

Consultation on approach to timetabling in 2022/3

Feedback and resulting recommendations

Aims

A high quality timetable is very important to our students and staff. Dissatisfaction with the timetable can have a direct detrimental effect on both the student experience, as evidenced by NSS comments, and staff satisfaction, as described in this paper.

For the last two years, timetabling activities have been heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. In the hope that 2022/3 will be business as usual (or as close to as possible), the Timetabling & Room Booking Team shared a consultation document (see Appendices) with Schools via the Boards of Studies and Student Experience (BoSSEs) during autumn 2021. The main aims were:

- To provide Schools and other stakeholders with a better understanding of why data is requested at certain times and how it is utilised.
- To seek input into key principles and operational questions in order to provide students and staff with a high quality timetable.
- To agree a timeline for timetabling activities in 2022/3.

Purpose

- To facilitate a functional and sustainable teaching and learning timetable that provides the best possible experience for both students and staff.
- To enable Schools, the Timetabling & Room Booking Team, and other relevant stakeholders to understand each other's requirements and timescales.
- To support the optimum use of the University estate.

Consultation method

The Timetabling & Room Booking Team managed to attend BoSSEs in most Schools and took feedback directly from meetings. Where this was not possible, Schools provided feedback via other means. Feedback was received from 13 of the 15 Schools and Institutes who have timetabled activities.

This paper gathers together the responses to the consultation questions, and other key themes that were identified during the process. The consultation specifically covered timetabling activities for 2022/3; further work needs to be undertaken to establish a framework or policy for timetabling for 2023/4 and beyond.

The paper's structure

This paper is split into two sections:

1. Summary of recommendations

All recommendations gathered together for easy reading.

2. Consultation response

Each set of consultation questions is followed by the feedback provided by the Schools, and some recommendations as to what should happen next.

2.1. Publication approach

2.1.1. Whole year or by term?

2.1.2. Draft timetable publication date

2.2. Timeline

2.3. Consistent teaching pattern

2.4. Other suggestions for 2022/3

2.5. Other suggestions for 2023/4 onwards

3. Appendices

The appendices include the overview of the end-to-end process required to build the timetable, and the associated timeline. These were shared in the original consultation document.

Note that, throughout the paper, 'Timetabling Team' is used to refer to the sub-group of the Timetabling & Room Booking Team who most frequently work on timetabling activities.

Elizabeth Evans, Head of Timetabling & Room Booking

22nd February 2022

1. Summary of recommendations

1.1. Core consultation questions

| Number | Recommendation | Actor |
|--------|--|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Timetable publication date: a. The whole year's timetable to be published on 1 st September. b. For a small subset of programmes whose teaching begins before Welcome Week, their timetable to be published on 17 th August. | Timetabling & Room Booking Team |
| 2 | Schools to make only essential changes to the timetable once it has been published. Essential changes include sickness absence, access requirements as a result of a disability, adjustments as a result of a Tailored Adjustment Plan, family leave, changes to contractual working patterns, and external meetings of national or University strategic importance e.g. TEF, REF, PSRB or Government panels. | Schools |
| 3 | The Timetabling Team will open a short review window in November during which time Schools may submit essential changes for the spring and summer timetables. The Timetabling Team will endeavour to make all changes before the Christmas break so that staff and students have time to plan their activities around their revised timetable. | Timetabling & Room Booking Team |
| 4 | Schools to commence work on their workload allocation planning in February so that individual module convenors can consider and submit their timetabling requirements in March. Where modules are offered across multiple Departments, Schools should ensure that all Departments are involved in the planning of these modules. This will contribute significantly to the enhanced accuracy of the timetable, reduce checking requirements, and create a better student and staff experience. | Schools |
| 5 | The draft timetable is published in June for a period of three weeks. | Timetabling & Room Booking Team |
| 6 | All stakeholders to adopt and adhere to the Key dates timeline. | All stakeholders |
| 7 | It is important for student experience to balance the needs of a module against the overall programme timetable. Schools should consider how modules with very varied teaching patterns fit together to create a coherent programme-level timetable. | Schools |
| 8 | In January, the Timetabling & Room Booking Team will be meeting with each School to discuss their plans for 2022/3. Where Schools have significant numbers of modules with practical activities, the Timetabling representatives will ask the Schools how they can work together to make any progress towards a more consistent teaching pattern. | Timetabling & Room Booking Team |

