1. PURPOSE

These Guidelines for the University-wide timetable have been written to supplement the University-Wide Timetable policy and should be read in conjunction with it. While the UNSW Policy defines the objectives, scheduling principles and organisational arrangements underpinning the University-wide timetable, the purpose of the Guidelines is to provide more definition and detail around the operational and organisation arrangements to be put in place to support the timetabling process.

It is intended that these Guidelines will remain under review as the timetabling implementation project progresses. This approach will allow them to evolve progressively as feedback from the University community is considered, issues are encountered and addressed, and prototype timetables are produced and reviewed.

These guidelines have been drafted following investigation of policy and practice at a range of other Australian Universities, taking distinctions between UNSW and other institutions into account in regards to the organisational model to be adopted to support timetabling at UNSW and other local factors and requirements. This document is not intended as a full operational guide. Guidance regarding revised business and systems procedures and timelines will be provided to academic units at the relevant times as the project progresses.

2. TIMETABLING OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

In creating its teaching timetable, the University’s priorities are:

1. a student timetable which facilitates enrolment into core courses and maximises student choice where possible
2. effective and efficient use of physical resources
3. production of an equitable and workable staff timetable

The final timetable is dependent upon a large number of factors such as the availability of rooms of suitable size and with suitable equipment, staff availability, and the need to accommodate the academic requirements of many programs and plans including a range of combined programs. In generating a timetable, all of these factors merge to function as constraints.

Careful management of constraints, including avoidance of unnecessary constraints and careful consideration of priorities, will provide for the best outcome from the complex timetabling process. As a general principle, all known constraints on the timetable should be applied prior to its production in order to minimise required changes once the timetable has been produced.

3. TEACHING HOURS AND TIMES

3.1. Core teaching hours

3.1.1. Wherever possible and unless otherwise requested, classes to be attended by full-time students will be scheduled within “Core teaching hours”. These are Monday to Thursday between the hours of 9am and 6pm and Friday between the hours of 9am and 4pm.
3.2. Normal teaching hours

3.2.1. The University’s “Normal teaching hours” are Monday to Friday 8am to 9.30pm. Teaching outside of core teaching hours but within normal teaching hours may be requested by a school in order to facilitate provision of teaching to suit a particular student population or a particular teaching arrangement e.g. to support attendance of part-time students or to offer some choice of early morning or evening activities for students enrolled in courses with large enrolment numbers.

3.3. Classes outside Normal teaching hours

3.3.1. Heads of School may approve teaching outside of Normal teaching hours e.g. weekend classes. Timetabling and room allocation for such classes will be supported. However, these arrangements must comply with the requirements of Clause 22.3 “Periods of Scheduled Teaching” of the UNSW (Academic Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2003.

3.4. Teaching times

3.4.1. Duration of classes should be in multiples of 30 minute blocks, preferably in full hours.

3.4.2. Classes should normally commence at 5 minutes after the published commencement time, and conclude 5 minutes prior to the published starting time of the next class to enable sufficient time for students to move between classes and to allow staff to set up a classroom if required.

3.4.3. Set-up and pull-down time for specialist classes will be allowed for in the timetable.

4. STUDENTS

4.1. Supporting academic program requirements

4.1.1. The first priority of the timetable is to support the ability of students to undertake core courses and maximise the choice of elective courses. In order to support this requirement, data regarding ‘clash-free’ requirements or ‘student sets’ will need to be maintained on the Syllabus Plus scheduling software.

4.1.2. The creation of ‘student sets’ will be coordinated by the Scheduling and Academic Requirements Unit in Student Services. Program authorities will be responsible for reviewing this data for each timetabling cycle to ensure it accurately reflects the requirements of the programs for which they are responsible and covers all necessary cohorts. Program authorities are ultimately responsible for the accuracy of this data.

4.1.3. Decisions will need to be made regarding the extent to which student sets can reasonably be supported. Desirable but non-essential sets will need to be reviewed for inclusion. If the number of students undertaking the particular combination of courses is very small, then the value of the set should be questioned as it may place an unnecessary constraint on the timetable. Unsupported combinations will commonly be available to students regardless - their non-inclusion simply means they cannot be guaranteed.

4.1.4. Timetabling arrangements for repeat students or students progressing according to non-standard arrangements cannot be guaranteed e.g. advanced standing, special substitution approvals, enrolment over non-standard timeframes. However, where non-standard arrangements apply to a significant cohort relevant timetabling arrangements will be facilitated where possible.

