



# POLICY ON THE ACADEMIC YEAR AND TEACHING CALENDAR

Version No.	Description	Author	Approval	Effective Date
1.0	Policy on the Academic Year and Teaching Calendar	Education Enhancement	Senate	AY 2019/20
1.1	Updated Policy on the Academic Year and Teaching Calendar – updated August 2023	Education Enhancement	Senate	16 <sup>th</sup> November 2023



**POLICY ON THE ACADEMIC YEAR AND TEACHING CALENDAR**

**CONTENTS**

Glossary of Terms .....	1
Rationale .....	2
Scope .....	2
Teaching Year and Teaching Structure .....	2
Teaching Week .....	3
Wednesday Afternoons .....	4
Attendance .....	4
The Teaching Timetable Guiding Principles .....	4
Timetable Construction .....	5
Timetabling Timeline .....	5
Timetabling Responsibilities .....	5
Annex A: Wednesday Afternoon Policy .....	6

## Glossary of Terms

1. This glossary sets out key terms used in this policy together with their associated definitions. Key terms are highlighted in italics throughout this policy.

Term	Definition
<b>Central Pool Teaching</b>	<i>Central Pool Teaching</i> and learning space which is centrally managed and timetabled and used for <i>teaching activities</i> and non-teaching events
<b>Compulsory Module</b>	A <i>Module</i> which <i>must</i> be taken as part of the <i>programme</i> curriculum
<b>Departmental Timetabling Coordinator</b>	A nominated staff member within each academic department is responsible for the management of the timetabling process at departmental level
<b>Elective Module</b>	A <i>Module</i> , offered by the University, which can be <i>freely chosen</i> by a student <b>or</b> a <i>Module</i> available where students have to choose from a specific list of <i>modules</i>
<b>Institutional Timetabling System</b>	The name used for the timetabling software (Syllabus Plus/S+/Enterprise)
<b>Module</b>	The individual components of a <i>programme</i> , normally worth 20 or 10 credits
<b>Optional Module</b>	A <i>Module</i> chosen by a student from a list <i>defined</i> in a <i>programme</i> curriculum, for example, specialisms within a <i>programme</i>
<b>Programme</b>	The full degree <i>programme</i> leading to an award
<b>Specialist Teaching Structure</b>	The study pattern for <i>programmes</i> of study which operate an alternative teaching calendar to align with sector requirements, for example teaching, social work, January start postgraduate taught <i>programmes</i> ; or to meet partner requirements, for example apprenticeship degrees
<b>Standard Teaching Structure</b>	This defines the pattern for teaching across 2 semesters, incorporating Welcome/Consolidation and Development weeks, the formal assessment periods (including the resit examination diet), and vacation time.
<b>Standard Teaching Week</b>	The <i>Standard Teaching Week</i> is Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00 pm with the exception of Wednesday 1.00pm-5.00pm (for undergraduate students).
<b>Teaching Activity</b>	A <i>teaching activity</i> , delivered at specific times and locations, including online, involving a member of staff
<b>Teaching Year</b>	52-weeks, numbered consecutively from week 1 to week 52. These week numbers inform timetable scheduling within the University's operational timetabling system. The <i>Teaching Year</i> commences the Monday which lies on or between 30th July and 5 August each year

## Rationale

1. This policy sets out the agreed principles for the structure of the academic year, the teaching structure and the relationship with operational timetabling procedures.
2. The aims of this policy are to:
  - outline the governance and parameters of the academic year and teaching structure within;
  - facilitate the delivery of an enhanced student experience, recognising the diversity of our population; and
  - provide the parameters for the implementation of the University's timetabling procedures in support of the effective use of the University estate.
3. Senate has responsibility for determining the shape of the academic year and the teaching structure therein. Senate delegates responsibility for the implementation of the University's *Standard Teaching Structure* to the Strategic Timetabling Group, a sub-group of Learning Enhancement Committee, reporting through Education Strategy Committee.

