University of Exeter

TIMETABLING, ROOMS BOOKINGS AND RELATED SERVICES

LEARNING SPACES, Student Services

Policy, Procedures and Responsibility Guidelines
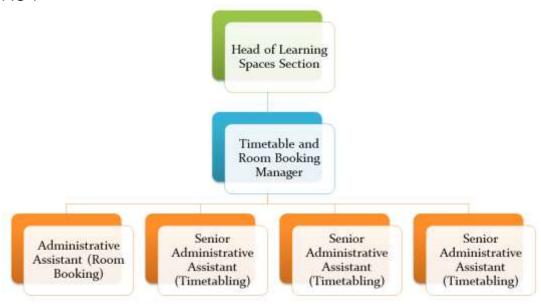
April 2015

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1   INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1   The timetable and room bookings policies and procedures have three main aims:

- To achieve excellent staff and student satisfaction with regards to their timetabled sessions and space assigned
- To provide the highest levels of space-related services to the University community
- To optimise the utilization of space, in particular for teaching but also for other purposes, such as income generating activities (conferences, events etc)

1.2   In 2010 a review of the current timetabling process was undertaken in recognition of the increased complexity and volume of timetable and room bookings activities. The recommendations arising from the review were approved by VCEG and PSMG.

1.3   The timetabling and room booking service is administered through the Timetable and Room Bookings Team, part of Learning Spaces, in the Student Services division of Academic Services. An organogram is as Fig 1:

FIG 1

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │  Head of Learning   │
                    │   Spaces Section    │
                    └──────────┬──────────┘
                               │
                    ┌──────────┴──────────┐
                    │   Timetable and     │
                    │  Room Booking       │
                    │     Manager         │
                    └──────────┬──────────┘
        ┌─────────────┬────────┴────────┬─────────────┐
┌───────────────┐┌──────────────┐┌──────────────┐┌──────────────┐
│ Administrative ││   Senior     ││   Senior     ││   Senior     │
│ Assistant (Room││Administrative││Administrative││Administrative│
│   Booking)     ││  Assistant   ││  Assistant   ││  Assistant   │
│                ││ (Timetabling)││ (Timetabling)││ (Timetabling)│
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The major elements of process/systems support are provided through the Academic Systems Team, of ExeterIT, through core IT systems already implemented (Kinetic, Scientia, Eveoh respectively). Process descriptions are provided in section 4 of this document.

Purpose of Document

1.4   It is intended that this document serves two key aims:

- To state the University's agreed policies in the management of space, for the benefit of all service users and those involved in service delivery (the document will be maintained on the Web, and will reflect current policy, noting major changes/approval dates where appropriate).
- To document the processes which taken together should ensure space is used to best effect and users receive excellence of service.

Coverage

1.5   This document is aimed for the Exeter campuses only – Streatham and St Luke's. Separate documentation is available for service users/providers for Penryn, shared with University College Falmouth.

Ownership and Oversight of the Policy

1.6   The principles in this document have been endorsed by VCEG and PSMG. The Timetabling User Group will act as stakeholders of this document and changes will be communicated to this group.

2   POLICY DRIVERS AND ASPIRATIONS

2.1   The major policy driver is to make the most efficient use of space for teaching. Additionally, there is the need to offer matching services to other University-approved activities, such as conferences, exams, evening lectures, Guild societies etc. Taking these demands together introduces a further driver - the need to provide a fair, transparent and flexible set of arrangements which manages the potential conflicts where different types of activities are competing for space and space-related resources.

2.2   The aspirations can be summarized as follows:

- **Optimised** use of teaching staff time – including the reduction of multiple teaching sessions wherever possible and the zoning of activities around a "home" area to reduce travel time on campus. Appendix B contains details from the last review of zoning in 2011/12.
- **Optimised space use** – both for frequency and occupancy levels - to ensure that the most cost-efficient use of physical resources is made. Increased capacity should only be approved on the basis that the existing stock is simply insufficient in volume/mix terms to meet projected growth.
- **An excellent level of customer service** – service users (staff, students and external agencies) should expect to receive a service in line with the agreed standards of excellence including a friendly and helpful response to enquiries with a maximum of two days to confirm an ad hoc room bookings with customers.
- **Access to bookings information** – service users should have ease of access to real-time information on bookings made and space availability; given access to timely, accurate and relevant information, service users will be best placed to order services (whilst also reducing the load on service providers)
- **Management information** - timely, accurate and relevant management data to inform short-long term management is a pre-requisite.