4.1.5. Student sets must not contain a course which is a prerequisite for some other course in that set or contain courses for which simultaneous credit is excluded.

4.1.6. Student sets must be reviewed for each timetabling cycle.
4.2. **Student timetables**

4.2.1. As far as practicable, the timetable should not require students to attend more than 4 continuous hours of classes without a break.

4.2.2. A one hour break for students between the hours of 11am and 3pm will be facilitated where possible.

5. **TEACHING STAFF**

5.1. **Allocation of Teaching Staff**

5.1.1. Where the school knows who will be teaching a particular activity, this staff member should be preset onto the activity in myUNSW. This will ensure that a clash free and workable timetable is constructed for the staff member.

5.1.2. Once the timetable is finalised it is acceptable for schools to vary the staff allocated to teach particular activities as long as this doesn’t require changes to the timetabled day/time or room. Any such changes to teaching staff should be updated on myUNSW so that the correct information is available to students.

5.1.3. In some cases the teacher of a particular activity may be unknown. Where the teacher will be drawn from a pool of staff, details of these staff need to be recorded so that the system can ensure that at least one of these staff members is available to teach. Alternatively, it is acceptable to schedule without details of the staff member teaching as long as it will be possible to allocate a staff member to the activity after the scheduling process has taken place without requiring changes to the day/time/room. This may the case where a casual teaching staff member will be found for the timeslot allocated, or there is a large pool of staff able to teach the activity.

5.1.4. Timetabling must be done on an impartial basis with regards to the principles of effective teaching and learning and efficient space utilisation. This will mean that all schools will receive a share of popular and unpopular teaching times. Staff should not be able to change time slots for their classes unless there are extenuating circumstances affecting their availability which could not be foreseen in advance of the production of the timetable. Staff unavailability for particular timeslots should be notified proactively according to 5.2 below. Timetable changes have significant flow on effects for students and other staff. As stated above (5.1.2) it is acceptable for a school to authorise internal teaching staff swaps as long as these don’t result in changes to days/times or rooms.

5.2. **Special limitations on full-time teaching staff availability**

5.2.1. All known constraints on teaching staff availability will be applied prior to the production of the timetable in order to minimise changes required as a result of staff clashes or unavailability which can prove difficult to resolve once the timetable has been produced.

5.2.2. Individual limitations to a full time staff member’s availability may be approved by the staff member’s Head of School where there are valid reasons. Such reasons may include special contractual arrangements, limited availability due to collaborative research or restricted access to special research facilities, special requirements due to disability, religious beliefs or family responsibilities, or University management responsibilities. Where special limitations to a full-time staff member’s availability are approved, reasons should be provided to the Scheduling and Academic Requirements Unit who will seek final approval by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or nominee.

5.2.3. If it is felt that limitations to a particular staff member’s availability are having a detrimental impact on the ability to produce an acceptable timetabling outcome, the school involved may be contacted so that options can be discussed, including the reallocation of teaching duties where appropriate and necessary.

5.2.4. These approved arrangements need to be advised by the appropriate deadline in advance of the timetable being developed, as post production changes to the timetable cannot always be accommodated.
5.3. **Standard teaching staff arrangements**

5.3.1. Teaching staff will be assumed to be available for teaching within the range of days and hours specified in the current UNSW (Academic Staff) Enterprise Agreement, unless approved individual limitations on availability are applied (see 5.2 *Special limitations on full-time teaching staff availability*). However, teaching will be scheduled between 9am and 6pm unless classes are specifically requested to take place outside of these hours by the school concerned (e.g. evening classes for part-time students).

5.3.2. Unless specifically requested by the school and compliant with the requirements of Clause 22.3 “Periods of Scheduled Teaching” of the UNSW (Academic Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2003, staff will not be scheduled to teach on weekends.

5.3.3. A standard constraint profile specifying agreed common arrangements will be applied to all full-time academic staff. The standard profile for full-time teaching staff will:
- Allow for a one hour break between the hours of 11 am and 3 pm.
- Prevent early teaching (before 10 am) on the morning following an evening where required to teach late (after 6 pm)
- Limit the number of contiguous teaching hours in one day to four hours (the constraint will be removed in special cases such as full day field trips etc).
- Limit the span of teaching (start of first class to end of final class) in a single day to nine hours.
- Limit teaching days in a week to a maximum of four to ensure that at least one day is available for research. Unless a specific approved individual constraint profile is applied, the timetabling software will determine which day/s are teaching free.
- Allow for attendance at school meetings and seminars.

