



University of  
South Australia

# Guidelines For Timetable Construction

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# *Guidelines For Timetable Construction*

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for the development and management of the University's timetable.

These guidelines are:

- to minimise the number of changes made to the timetable after it has been published
- to schedule classes at times and in locations that will facilitate student attendance
- to ensure that students enrolled in a standard program are able to attend classes in all core subjects and have a reasonable selection of electives from which to choose
- to optimise the use of University teaching resources, teaching staff and facilities.

## **Principles**

In the development of the timetable the needs and interests of all stakeholders should be recognised.

These guidelines are based on the following principles:

1. The timetable will be published in a timely manner allowing the University to provide timely enrolment information to students and staff.
2. To accommodate changing needs of the University, the scheduling of teaching and learning activities for programs and courses may vary from year to year. This will provide an equitable environment for scheduling.
3. Changes to the final timetable will be kept to a minimum.
4. Class sizes will not exceed the capacity of the allocated venue.
5. Scheduling of classes will make efficient use of teaching space and resources.
6. Scheduling of classes and allocation of venues will endeavour to support the most effective teaching and learning practice.
7. As far as practical, students and staff are not required to be involved in more than four continuous hours of learning activities. Intensive short courses are an exception to this principle.
8. The University timetable intends to maximise the choice of electives available to students, but all preferences may not be available to all students.
9. The University will use standard and consistent software tools for the scheduling and timetabling of classes across all schools and units.
10. Authorised constraints will be taken into consideration regarding off campus teaching, cross-campus teaching, research, or fieldwork.
11. The University will own generic teaching space.
12. A school may be designated specialist teaching space where specialist equipment is required. Allocation of dedicated space is in accordance with the University Space Management Guidelines. This dedicated space should be utilised as fully as possible by the respective school before booking general teaching space.

13. If a school has organised installation of software in a particular computer pool (or other general teaching space) for one year, this does not automatically give that school access to that facility in subsequent years.
14. Where travel to attend classes on different campuses is required a minimum travel time should be provided for both staff and students.

## Priorities

The timetable is prepared on the basis of the best fit for students and drafting of the timetable reflects the following priorities.

In developing the timetable, consideration should be given to the following:

1. long (in excess of 4 hours) activities must be given higher consideration in order to fit in with the timetable,
2. activities requiring dedicated space should utilise this to the fullest possible extent and therefore should be considered early,
3. large courses must be scheduled as a high priority,
4. courses taught across multiple campuses should be considered a high priority,
5. large planned class sizes should be scheduled in descending order of planned class size,
6. regular teaching activities should be scheduled before ad hoc activities and non-teaching activities.
7. SAIBT and CELUSA bookings are scheduled by SAS and will be considered after RESA and Orientation bookings are completed.

## Roles

### 1. Student and Academic Services (SAS)

- 1.1 The Programs, Admissions and Timetabling unit within SAS is responsible for managing and coordinating the production of the annual timetable within the University. This unit is also responsible for the use of teaching or other booked space including casual room bookings as well overseeing the use of the timetabling software, Syllabus Plus. SAS is responsible for maintaining the validity of the location data (teaching or other bookable space in Syllabus Plus) as advised by the Facilities Management Unit (FMU).
- 1.2 SAS is responsible for administering the software, managing security and user access to Syllabus Plus. The level of access is defined by the user's role, level of responsibility and training.
- 1.3 Responsibilities:
  - 1.3.1 preparing, promulgating and monitoring the production schedule for the annual timetable;
  - 1.3.2 production and publishing of the timetable;
  - 1.3.3 developing and evaluating procedures relating to timetabling and room usage;
  - 1.3.4 providing expertise and user training in regard to Syllabus Plus and other timetabling related software;
  - 1.3.5 troubleshooting and support for system users;

- 1.3.6 developing and maintaining an efficient collection process of the required data for timetabling.
- 1.3.7 mentoring Divisional Timetable Support Officers
- 1.3.8 providing generic university-wide training for school timetabling staff

## 2. Division Timetable Support Officers

- 2.1 Provide training for Syllabus Plus and Class Scheduling with local scenarios and data as an adjunct to SAS timetable training.
- 2.2 Mentor School timetablers through timetabling cycle.
- 2.3 Assess and review timetable changes for the Division and manage changes at the Division level.
- 2.4 Facilitate user groups within the Division with SAS support.
- 2.5 Assist in negotiating space allocation within University space guidelines.
- 2.6 Liaise with relevant Division staff on load management decisions for domestic and international admission processes.
- 2.7 Liaise with Campus Central to assist with class availability during enrolment cycles
- 2.8 Monitor timetabling at the Division level to ensure quality assurance and compliance with University policies and procedures in relation to timetabling.

## 3. School Timetablers/Class Schedulers

- 3.1 Where a school has complex programs, timetabling should be a dedicated staff role. The school should liaise with SAS in order to ascertain the level of complexity of School Timetable data
- 3.2 School timetablers should not have included in their duty roles any tasks which require “front desk” activities which result in constant interruption and reduced concentration at peak timetable development deadlines during the year.
- 3.3 Timetabling staff within the school will provide information and carry out duties to ensure that the timetable is prepared in a timely and efficient manner, in accordance with the timetable production schedule. The provision and checking of information for the teaching timetable is the responsibility of each school.
- 3.4 The roles and responsibilities of staff within the school are :
  - 3.4.1 liaise with Division Managers, Heads of School, Program Directors and Course Coordinators to obtain relevant data to be used in the production of yearly timetables
  - 3.4.2 enter base data into the Syllabus Plus database
  - 3.4.3 generate required activities, programs of study, pathways and student sets prior to scheduling of the timetable by SAS
  - 3.4.4 communicate with Program Directors and Course Coordinators once the provisional timetable is scheduled and make appropriate changes to ensure a clash free and efficient timetable is produced
  - 3.4.5 assist academic staff with any change request forms following publication of the final timetable and forward these to SAS for processing
  - 3.4.6 update information in the class schedule system as necessary so students can enrol into appropriate classes with a clash free timetable.

