1 Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to define the objectives, scheduling principles, and organisational arrangements that will underpin the production of the University-wide timetable. The primary objective is to produce a timetable that is equitable, effective, and complete; takes into account the needs of both students and staff; and maximises the efficient use of space and resources.

The Policy is supported by the University-wide Timetable Operational Guidelines (documented separately), which will be developed iteratively in response to the University’s evolving requirements.

2 Background

The University has adopted a University-wide teaching timetable, introduced for the 2007 academic year. Historically, timetabling of classes has been the responsibility of individual faculties and schools with little co-ordination of activities and no central administrative support, other than the booking of rooms for teaching activities by CATS. The timetabling process has used a roll-forward, precedent-based approach which is unsuitable for responding to an evolving academic curriculum, and managing the complex interactions and decisions required to support key timetabling objectives.

A key outcome of the introduction of a University-wide timetable will be improved management reporting on timetabling and class enrolment patterns, learning and teaching requirements, and student / staff class profiles. Comprehensive information captured in the University’s business systems can be used to identify changing needs and make informed planning decisions around classes, scheduling, learning and teaching space, and resources.
3 Definitions
The Timetabling Glossary which forms an attachment to the Policy contains definitions of the key concepts used in timetabling at the University.

4 Scope
The University-wide timetable will be produced either annually or by semester (according to need) and will be campus-based. A common timetable can be scheduled where campuses are located in the same city.

The inclusion of campuses and faculties in the University-wide timetable process will be agreed between the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and individual campus / faculty managers.

5 Information Technology Assisted Timetabling
The University-wide timetable will be produced using Syllabus Plus Course Planner software which has been in use at UNSW as a room booking system since 1999 and is successfully used at a large number of Australian and overseas Universities. Use of the software will be expanded to take advantage of its full scheduling capability.

With the implementation of centralised timetabling, Syllabus Plus will be tightly integrated with several of the University’s core student and academic administration systems: NewSouth Student, NewSouth HR, myUNSW, and the Online Handbook. These systems will be further developed to collect and store timetabling requirements and parameters and will support holistic management of course and timetabling information. The systems will support campus-wide timetabling priorities, while at the same time accommodating valid local requirements.

6 Principles

6.1 General Principles
6.1.1 The primary objectives in implementing a University-wide timetable are to produce a timetable that: is equitable, effective, and complete; takes into account the needs of both students and staff; and maximises the efficient use of space and resources. The timetabling process and system will be engineered around meeting these objectives.

6.1.2 The University will use a planning timetable model. A planning timetable is produced ahead of enrolments using requirements and constraint parameters defined by schools as well as previous year / semester enrolment data to validate assumptions. All known requirements and constraints on the timetable should be applied prior to its production. This will facilitate a stable and complete timetable and minimise the need for changes once the timetable is published.

A planning timetable supports myUNSW’s online, real-time self-service enrolment system which empowers students to construct their own timetable based on their course choices and class meeting time preferences.

6.2 Students
6.2.1 The needs of students will be given highest priority in the University-wide timetable, reflecting the University’s strategic goal to enhance the student experience and learning outcomes.

6.2.2 The timetable will be optimised to facilitate clash-free student enrolment in core courses, and maximise choice of elective courses, wherever possible.

6.2.3 Consistent with the previous principle, the timetable will address the needs of students in combined degree programs, including the requirement for them to enrol in core units across multiple study areas in the one teaching period.

6.2.4 The timetable will schedule classes for all teaching activities (including large and small group classes). This will ensure that a complete view of student needs can be considered in the production of the timetable, and that students are able to attain a complete and cohesive timetable at enrolment.
6.2.5 Timetabling arrangements for repeat students, or students progressing according to non-standard arrangements (e.g. advanced standing; special substitutions; enrolment over a non-standard timeframe), cannot be guaranteed. Where non-standard arrangements apply to a significant cohort, relevant timetabling arrangements will be facilitated where possible.

6.2.6 While constraint-based scheduling of core courses defined for an academic program will be supported, “clash-free” scheduling of optional course combinations cannot be guaranteed, especially for course-combinations with low enrolments, due to the impact on the quality of the timetable. The University-Wide Timetable Operational Guidelines contain further information about the treatment of optional course-combinations in the scheduling process.

6.3 Staff

6.3.1 The needs of staff will be accommodated in the University-wide timetable. Teaching commitments and other responsibilities (including administration and research commitments) will be recognised as constraints.

6.3.2 Allocation of teaching duties will remain the responsibility of Heads of School.

6.3.3 The nomination of staff to particular classes, and all known constraints on teaching staff availability, will need to be defined and applied prior to production of the timetable in order to minimise changes resulting from staff clashes or unavailability. Changes can prove difficult to resolve after the timetable has been produced and impede the stability of the timetable, inconveniencing both students and other staff.

6.3.4 Once the timetable is finalised, it is acceptable for schools to adjust the allocation of staff to teaching activities as long as this doesn’t result in changes to the timetable.