## Scope

4. This policy applies to all campus-based undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision (including co-taught undergraduate masters and postgraduate taught *modules*) operating within a *Standard Teaching Structure* with the exception of points 17 - 20 and Annex A, which currently applies to campus-based undergraduate *programmes* only.
5. Postgraduate research provision is delivered within the broad parameters of the *Standard Teaching Structure*, aligned to the requirements of Research Councils and external University partners.
6. Where possible, online, work-based learning and distance learning *programmes* will be delivered within the broad parameters of the *Standard Teaching Structure*, however *programmes* may be aligned to specialist requirements and/or external University partners' requirements through a *Specialist Teaching Structure*. Where this is the case, full information on the *Specialist Teaching Structure* will be provided to all students enrolled on the *programme*, highlighting key areas of divergence with the *Standard Teaching Structure*.

## Teaching Year and Teaching Structure

7. The University operates a 52-week academic *Teaching Year* (TY), with weeks numbered consecutively from week 1 to week 52. These week numbers inform the timetable scheduling within the *Institutional Timetabling System*. The *Teaching Year* commences the Monday which lies between 30<sup>th</sup> July and 5<sup>th</sup> August each year.
8. This defines the pattern for teaching across 2 semesters, incorporating Welcome/Consolidation and Development weeks, the formal assessment periods (including the resit examination diet), and vacation time. For *programmes* following a *Specialist Teaching Structure*, teaching may be scheduled in accordance with an alternative teaching structure.
9. Semester 1 within the *Standard Teaching Structure* begins in September with Welcome and Development Week (TY week 7), followed by 11 weeks of teaching (TY weeks 8-18 inclusive). This is followed by a 2-week Formal Assessment Period in December (TY weeks 19-20) and subsequently, winter vacation (TY weeks 21-23). Where *programmes* follow a *Specialist Teaching Structure*, this is highlighted to students through admission to the *programme* and through their *Programme/Department* induction.
10. Semester 2 within the *Standard Teaching Structure* begins in January with Consolidation and Development Week (TY week 24), followed by 11 weeks of teaching (TY weeks 25-35).

inclusive). This is followed by a 2-week spring vacation (TY weeks 36-37) and subsequently, a 5-week Formal Assessment Period in April and May (TY weeks 38-42 inclusive). The Summer vacation period commences in week 43, followed by the Resit Examination Diet (TY Weeks 52/53 – Week 2).

11. Resit examinations take place from late July to early August each year (TY Weeks 52/53 – Week 2).

12. The University's *Standard Teaching Structure* is as follows:

<b><i>Standard Teaching Structure</i></b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>TY Week Number<sup>1</sup></b>
<b>Welcome and Development Week</b>	1 week	Week 7
<b>Teaching block 1</b>	11 weeks	Weeks 8 - 18
<b>Formal Assessment Period</b>	2 weeks	Weeks 19 - 20
<b>Winter vacation</b>	3 weeks	Weeks 21 - 23
<b>Consolidation and Development</b>	1 week	Week 24
<b>Teaching block 2</b>	11 weeks	Weeks 25 - 35
<b>Spring vacation</b>	2 weeks	Weeks 36 - 37
<b>Formal Assessment Period</b>	5 weeks	Weeks 38 - 42
<b>Summer vacation</b>	16 or 17 weeks	Weeks 43 – Week 6
<b>Formal Assessment Period – Resit Examination Diet</b>	2 weeks (Wednesday – Tuesday)	Weeks 52/53 – Week 2

### Teaching Week

13. In the *Standard Teaching Week*, teaching hours are as follows:

Monday	9.00am-5.00pm
Tuesday	9.00am-5.00pm
Wednesday	9.00am-5.00pm (9.00am-1.00pm for UG students)
Thursday	9.00am-5.00pm
Friday	9.00am-5.00pm

14. Students are expected to attend all scheduled activities during the times noted in point 13<sup>2</sup>.

15. Teaching starts at 5 minutes past the hour and ends at 5 minutes to the hour, to allow students and staff sufficient time between *teaching activities*.