1.2. Other suggestions for 2022/3

| Number | Recommendation | Actor |
|--------|---|---------------------------------|
| 9 | Timetabling Team to liaise with CQSD and Marketing to obtain a full list of part-time PGT programmes which are taught on specific days. | Timetabling & Room Booking Team |

| | | |
|----|---|---------------------------------|
| 10 | Schools to ensure that full-time PGT applicants are aware that they need to be available Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm, and that they will not receive complete timetables until Friday 7 th October (see section 2.2.). | Schools |
| 11 | The Timetabling Team to increase the number and frequency of data accuracy checks during the timetable build process and prior to publication. This will only be possible if data is submitted on time so that the planned time within the build process can be used for accuracy checking rather than last minute building. | Timetabling & Room Booking Team |
| 12 | Schools to provide accurate timetabling information at the outset and check draft timetables thoroughly during the designated period so that the Timetabling & Room Booking Team can make all required changes (including resolving student clashes) in advance of the publication of the final timetable. | Schools |
| 13 | The Timetabling and Room Booking Team to respond promptly to essential change requests, and discuss change requests which would have an impact on any other teaching session with Schools so they can explore alternatives and work in partnership to put these in place. | Timetabling & Room Booking Team |
| 14 | CILT to discuss and agree operational actions to support Smart Working within the context of timetabling. | CILT |
| 15 | The Chair of CILT to discuss with UEB (as owners of the Smart Working Policy) sending clarification to Schools outlining the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adequately resourcing teaching and learning activity is the responsibility of the Head of School and decisions to agree to formal flexible work arrangements and/or smart working must be seen in this context. ○ Smart Working is supported by the Timetabling & Room Booking Team, but this cannot be to the detriment of having insufficient staff availability within a School/Department to cover teaching sessions throughout the timetabled week. Timetable slots are determined by a combination of staff availability, student module choice, and estate availability. | CILT |

1.3. Other suggestions for 2023/4 onwards

| Number | Recommendation | Actor |
|--------|---|---------------------------------|
| 16 | Create in partnership with Schools, a good quality timetable for 2022-3 with the aim of rolling forward the Part 1 and Master's module timetables for 2023-4, subject to a decision by CILT in late autumn 2022. | Timetabling & Room Booking Team |
| 17 | As was committed to in the original paper, the Timetabling & Room Booking Team will continue to consult with Schools and other stakeholders via CILT recommended routes. This may include further BoSSEs, and programme diet meetings with Schools and Support Centres. | Timetabling & Room Booking Team |

2. Consultation response

2.1. Publication approach

2.1.1. Whole year or by term?

Consultation questions

- Does publication of the whole year's timetable in September have any advantages over two separate publication dates, one for autumn and one for spring/summer?
- Assuming there are no external factors which might change this approach, should the whole year's timetable be published in September?

Feedback

The majority of consulted groups agreed that the timetable should be published in September for the whole academic year. The benefits of this, listed in order of frequency of mention, are:

- Staff can plan childcare
- Staff can plan external commitments (conferences, or external examiner work)
- Students can plan caring responsibilities and paid work (an important factor in widening participation)

It should be noted that there is a large gap between reviewing the draft timetable and commencing teaching for the spring and summer terms. Many Schools expressed a wish to make changes to the spring and summer timetable either in the autumn term, or at the start of the spring term. Schools felt that this was necessary to reflect changes in staffing, and also to allow changes in the way in which staff wish to deliver their module.

Having a timetable published well in advance so that individuals can plan other activities, and making changes to the spring and summer timetable after it has been published are conflicting desires but were raised by the majority of Schools. This could be resolved by opening a second window for timetable review in November so that changes are implemented before the Christmas break.