- **Exploitation of investments in core systems** – with significant IT investments already made in the implementations of Kinetic and Scientia, greater use of those systems would give better returns on prior investments into IT, and ongoing investments in staffing resources.
- **Training and communication** – a training programme is in place to ensure that College staff are fully trained in the use of the web data collector and student allocation systems. Communication of changes and updates are handled through the Education and Student Experience Executive and the Timetable User Group.

3   POLICIES

Categories of Space

3.1   Broadly, there are two categories of space, as follows:

- Centrally Managed Space – this is space, typically lecture theatres, seminar rooms, but also including committee rooms and other areas normally used for teaching, meetings, functions etc. These facilities are bookable only through the timetable and rooms bookings service (once the teaching timetable has been completed) and may be booked, in principle, for any event that would be considered appropriate for University space, be that for teaching, conferences, public events or other appropriate activities, normally income-generating. These spaces are primarily held and centrally managed by Academic Services.
- College & Service Owned Space – space will also be held specifically by individual Colleges and Services. Most obviously this includes office occupancy, but also specialist teaching spaces, such as laboratories which are run by a College generally for its sole use.

Prioritisation of Use by Time and Activity

3.2   The University terms can be found on the intranet (via the timetabling website at http://www.exeter.ac.uk/admin/academic/timetable). However, there are a number of academic activities that take place outside of the core teaching period. For example, certain Postgraduate programmes have differing start-end times, such as the MBA and PGCE programmes. The Exeter Medical School undergraduate programme also has different term dates. Similarly, Degree Day ceremonies and referred/deferred examinations will take place outside of term-time.

3.3   Normally, all programmes approved by the University have priority use of teaching facilities during the approved term-times that apply to those programmes. Colleges are required to ensure that their requirements are made known to the rooms bookings service in accordance with the publicised timetable; where requests are not given according to deadlines, every effort will be made to accommodate these, but there is the risk that suitable rooms may already have been booked for something else.

3.4   It has to be recognized, however, that there are caveats to the principle of academic events having precedence during the teaching period:

- University-approved admissions events, such as Open Days, will be likely to require temporary usage of rooms otherwise booked for the term/year
- Major "one-off" events might occur that are in the University's interests to host – it is possible to foresee for example, a Government Minister wishing to launch a new HE policy from Exeter, and in such cases (which

will be by definition very occasional) prior bookings would be superseded, and alternative arrangements made for the prior bookings

- Those teaching activities that fall outside the standard University term, are likely to be at the time (especially September and March/April) when the University will be seeking to maximize its conference bookings, so that the net revenues from these events can be ploughed back into University business. It is to be anticipated that during these times there is the likelihood of seeking compromise solutions so that all activities are suitably housed.

3.5   Outside of when academic programmes are officially being taught, the priority for usage is guided in the main by the administration by Corporate Services of conferences and other commercial bookings.

The Teaching Period

3.6   The current teaching terms are as set out through the timetabling website.
3.7   The standard teaching week is organised as follows:

- All teaching begins on the half hour
- The standard teaching day is 0830 – 1730
- The teaching day includes 1730 – 1830 on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays only*, and these slots will be used as a last resort for large groups, when no other options are available, particularly for first year Undergraduate (UG) and Post Graduate Taught (PGT cohorts). It is not anticipated that the Penryn or St Luke's campuses would need to use these slots.
- Wednesday afternoons have no compulsory undergraduate teaching after 1230.

