsheet:

* The event category for the event
* The event duration if it differs from the standard timeframes per event type
* Numbers of teaching weeks required for the module per event type
* The room(s) required for face- to- face event type
* The staff member teaching on the module and the week(s) they will be teaching
* Any additional information that could help or hinder the timetabling process

Where information provided by academic staff is inconsistent with the distribution of learning and teaching hours detailed in the approved module specifications, the module specification will take precedence.

Any restrictions arising from academic staff contracts will be identified directly from Human Resources and incorporated into the timetabling requirements in advance.

### Draft Timetable Construction

The draft timetable will be produced using the relevant module specifications, and the information obtained from the data collection.

Global events will be pre-populated into the timetable, including:

* Graduation
* Open days and offer holder days
* RAG week

Requirements and restrictions for each event will be prioritised based on the prioritised objectives above.

Core modules will be timetabled to ensure there are no clashes.

Elective modules will be timetabled to ensure there are no clashes using student registration data from ‘Plan Curriculum’. Where a clash between elective modules is unavoidable the best possible solution will be identified in consultation with the programme Leader.

Elective modules with fewer than 12 students, based on ‘Plan Curriculum’ will not be timetabled.

Examples of practical and pedagogical requirements that may be considered, in accordance with the prioritised objectives above:

* Requests for a shared teaching event across two or more modules
* Requests for fieldwork or study visits to take place at a specific time of day (e.g. to maximise daylight)

Examples of academic staff preferences that may be considered, in accordance with the prioritised objectives above:

* Requests for a specific time of day (e.g. to accommodate commuting)
* Requests for a specific day of the week (other than contractual requests)

### Release of Draft Timetable for Comment

The draft timetable will be circulated to academic staff to review and request any changes. Change requests must be submitted using the change request form to timetabling@rau.ac.uk.

### Final Timetable Construction

Change requests will be incorporated where possible, and only in accordance with the prioritised objectives above. Where a change request cannot be accommodated the relevant academic will be informed.

### Publication of Final Comprehensive Timetable

The final, comprehensive timetable will be published to registered students six weeks prior to the start of the academic year.

## Changes to the Published Timetable

Changes to the published timetable have a negative impact on the student experience and a knock-on effect on other scheduled activity. As a result, and in accordance with the prioritised objectives above, changes to the published timetable must be avoided.

Changes to the timetable may be required, for example, where:

* Actual student numbers exceed room capacity
* Teaching activity is reassigned to another lecturer due to staff illness
* Force majeure, reasons outside of the University’s control

Changes to the published timetable (including proposed cancellations) must be submitted using the change request form to timetabling@rau.ac.uk.

Requests to cancel an event must be avoided. Change requests to cancel an event should clearly demonstrate that alternative avenues have been explored, and when the event can take place.

Where a change is approved, the member of academic staff is responsible for contacting students to notify them that a change has been made to the published timetable. Students should only be contacted once a change has been approved and the published timetable has been updated.

Change requests may be rejected where they would unreasonably compromise the prioritised objectives above. Where a module leader is dissatisfied with the outcome of a change request they may raise this with t he Director of Academic Services for review.

Academic Services will maintain a record of changes to the published timetable.