As optional modules are offered across Departments, the vast majority of the timetable is interlinked and a change in one area has a knock-on impact elsewhere. Changing an activity, whether for pedagogic or personal reasons, will have an impact on students or other staff who have used their 'final' timetable to plan activities.

Recommendations

1. Timetable publication date:
 - a. The whole year's timetable to be published on 1st September.
 - b. For a small subset of programmes whose teaching begins before Welcome Week, their timetable to be published on 17th August.
2. Schools to make only essential changes to the timetable once it has been published. Essential changes include sickness absence, access requirements as a result of a disability, adjustments as a result of a Tailored Adjustment Plan, family leave, changes to contractual working patterns, and external meetings of national or University strategic importance e.g. TEF, REF, PSRB or Government panels.
3. The Timetabling Team will open a short review window in November during which time Schools may submit essential changes for the spring and summer timetables. The

Timetabling Team will endeavour to make all changes before the Christmas break so that staff and students have time to plan their activities around their revised timetable.

2.1.2. Draft timetable publication date

Consultation questions

- Is June (and again in November if the split publication approach has been chosen) the right time for timetables to be checked for academic staff? If not, when would be better?
- Is this timeline realistic? If not, what needs to be changed?
- To achieve timely publication of an accurate timetable, the deadlines in the timeline need to be met. Are these deadlines achievable?

Feedback

Draft timetables are provided so that Schools can review what has been built for them, and advise the Timetabling Team of any errors that have been made. Schools require sufficient time to undertake the checks, and the Timetabling Team requires sufficient time (approximately double the length of time Schools have had to review) to implement the changes. The number of changes required by Schools during the draft checking stage would likely be reduced if the quality of data provided by Schools at the data submission stage was improved.

In order to improve the quality of data submitted by module convenors, Heads of School may need to undertake workload modelling activities in February so that staff have sufficient information to make their timetabling requests.

Most Schools agreed that they would be able to check draft timetables in June, as long as sufficient time for doing this was given. Three weeks was suggested as being sufficient duration. Note that the shortened timeframe in 2020/1 and 2021/2 was necessitated by the end to end process being condensed for all stakeholders.

Some Schools stated that checking timetables in June was difficult because this clashes with assessment activity. In all cases, no alternative was suggested.

Various Schools commented that submitting timetabling information in March was not realistic as decisions about who would be teaching which modules, and how, are not decided until after that point. However, those same Schools all agreed that they could not wait until later in September for publication of the final timetable, and they did not want to push checking of the draft timetable back into July or August. Therefore, to meet the Schools' desires for June and September draft and final publication dates, timetabling data collection needs to take place in March (this gives the Timetabling Team just 11 weeks to build the whole year's timetable for the whole University).

It was noted in some BoSSEs that Schools have the perception that the Timetabling Team consider timetable changes requests to be caused by poor planning, rather than pedagogical need. Planning-related timetabling challenges are evidenced by:

- Workload planning within Schools is coming too late for module convenors to be able to submit accurate timetabling information.
- Schools provide data to the Timetabling Team knowing that they intend to change the information once workload planning has been completed. One School commented that they provide 'any old information' to stop the Timetabling Team from 'nagging them'

and then, when the School wants to start work on their timetable, they submit a raft of changes knowing that the Timetabling Team will have to undertake the work.

- Planning across Schools for teaching is better coordinated in some Schools and Departments than others. This has been particularly noticeable where:
 - Individual academic staff have not understood the Teaching & Learning Framework and have not received support to guide them in how to structure their teaching to meet the Framework.
 - Individual academic staff contact the Timetabling Team directly asking for a session to be moved without having consulted other colleagues teaching on the same programme, resulting in complaints about timetable changes from the colleagues who receive knock-on changes.