6.3.5 A minimum set of conditions will be applied to the scheduling of full-time academic staff to teaching activities in the timetable. These will:

- Limit the number of contiguous teaching hours in a day
- Limit the span of teaching hours in a day (start of first class to end of final class)
- Limit the number of teaching days in a week (to provide dedicated time for research)
- Prevent early teaching on the day following late teaching
- Allow for a break in the middle of the day
- Allow for a teaching-free time-slot in common with other school staff to facilitate school meetings and seminars

These constraints will be respected and complied with wherever possible. It may occasionally be necessary to break the constraints where there are compelling reasons affecting the quality of the timetable.

6.4 Teaching Space

6.4.1 The timetable will be optimised to ensure the effective use of teaching spaces and facilities across the week. Classes will be allocated to appropriately equipped spaces that suit the mode of teaching and class size.

6.4.2 All teaching facilities, 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.

6.4.3 The timetabling system will incorporate controls to ensure the allocation of appropriate classes into school-managed and specialist teaching space.

6.4.4 Location precincts will be defined in the timetabling system to support the scheduling of classes into teaching spaces in buildings and areas on a campus that are within reasonable proximity to a school’s teaching staff.

6.4.5 The allocation of teaching space in the timetable will be managed by UNSW Student Services. Student Services will also manage requests for scheduling additional classes once the timetable is finalised and published.

6.4.6 CATS will manage all casual bookings, including requests for space to accommodate small classes which fall outside the scope of the University-wide timetable. CATS will also be responsible for the maintenance and operation of centrally allocated teaching space.
6.5 Teaching Hours and Times

6.5.1 Classes to be attended by full-time students will be scheduled between the hours of 9 am and 6 pm Monday to Thursday, and between 9 am and 4 pm on Fridays.

6.5.2 At the request of a School, classes may also be scheduled between 8 am and 9.30pm Monday to Friday in order, for example, to support attendance by part-time students, or make use of special teaching facilities, or utilise the services of external specialist teaching staff.

6.5.3 Classes may also be scheduled outside of these days/hours with the approval of the relevant Head of School, for example, on weekends. Such arrangements must comply with the requirements of the UNSW (Academic Staff) Enterprise Agreement.

6.6 Special Scheduling Requests

6.6.1 A School may request same-time and/or co-location of activities for individual or related courses. The need for this may arise where students need to transfer between courses that are offered at different levels, or where a course is offered through multiple aliases.

6.6.2 The order in which activities for a course are scheduled within a teaching week will not be sequenced. A School may apply to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) for special permission to sequence classes where it believes compelling pedagogical grounds exist. It is generally expected that small group classes will be based on the previous week’s lecture materials and consequently activity sequencing will not be necessary for the large majority of courses.

6.6.3 Some courses with anticipated enrolments of ten or fewer students (e.g. honours seminars) may be timetabled by the school responsible in consultation with students enrolled in the course, rather than being centrally timetabled. Venues for these classes will be organised either as casual room bookings (to be made after the teaching timetable is finalised) or by using School facilities.

6.7 Scheduling Calendar

6.7.1 The schedule of dates for producing the timetable will be established on an annual or semester basis by UNSW Student Services. The schedule will align with related NewSouth Student and handbooks review and publication cycles, and will comply with dates established by the Commonwealth in the Higher Education Support Act (2003) for finalising schedules of courses to be offered in a calendar period.

6.7.2 The University-wide Timetable Operational Guidelines will be reviewed annually by UNSW Student Services in consultation with the Timetabling Reference Group. The Guidelines will be distributed, with Procedures and the Scheduling Calendar, to School timetabling staff.

6.7.3 Unbooked teaching spaces will be released for casual bookings three weeks after the commencement of classes in a semester.

6.8 Changes to the Final Timetable

6.8.1 Changes to the final timetable will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Valid reasons for changes include:

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

Consistent with University policy and relevant legislation, timetabling procedures will make reasonable accommodations for staff and students in regards to family responsibilities, religious beliefs, and disabilities.

8 Governance

The governance arrangements are set out in the University-wide Timetable - Governance Structure document. Governance will be provided by a Timetable Steering Committee (with a particular focus on quality assurance and resourcing of operations, licences and future developments), a Timetabling Reference Group (with a particular focus on agreeing operational guidelines, timetabling priorities and resolution of issues). Both groups will have cross-divisional and cross-functional representation from throughout the University to ensure broad and appropriate consideration of relevant issues. The Steering Committee will report to and advise executive management and the Academic Board (via the Academic Services Committee).

9 Review

University timetabling policy and procedures will require regular review. The University-wide timetabling strategy, governance arrangements, and policy are to be reviewed at least bi-annually. Operational guidelines are to be reviewed at the end of each business cycle. Reviews will be coordinated by UNSW Student Services.

10 Acknowledgements

This Policy draws on information from timetabling policy documents developed at other Australian universities, including:

- ANU
- University of Adelaide

11 Reference Documents

| University-wide timetabling – Operational Guidelines. |
| University-wide timetabling – Governance Structure. |
| University-wide timetabling – Glossary. |
| CATS Procedures Manual |
| Space Management Policy and Procedures |
| http://www.infonet.unsw.edu.au/poldoc/space.htm |
| Enterprise Bargaining Agreement – academic staff |
| Higher Education Support Act (2003), Commonwealth of Australia |

>>End document