5.3.4. The arrangements above will be respected and complied with wherever possible. It may be necessary to break with them where there are compelling reasons affecting the timetabling outcome.

5.3.5. Where individual teaching staff are not identified in myUNSW (see 5.1.3) it will not be possible to ensure compliance with these arrangements.

5.4. **Part-time and sessional teaching staff**

5.4.1. Individual availability profiles will be recorded for part-time teaching staff where necessary.

5.4.2. The ability of part-time staff to vary their hours according to the timetable will support greater flexibility in the timetabling process. However, it is understood that a staff member may only be available at particular days/times and that specialist staff from outside the University are working around a range of commitments and may be restricted in the days/times they are available to teach.

5.4.3. In some cases part-time sessional staff are recruited according to their availability to teach according to the published timetable. In these cases it will not be necessary to record staff availability profiles.

5.5. **Meetings and staff seminars**

5.5.1. It is reasonable for each school to keep a period free of teaching each week to accommodate staff meetings or seminars.

5.5.2. Two hours per week is considered a reasonable length of time for such meetings, however a school may request a longer timeslot by stating a case in writing to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) outlining the length of time required and the reasons.

5.5.3. The day/time of school meetings/seminars will be determined by the timetabling software. Where necessary, a school may make a written case to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or nominee requesting a particular preset timeslot in order to
accommodate special circumstances e.g. to facilitate meetings involving members of another institution or organisation such as joint seminars.

5.5.4. A faculty may make a case for a common time slot for all of its member schools in order to facilitate faculty-wide meetings.

5.5.5. Staff who are members of major committees will have their availability to teach restricted to facilitate attendance at these meetings where requested.

6. TEACHING SPACE

6.1. Responsibilities

6.1.1. All teaching space, including specialist teaching space, will be incorporated into the timetabling system. This will provide for a total timetabling solution and ensure that students can obtain a complete and coherent timetable at enrolment.

6.1.2. Allocation of centrally allocated teaching space for the University teaching timetable will be managed by the Scheduling and Academic Requirements Unit, Student Services.

6.1.3. Casual bookings and requests for small classes which fall outside the scope of the centralised timetable will be managed by CATS, Facilities Management.

6.1.4. Schools are responsible for advising the Scheduling and Academic Requirements Unit of any changes to school managed space. This includes changes to the characteristics of the space such as capacity and equipment, any periods or times of unavailability, and any changes to the types of classes that may be timetabled to use the space.

6.2. Allocation controls

6.2.1. School staff will enter their space and equipment requirements for particular activities through the myUNSW interface as part of the class scheduling process.

6.2.2. To ensure allocation of rooms of the appropriate capacity, type, and with the necessary equipment, special controls referred to as “suitabilities” will be used in Syllabus Plus.

6.2.3. Teaching spaces identified as specialist space will be reserved for use by classes conducted by the owning school. Other schools wishing to use this space must make arrangements with the school that controls it before they can be timetabled to use the space.

6.2.4. Laboratories and other designated specialist teaching spaces containing specialised equipment that require expert supervision will only have activities scheduled into them which require use of this equipment.

6.2.5. Class sizes will not be permitted to exceed the approved capacity of rooms.

6.2.6. The timetabling system will preferentially allocate classes to pre-defined ‘precincts’ i.e. a building within reasonable proximity of the owning school where possible. ‘Precinct’ controls will need to be balanced with ensuring that classes are allocated to teaching space most suited to the mode of teaching and class size.

6.2.7. Scheduling into preferred ‘precincts’ may need to be supported to a lesser extent outside of core teaching time, as there is a greater need at these times to rationalise the allocation of teaching space so that classrooms in use are clustered in fewer buildings due to access, security and energy efficiency reasons.

6.2.8. As a general rule, where a choice is available, classes should be allocated to teaching spaces which have the minimum resources necessary to meet the needs of the class (smallest room with fewest resources). This may need to be balanced with other constraints such as proximity to the teaching school etc.