Recommendations

4. Schools to commence work on their workload allocation planning in February so that individual module convenors can consider and submit their timetabling requirements in March. Where modules are offered across multiple Departments, Schools should ensure that all Departments are involved in the planning of these modules. This will contribute significantly to the enhanced accuracy of the timetable, reduce checking requirements, and create a better student and staff experience.
5. The draft timetable is published in June for a period of three weeks.

2.2. Timeline

A timeline was presented to Schools for comment (see Appendix 2), and to aid discussion on the consultation questions in section 2.1. Some additional consultation was carried out with CQSD and the Support Centres who have confirmed that they can work to this timeline. No alternative suggestions were made by Schools and, in order to meet the desire for a full year's publication in September with a draft timetable available in June, a table of key dates for Schools has therefore been devised and is recommended below.

New students who have optional modules to select may not receive a complete timetable until the end of the second week of term (Friday 7th October). Students are permitted to change module until the end of the third week of term; therefore, some students will not have complete timetables until the fourth week of term (w/c 17th October).

Recommendation

6. All stakeholders to adopt and adhere to the Key dates timeline.

Key dates timeline

| Date | Activity |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 14 January | CQSD deadline for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Requesting changes to key module information for the 2022/23 academic year 2. Requesting that modules to be taken out of use or put back in use for the 2022/23 academic year. 3. Requesting the creation of new modules for the 2022/23 academic year (new module setup request forms). |
| January and February: 4 February | Schools to work with Support Centres to build programme diets for all Parts: Deadline for undergraduate diet discussions with Programme Managers to be completed |
| 18 February | Deadline for PGT diet discussions with Programme Managers to be completed |
| 28 February to 25 March | Schools to consider their workload allocation and gather together their timetabling requirements for all module and programme activities for 2022/3. Schools must ensure timely communication with Departments with whom modules are shared. |
| 4 March | Deadline for undergraduate diets to be input into RISIS |
| 11 March | The deadline for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Requesting changes to the content of an existing module description for the 2022/23 academic year. 2. Providing completed module description templates for new modules created by 14 January 2022 deadline. |
| 18 March | Deadline for PGT diets to be input into RISIS |
| 25 March | Deadline to submit timetabling requirements for all module and programme activities for 2022/3 to the Timetabling Team |
| 29 March | Module information is rolled forward to 2022/23 and published on the University webpages. |
| 22 April | Deadline for Heads of Schools to return staff availability information for inclusion in scheduling |
| April | Browsing and module selection takes place for returning undergraduate students |
| 13 June to 1 July | Timetable available in draft format for Schools to review |
| 1 July | Deadline for return of comments on the draft timetable |
| 17 August | Timetable published to programmes with early start dates |
| 1 September | Timetable published to all returning students and all staff |
| 19 September | Welcome Week commences and new students (undergraduate and PGT) allocated to compulsory modules |
| 26 September to 7 October | New students (undergraduate and PGT) allocated to optional modules, and to module groups |

2.3. Consistent teaching pattern

Consultation question

- For modules which don't already have a consistent teaching pattern, is it possible to move to a consistent teaching pattern in 2022/3?

Feedback

Where Schools have modules which don't currently have a consistent teaching pattern, most cited that there were good pedagogic reasons why this could not be achieved. However, this creates an inconsistent weekly pattern with more sessions pushed to the margins (9am and 5pm) which is undesirable for both students and staff. This is particularly noticeable for programmes which have numerous option pathways and modules which are taught across Departments.

The consultation focussed on 2022/3; in the longer term, consistent teaching patterns should be picked up as part of the Programme Expectations work in the Strategic Foundations Project.

Recommendations

7. It is important for student experience to balance the needs of a module against the overall programme timetable. Schools should consider how modules with very varied teaching patterns fit together to create a coherent programme-level timetable.
8. In January, the Timetabling & Room Booking Team will be meeting with each School to discuss their plans for 2022/3. Where Schools have significant numbers of modules with practical activities, the Timetabling representatives will ask the Schools how they can work together to make any progress towards a more consistent teaching pattern.

2.4. Other suggestions for 2022/3

Feedback from Schools highlighted areas for further work in 2022/3.