16. Evening and weekend *programmes* will define scheduled times within their *Specialist Teaching Structure*.

<sup>1</sup> See: point 7, week numbering used within the *Institutional Timetabling System*, based on 52-week year.

<sup>2</sup> The University recognises that Student Carers may be required off-campus at irregular times in order to carry out their caring responsibilities. Student Carers are invited to meet with their Adviser of Studies at the earliest opportunity to discuss their needs. Further information on support provision can be found in the [University's Student Carers Policy](#).

### Wednesday Afternoons

17. This section of the policy currently applies to undergraduate *programmes* following the *Standard Teaching Structure* only. Where possible, local *Departmental Timetabling Coordinators* are encouraged to be cognisant of this policy for postgraduate and other taught provision.
18. The University is committed to supporting students to participate in extracurricular, skills development and employability opportunities on Wednesday afternoons.
19. The policy for Wednesday afternoons encompasses collaboration between all University Departments to ensure that the University:
  - (i) supports opportunities for: participation in Sport; engagement in Clubs and Societies; involvement in Volunteering; and many others including employment experience and the development of employability skills.
  - (ii) has an appropriate policy for Wednesday afternoons to allow students to engage in extracurricular activities, enhance employability opportunities and develop transferable skills.
  - (iii) recognises that these opportunities promote health and well-being, allow for a more holistic and wholesome experience at university; but also increase employability through developing transferable skills, and support students to develop transferable skills which include (but are not limited to): communication skills, leadership, team working, event management, budgeting and resilience.
20. The parameters for the policy on Wednesday afternoons and requirements for applying this policy in practice are described in Annex A.

### Attendance

21. Students are expected to attend all formally scheduled teaching and related events within the parameters of the *Standard Teaching Structure*, as defined in point 12 or their *Specialist Teaching Structure*. This includes events scheduled by Departments and Faculties within Welcome and Development Week and Consolidation and Development Week. Such weeks are considered to be an important part of the teaching structure, designed to facilitate the delivery of wider developmental activities in support of students' wider education within Strathclyde. Departments and Faculties are responsible for communicating the programme of events scheduled during these weeks.
22. Students are expected to attend all *modules* scheduled in accordance with their teaching structure, but may be granted absences in line with points 17 - 20 and Annex A for recognised sporting or extracurricular activities. Personal circumstances should be addressed through the [University's Personal Circumstances & Academic Appeals Procedure](#). Students are responsible for communicating the reasons for their absence, in line with 1.7 and 1.8 in Annex A. Any absence relating to personal circumstances should be reported in line with that procedure.

### The Teaching Timetable Guiding Principles

23. The teaching timetable will be designed based on:
  - (i) The primacy of the student learning experience
  - (ii) The pedagogic imperatives as identified by the teaching staff
  - (iii) The need to achieve and promote equality of opportunity, including equality of access to teaching facilities and fair allocation
  - (iv) The need to provide timely and accurate timetabling and room booking information to students and staff
  - (v) The need to make efficient use of space, resources and the teaching estate

**Timetable Construction**

24. A range of factors will be considered when developing the timetable, including:

- (i) Accurate data on all *teaching activities*
- (ii) Accurate data on all teaching rooms
- (iii) Accurate data on all teaching facilities
  
- (iv) *Central pool teaching* and departmental teaching facilities
- (v) Student choice - pathways
- (vi) Student availability
- (vii) Staff availability
- (viii) Clustering / distribution of activities
- (ix) Prioritisation of teaching and other 'bookable' activities.

**Timetabling Timeline**

25. The University's Timetabling Timeline is reviewed and agreed on an annual basis through the Operational Timetabling Group, and reported to the Strategic Timetabling Group.