6.2.9. As part of the timetabling process, an attempt will be made to spread the timetable more evenly across timeslots (minimising the acute room utilisation ‘peaks’ and ‘troughs’ that currently exist across the teaching week). This is in order to allow some spare room capacity across timeslots to more easily accommodate changed imperatives such as increased enrolments requiring the scheduling of additional classes.
6.3. Room allocation changes after timetable production

6.3.1. Once the timetable has been finalised, requests to move classes into a different room will not be able to be accommodated unless the allocated room is inappropriate for the class (wrong type of space, inadequate equipment). In these cases, changing the room will be attempted where time and resources permit. However, it should be noted that this will often prove to be difficult and no guarantees can be given. Thus, it is important to accurately record the teaching space requirements of the activity in myUNSW by the relevant deadline in advance of timetable production.

6.3.2. In some cases it may be necessary to change allocated rooms after finalisation of the timetable in order to accommodate students with special needs. Where this is necessary, attempts will be made to minimise disruption to students and staff. Changes will be communicated to those affected.

6.4. Casual room bookings

6.4.1. Casual bookings requests should go through CATS in Campus Services. CATS have a small pool of rooms which are reserved for casual bookings only.

6.4.2. Teaching activities will take precedence over non-teaching activities in the use of University teaching space with some approved exceptions outlined in the CATS Procedures manual (e.g. Graduations, Australian Ensemble, UNSW Orchestra, and Collegium Musicum Choir).

6.4.3. Teaching space which is not booked for classes at the end of Week 3 of session may be booked for casual purposes through CATS. It is necessary to reserve this space for teaching until this time as there is always a degree of adjustment required following release of the teaching timetable in response to enrolment numbers and changed imperatives. CATS will keep a record of such booking requests and action them after this date.

6.4.4. Once casual bookings have been confirmed, any scheduling requests for new classes will not take precedence over these. However, where there is no alternative appropriate teaching space available the casual booking person may be contacted to discuss possible mutually acceptable rearrangements.

6.4.5. No adjustments should be made to the academic timetable to accommodate casual or external use unless specifically approved by the relevant senior manager.

7. SCHEDULING REQUESTS

7.1. Scheduling requests

7.1.1. Parallel (same-time) activities: A school may request parallel (same-time) activities for courses through myUNSW. This may be desirable in the case of courses where there are different levels of difficulty which students need to be able to swap between.

7.1.2. Combined timetable activities: A school may request combined timetable (same-time/same-room) activities for courses through myUNSW. This may be necessary in the case of courses known by different aliases.

7.1.3. Sequencing: the order in which activities for a course fall within the week will not be sequenced unless the relevant school presents a strong case on a pedagogical basis for consideration by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or nominee. It is generally expected that small group classes will be based on the previous week’s lecture materials. Evidence from other Universities indicates that unnecessary sequencing impedes the ability to produce a workable timetable overall and may lead to reduced ability to satisfy key timetabling objectives if used too liberally i.e. it tends to lead to skewed and inefficient utilisation of teaching space. It can also place a huge constraint on producing workable student timetables.

7.1.4. Small enrolment classes: It is acceptable for courses with anticipated enrolments of ten or fewer students (e.g. honours seminars) to be timetabled by the school responsible in consultation with the enrolled students rather than being centrally timetabled.
Venues for these classes will be organised through casual room bookings after the teaching timetable is finalised or school facilities may be used.

7.1.5. **Anticipated enrolment numbers**: the expected number of students to enrol into a course is to be recorded as part of the scheduling request on myUNSW. A default value will be recorded based on the number of students enrolled the last time the course was offered in the corresponding period. The school will be able to nominate an increase up to an approved percentage. Increases greater than the approved percentage will require justification to the Scheduling and Academic Requirements Unit. Valid reasons may include an increasing pattern of enrolments; changes in program structures which are expected to impact upon enrolment numbers; previous enrolments suppressed due to teaching space limitations or timetabling restrictions. Actual enrolments in courses will be checked each semester against predicted enrolments. Significant discrepancies, such as under-enrolment and subsequent use of a large venue for a small class will be noted in the production of future timetables.

7.1.6. Scheduling requests will generally be actioned in the following order of priority:

1. lectures for large courses offered as part of a program/s leading to an official University award qualification and conducted over a full teaching session
2. all other lectures and activities with a single option offered as part of programs leading to an official University award qualification and conducted over a full teaching session
3. all other activities with multiple options offered as part of a program/s leading to an official University award qualification and conducted over a full teaching session
4. Classes for courses conducted over a full teaching session which, although not leading to a University award qualification, are taught under the aegis of the University, for example, Foundation Studies classes.
5. Other University activities conducted over a full session
6. Other University activities conducted over less than a full session but not for a single date
7. Other University activities for a single date