    *- Post Graduate lectures may finish on a Wednesday at 18:30

3.8   A lecture/seminar should start at twenty five minutes to the hour and should finish at twenty five minutes past the hour, allowing for cross over and travel time
3.9   Lunch-times, where at all possible, should be one hour between the window of11:30-14:30 for each student or staff member and will be kept free of teaching activity for a period of 1 hour
3.10   The full teaching week will be utilised, and students services (such as catering in halls of residence) will be organised in the context of students being required to be available for teaching in all hours of the teaching day/week.
3.11   Any teaching staff unavailability within the normal teaching day/week must be approved in advance by the College Senior Management Team via the appropriate form (see appendix A).
3.12   Bank Holidays will be dealt as a non-teaching day. Staff should consider making alternative provision (e.g. online resources, alternative session etc) to replace this lost day.

Oversight of the Teaching Portfolio

3.13   The timetable team should be involved in the accreditation of new programmes or the withdrawal of programmes in order to plan for the expected cohort sizes and use of new and/or existing modules. The Faculty will inform timetabling of new programmes.
3.14   The timetable team will also have input into the long term planning strategy with regards to student numbers and admissions policy within the University.

Accessibility for Students and Staff

3.15   Every effort will be made to best accommodate the needs of students and staff with disabilities. The most obvious example will be placing teaching activities in the most suitable space, where it was known that students/staff with mobility issues would be involved.

3.16   The delivery of this policy will be dependent upon high quality information being available and being utilised within the timetabling and rooms allocations processes.

Facilities Related to Rooms Bookings

3.17   All services related to rooms bookings – room layout, AV and IT provision, catering etc – are provided centrally, mainly through Corporate Services and Academic Services.

3.18   Colleges are charged within the Income Distribution Model for use of centrally bookable space.

3.19   Currently, all ad-hoc bookings for centrally bookable space for University business (committees, student society meetings, etc.) are made free of charge within core teaching hours. Bookings for external customers/events are subject to charges but where such bookings are made through Colleges, charges will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Additional charges will apply for catering, and it is possible that further charges would be applied for key services out of hours eg portering to keep buildings open, provision of AV/IT and/or specialist support staff.

3.20   More details on the charging policy may be found in Section 4.

Issue and Conflict Resolution

3.21   Inevitably, there will be times when issues will emerge, and possibly these could escalate into conflicts, in particular should any of the processes (as set out in Section 4) fail to work. For example:

- A high profile event may seek to use Exeter facilities, but create potentially major problems for accommodating teaching activities, (most obviously outside of the standard term, but where teaching is taking place)
- Two activities appear to have been booked for the same venue at the same time, without close-by or appropriate alternatives available

3.22   The process section documents the basis for issue and conflict resolution.

4   PROCESSES

4.1   This document is concerned with the Streatham and St Luke's based programmes. Penryn, Truro and elements of PCMD, are timetabled separately and follow different processes.

Creating the Teaching Timetable

4.2   Exact dates relating to the timetable process are agreed each year via Timetable User Group meetings. The process schedule is advertised via a link on the timetable home page https://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/timetable/

Avoiding Clashes

4.3   The timetabling team cannot guarantee that all students will receive a clash free timetable. All core modules will be available, but especially for inter-disciplinary programmes, it may not be possible to avoid clashes for all optional modules.

4.4   After the draft timetable is published, a College that initiates a change is responsible for avoiding clashes, and should liaise with other Colleges to avoid clashes where possible (with the assistance of the Timetable and Room Bookings Team).

4.5   Requests   for   Changes   to   the   Teaching   Timetable

Changes to the Teaching Timetable after publication should be kept to a minimum, as the timetable is used to inform decisions regarding family, childcare and work commitments, as well as enrolment decisions.