- 3.4.7 communicate clearly with timetable staff in Student and Academic Services in relation to ability to meet deadlines and raise issues as appropriate.

#### 4. Campus Services (FMU)

Campus services are responsible for the maintenance of location data on Syllabus Plus, and processing ad hoc room bookings on the dates specified in the timetable development schedule. Campus Services are also responsible for ensuring consistency of facility codes across different functions e.g. AV equipment, to maximise the timetable scheduling software contains the same facility code and that this is consistent across all campuses for equipment and materials.

### Commencement and Duration of Classes

1. Core timetabling hours are Monday to Friday between the hours of 8am and 7pm.
2. Classes may be scheduled in the evenings up until 10pm or on weekends where specifically requested by the relevant Program Director and by mutual agreement by the teaching staff involved.
3. Classes will normally start on the hour, however, in some circumstances may start on the half hour.
4. Where a class is formally shown as being of one hour's duration, in practice it shall be limited to 50 minutes in order to allow students time to get to the next class at the scheduled time.

### Common Free Time

1. During teaching weeks, the period from 12noon to 2pm each Friday is designated as Common Free Time and shall be kept free from all classes and other compulsory student activities to the maximum extent possible.
2. Classes and other compulsory student activities may only be scheduled during Common Free Time following gaining permission from the Deputy Director: Academic Services, Student and Academic services, and may only be based on:
  - 2.1 where suitable venues or facilities for the class or other activity are not available or are impossible to schedule at other times and not using the Common Free Time period will disadvantage students; or
  - 2.2 where scheduling the class or other activity during Common Free Time is the most efficient or practical arrangement taking into account the scheduling of other compulsory student activities for the students affected on the day; or
  - 2.3 where scheduling the class or other activity during Common Free Time is required as a "one off" due to exceptional circumstances.
3. Where compulsory student activities are scheduled during Common Free Time, the following restrictions should be observed to the maximum extent possible:
  - 3.1 scheduling of classes or other activities during Common Free Time for first year students should be avoided where possible;
  - 3.2 scheduling of classes or other activities during Common Free Time that cover the whole two-hour period should be avoided where possible.

## Equity considerations

In accordance with the University's policies in relation to work, life and family, ethics, equity, social justice and diversity and various anti-discrimination laws, the University will ensure that the timetabling process make reasonable accommodation for staff and students.

## Timetable publication

1. The final timetable for the whole year will be published at a time decided by Student and Academic Services.
2. A draft timetable will be prepared for staff to review with adequate time prior to the publication of the final timetable. Teaching areas will review the draft timetable to ensure that:
  - 2.1 activity requirements are in line with initial teaching area's requests,
  - 2.2 all details of activities have been entered correctly, and
  - 2.3 any clashes are resolved before publication of the final timetable.

## Timetable changes

1. Changes to the final timetable will be kept to a minimum and must be approved, in writing, by Program Directors (or nominee).
2. Changes will generally only be considered if:
  - 2.1 student enrolment numbers exceed the capacity of the scheduled venue, or otherwise require a change,
  - 2.2 a unit is no longer deemed viable to run,
  - 2.3 an allocated venue does not provide the requested specialist facilities,
  - 2.4 a change in staff availability necessitates a change e.g. a new staff member is appointed after final publication of the timetable,
  - 2.5 a location is a safety or health hazard, or
  - 2.6 there is a need to accommodate reasonable adjustments for students or staff with a disability or medical condition, or
  - 2.7 there have been data errors or omissions, or
  - 2.8 a compelling business case can be mounted by the requestor to support a change.
3. Students shall be appropriately notified in a timely manner, of any changes to the final timetable by the course coordinator.
4. In the first instance schools will submit conflict/resolution disputes to the Divisional Timetablers Support Officers for arbitration. If not satisfied with the result, the School can redirect their conflict/resolution to the Coordinator of Programs Admissions and Timetabling. If the conflict is still not resolved it may then be elevated to the Deputy Director: Academic Services.

## **Travel between campuses**

1. To minimise the need for students to travel between campuses staff should consider:
  - 1.1 scheduling classes on the students' campus, i.e. taking the class to the students rather than bringing students to the class; and
  - 1.2 applying flexible delivery alternatives to their teaching.

## **Compulsory student activities**

1. Compulsory student activities, including classes or school-arranged examinations, shall **not** be scheduled during any study period break or study week other than as prescribed below.
2. Exceptions are permitted only in the following circumstances:
  - 2.1 In units involving clinical experience or professional practice;
  - 2.2 where an enforced interruption would substantially reduce the value of the activity and/or;
  - 2.3 where the scheduling of such an activity during a class contact week would seriously disrupt other activities required of the students involved.
3. In other cases, only where the following conditions are ALL met; exceptional circumstances exist making the scheduling of an activity during that period essential;
  - 3.1 consultation has occurred in advance with affected staff and students and a majority of students are in agreement;
  - 3.2 both the Head of School/Department and Program Director support the proposal and are able to verify that appropriate consultation has occurred with students.

## **Determining Times for Clinical Experience/Professional Practice**

1. The Program Director shall determine when clinical experience or professional practice is to be arranged and this should be clearly stated in the course outline.
2. Clinical experience/professional practice may be scheduled outside semester times in accordance with the availability of appropriate placement opportunities.

## **Service Teaching**

The service provider and the recipient teaching area will liaise with each other before requesting timetable changes. Requests must be made by the service provider teaching area.