8. **TIMETABLE PRODUCTION AND PUBLICATION**

8.1. **Faculty/school input and deadlines**

8.1.1. Business procedures will be prepared by the Scheduling and Academic Requirements Unit annually for distribution to Faculties/school timetabling contacts. These will provide details on:
- A schedule of deadlines by which various actions must be taken upon which Syllabus Plus and the timetable are reliant
- Business and system process changes that impact the production of the timetable
- Timetable release dates
- Other relevant issues/matters

8.2. **Draft timetable**

8.2.1. A draft timetable will be prepared and released via an appropriate method for review by faculties/schools prior to the release of the final timetable to students. During the review period schools will be responsible for reviewing the draft timetable to ensure that:
- adequate provision has been made for all offerings for the coming teaching periods
- there are no clashes for core courses in standard programs and a suitable range of electives choices are available to students
- all details of teaching activities are accurately reflected
- teaching space requirements have been adequately satisfied
- teaching staff are correctly recorded and are available to teach
- other agreed localised requirements are met
8.3. **Final timetable**

8.3.1. The final timetable for the forthcoming academic period will be published in time for students to have reasonable notice to plan their enrolment, generally a few weeks before the commencement of the enrolment period. Details of course offerings in upcoming sessions including details of EFTSL values and census dates will be released according to the deadlines specified by DEST, in advance of the release of the full teaching timetable.

8.4. **Timetable changes after publication**

8.4.1. Students plan their enrolment based on a number of factors including academic requirements and choices as well as personal timetabling considerations including work and childcare. Late changes to the timetable for one course or activity may impact on a student’s ability to attend other enrolled activities or personal or work commitments. It is sometimes difficult or impossible for students to reorganise their timetable at a late stage in the enrolment process. Therefore, changes to the timetable once student enrolments have commenced must be kept to an absolute minimum.

8.4.2. It is incumbent on academic managers and timetabling coordinators in each school to ensure that information used to prepare the University timetable is as accurate as possible, and subsequent changes to the final timetable are only made under valid conditions. Valid reasons for changes include:

- additional classes for courses where demand exceeds expectations
- unexpected staff turnover
- a location that becomes a health or safety hazard
- reasonable adjustments to accommodate students with special needs

8.4.3. It is also reasonable to cancel courses or classes under the following circumstances:

- unexpected decline in student numbers enrolled such that an elective course is no longer deemed viable and offering of the course is consequently cancelled by the approved deadline
- closing of classes for particular activities where enrolment numbers deem them unviable and students are notified to choose an alternative class for the activity

8.4.4. Where such changes become necessary they need to be authorised to ensure the impacts on enrolled students has been carefully considered and minimised and changes are made in the least impacting way. Students should be advised as soon as possible via the messaging facility available in myUNSW and via lecture announcements etc.

8.4.5. It may sometimes be necessary to move classes to a different room before the commencement of session, and less often soon after the commencement of session. These changes will be minimised as much as possible but are sometimes necessary in order to accommodate the requirements of another class or to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

9. **EQUITY**

9.1. Consistent with University policy on equal opportunity and diversity and various anti-discrimination laws, the University will ensure that its timetabling procedures make reasonable accommodations for staff and students in light of their:

- family responsibilities
- religious beliefs
- disabilities

9.2. Students and staff should provide information and requisites in advance of the timetable being developed wherever possible so that reasonable accommodations can be made, whilst minimising the need for post-publication changes to the timetable.

9.3. Requests:

- from students related to disabilities should go through the Equity Officer (Disability) in the Equity and Diversity Unit
from students related to religious beliefs should go through their Program Authority
from staff with disabilities, family responsibilities or religious beliefs should go through
the staff member’s Head of School

10. REVIEW

10.1. The University timetabling principles and guidelines will require review upon completion of
the initial timetabling business cycle. Subsequent reviews will occur annually. Review
should focus on:
- satisfying agreed timetabling objectives and priorities
- maximising the inter-relationship of timetabling systems with other University corporate
  systems
- addressing the impact of new teaching technology
- addressing the impact of new learning paradigms
- addressing the impact of changes to the academic calendar and compliance
  requirements
- maximising the efficient use of resources including business and system processes by
  which the timetable is produced
- improvements based upon analysis of timetable outcome quality measures

10.2. A decision will be made in consultation with the University community following the
implementation and evaluation of the 2007 teaching timetable as to whether to fully
reschedule for the following cycle or to keep some stability in the timetable by rolling some
arrangements forward.