4.6   Changes should only occur for the following reasons:

• Staff unable to run sessions due to illness, bereavement or emergency carer responsibilities
• Late changes to student numbers as part of the admissions process
• New and late unforeseen staff changes
• SSLC agreed changes following Timetable Office consideration first
• Reasonable adjustments (lecturer or student) such as access to the teaching space
• Strike action
• Any other exceptional reasons for change to be approved only at the discretion of the Head of Discipline

Change requests will not be considered if they relate to the following reasons:

• To make changes within a normal teaching day if a reasonable session time has been scheduled
• If year 2 and 3 module sizes exceed the size of the room allocated (based on previous actual online module selection numbers)
• For staff unavailability which hasn't been approved by the College SMT
• For staff preferences with regards to venues

All change requests should be submitted directly to the Timetable and Room Bookings Team via e-mail.

Room Booking Policy

Requesting Services associated with Room Bookings
Learning spaces issues are now managed via the helpdesk and technical problems should be logged through the usual means.

Charging

4.7   Charges for use of centrally bookable space may be found in the document entitled 'Room Charging – Policy and Application' on the timetable website.

'Conflict Resolution'

4.8   The system depends on three key matters – provision of accurate and timely information to service users, the co-operation of all service users in sensibly negotiating any conflicts that arise, and an arbiter provided with sufficient authority to resolve otherwise unsolved disputes.

4.9   It is hoped that the provision of clear and timely information to all service users gives a sound platform for avoiding the confusion that is the source of most disputes. Information available on the Web and shown on individual room doors should clarify what is booked and what isn't booked – though changes may have occurred since printing.

4.10   Service users are required to be sensitive to each other's needs. Most disputes will be 'immediate' and about who has booked what and when. The on-line/hardcopy information should clarify that. Where there remains confusion, colleagues should refer to staff in the Timetable and Room Bookings Team for clarity.

4.11   In other cases, there will be disputes over who has priority to actually book a room in any given time, or who can over-ride an existing booking. For example, whilst it is clear that teaching holds priority during the stated teaching hours/terms, it is easy to envisage an event being planned that might be either massively high profile (a Prime Ministerial visit, for example) or a big income-earner, or indeed both. All parties affected will need to be sensitive to the requirement to both conduct teaching but also engage in outreach/income generating activities. Where satisfactory solutions cannot be found through colleagues working with one another and the Timetable and Room Bookings Team, the issue will require escalation. The arbiter of such disputes will be the Director of Academic Services. However, in the first instance the Head of Learning Spaces will on the behalf of the Director of Academic Services seek to find a solution; where that is not possible the Director of Academic Services will decide how the matter should be dealt with, without recourse to any form of further 'appeal'.

Appendix A

TEACHING STAFF RESTRICTIONS APPLICATION

The University teaching restrictions form should be used to request any unavailability within standard term time hours. The form and associated guidance can be found at the following web address:

http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/employment/leave/flexibleworking/staff/academics/teachingrestrictions/

Appendix B

Zoning Arrangements since 2011/12

Each year a soft constraint is used, which increases the probability of space being allocated to a College home zone. Using this approach we can be more certain that rooms would be allocated to zones, we could also be more certain that utilisation would be maintained at a reasonable level. Hard constraints are not accepted, as the effect of this would be negative in terms of utilisation.

Where buildings do not offer the required sized rooms for the teaching activity (large lecture theatres in particular) there will remain a need for some travel across campus. The success of the zoning is also affected by circumstances that arise outside of the timetable construction. These include where Colleges offer modules at late notice that have not been incorporated into the timetable construction via a dummy module, or where a College allows additional students onto a module which then requires a larger room to be found than was originally timetabled.

Zones

UEBS – Building 1, Xfi, Streatham Court and Newman
CEMPS – Harrison, Newman, Laver, Peter Chalk and Physics
Archaeology – Laver
Classics, Politics and Sociology - Amory and Peter Chalk
Modern Languages and English – Queens and Old Library
History and Law – Amory and Streatham Court
Theology – Amory
Biosciences – Newman, Harrison, Hatherly, Peter Chalk and Laver

Geography – Amory, Streatham Court and Peter Chalk
Psychology – Washington Singer, Queens and Old Library
IAIS – IAIS and Peter Chalk
EMS – EMSBuilding and other CB rooms on campus
Education – Baring Court and other CB rooms on campus
Sports and Health Sciences – Richards Building and other CB rooms on campus