**Timetabling Responsibilities**

26. For details of timetabling responsibilities, please refer to the University's Timetabling Policy.

## Annex A: Wednesday Afternoon Policy

1.1 The Wednesday Afternoon Policy applies to undergraduate on-campus *programmes* only. The following exclusions apply:

- (i) *Programmes* with formal requirement to undertake a placement as part of the curriculum, which may require to be scheduled on a Wednesday afternoon.
- (ii) Postgraduate Taught *programmes*.
- (iii) Apprenticeship or work based learning degree *programmes*.
- (iv) Fully online *programmes*.

1.2 It is the policy of the University of Strathclyde that:

- (i) *Teaching activity* shall not be scheduled on Wednesdays after 1pm.
- (ii) Staff should understand that students may be required to leave before 1.00pm on Wednesdays in respect of sporting opportunities within the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) and Scottish Student Sport (SSS) framework and approve absences, where possible (see Note 1, below<sup>3</sup>).
- (iii) Staff should understand that students may be required to leave before 1.00pm on Wednesdays in respect of other recognised extracurricular activities, where appropriate, as outlined within section 1.3 (Annex A).
- (iv) Staff will avoid scheduling mandatory activities within *modules* on Wednesdays, unless there is no other alternative. These include (but are not limited to): *module* tests, peer-review *modules* and labs without alternatives.
- (v) Students and staff should make arrangements to ensure that any material missed due to absence agreed within the context of this policy should be made available to ensure students catch up on any missed *modules* and content.

1.3 The scope of sporting or extra-curricular activities which may be considered as valid for an approval of absence include:

- (i) Sporting fixtures within the BUCS framework and those supported by SSS
- (ii) Extracurricular activities contributing to a student's wider achievement, for example: Volunteering, representation, University internship, academic non-credit bearing competition, recognised peer mentoring *programme*, recognised community engagement *programme*, recognised employability focused and outreach activity.

1.4 In the first instance the local timetabling coordinator/key contact will endeavour to ensure that no mandatory activities within *modules* are scheduled on Wednesdays, through co-ordination with the *module* co-ordinator.

1.5 In cases where timetabling challenges could impact on a student's ability to participate in BUCS and SSS activity the student should contact their *programme* leader / director who will in most cases be able to resolve the situation in a manner that is supportive of the student.

1.6 Where matters cannot be resolved by this process the case should be referred to the Vice Dean Academic (VDA) to establish a final outcome.

1.7 No more than 3 absences will normally be permitted per semester. This is to avoid undue adverse impact on the student's academic performance within the *module*. In all cases students are expected to discuss potential absences with *module* leaders. In addition, where sporting commitments mean that a student will be absent from a *module* more than 3 times across the semester, this should be discussed with the programme leader / director.

---

<sup>3</sup> Sporting fixtures within the British Universities & Colleges Sport framework and those supported by Scottish Student Sport.



1.8 Students should take responsibility for contacting their *programme* leader / director prior to committing to regular external engagements scheduled for a Wednesday afternoon.

Students may be required, on occasion, to travel to fixtures on Wednesday mornings or Tuesday evenings. A greater degree of academic flexibility is required for all students participating in high level sport (not only those formally supported by the Performance Sport Scholarship *Programme*).

This note will provide guidelines to allow students to compete in these fixtures and still fulfil academic requirements; recognising the outstanding student experience available through curricular and extracurricular activities should be supported.

1. It is the policy of the University of Strathclyde to approve absences between 9am and 1pm on Wednesdays, where appropriate and in accordance with the guidance provided above.
2. Students who are required to leave before 1.00pm on the Wednesday should contact all staff of the *module(s)* they will be missing.
3. The staff should then approve the absence from *module* on the understanding that the student commits to catching up with any work missed.

While it may not be possible to grant all absence requests, every effort should be made to support the student.

Further information on the BUCS framework and SSS supported fixtures is available from the University of Strathclyde Sports Union.