2.4.1. PGT programmes

Some Schools have part-time PGT programmes which are advertised as being taught on a specific day of the week. The Timetabling Team need to liaise with CQSD and Marketing to obtain a full list of these programmes and the days that have been advertised.

Schools need to ensure that full-time PGT applicants are aware that they need to be available Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm, and that they will not receive complete timetables until Friday 7th October (see section 2.2.).

Recommendations

9. Timetabling Team to liaise with CQSD and Marketing to obtain a full list of part-time PGT programmes which are taught on specific days.
10. Schools to ensure that full-time PGT applicants are aware that they need to be available Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm, and that they will not receive complete timetables until Friday 7th October (see section 2.2.).

2.4.2. Data accuracy

The timetabling process is wholly reliant on the quality of data submitted by the Schools and inputted by the Timetabling Team. Both Schools and the Timetabling Team have a responsibility to ensure that the data that they produce is accurate and unambiguous. This will improve trust between all parties involved in the process.

As recommended in section 2.1.2., if Schools are able to commence work on their workload allocation planning in February, individual module convenors would be able to consider and submit their timetabling requests in March. Where modules are offered across multiple Departments, Schools should ensure that all Departments are involved in the planning of these modules. This will contribute significantly to the enhanced accuracy of the timetable, reduce checking requirements, and create a better student and staff experience.

Recommendation

11. The Timetabling Team to increase the number and frequency of data accuracy checks during the timetable build process and prior to publication. This will only be possible if data is submitted on time so that the planned time within the build process can be used for accuracy checking rather than last minute building.

2.4.3. Timetabling & Room Booking Team's approach to changes

Less rigid approach to changes

Some Schools commented that the rigid approach to making changes in the autumn term of 2021 had been detrimental to their module delivery. Comments were also received about the inability of the Timetabling & Room Booking Team to keep up with the volume of changes. Rather than requesting changes, Schools were making ad hoc decisions and room bookings, and then advertising timetable changes to students via email or Blackboard. Schools felt that the Timetabling & Room Booking Team's approach was actively harming the student experience.

More notice of changes to sessions

Some Schools wished to have a week's notice when a session needs to be changed (either for estate maintenance or failure, or when a change is necessitated by another academic colleague). This is not practicably deliverable as requests from academic colleagues for changes are often received with less than 24 hours' notice. There is clearly a disconnect between staff wanting their changes actioned immediately, but also wanting ample notice if their sessions are to be moved for other reasons. The most frequent reason for moving a teaching session is to resolve a student clash which has been created by an academic colleague requesting a change to their timetable.

Recommendations

12. Schools to provide accurate timetabling information at the outset and check draft timetables thoroughly during the designated period so that the Timetabling & Room Booking Team can make all required changes (including resolving student clashes) in advance of the publication of the final timetable.
13. The Timetabling and Room Booking Team to respond promptly to essential change requests, and discuss change requests which would have an impact on any other teaching session to Schools so they can explore alternatives and work in partnership to put these in place.

See also recommendation 2 in section 2.1.1.

2.4.4. Staff availability

Staff availability information is provided to the Timetabling Team by Heads of School. This information is collected in April so that it can be incorporated into the draft timetable, meaning that timetables are right first time for staff with part-time and flexible working arrangements.

When new staff join the University, or when existing staff have a formal flexible working arrangement agreed, the timetable is altered to accommodate these changes. There is no deadline for submitting these changes, but they can become more difficult to accommodate after the final timetable has been published.

Often staffing arrangements and gaps in staffing are passed to the Timetabling Team to 'solve' via timetable changes; timetable changes are rarely in isolation and will often have a significant impact on other modules, academic colleagues, and students. Adequately resourcing teaching and learning activity is the responsibility of the Head of School and decisions to agree to formal flexible working arrangements and/or smart working must be seen in this context, rather than expecting the timetable to be adapted to accommodate.

Flexible working

With respect to formal flexible working agreements, individuals within Schools noted that their flexible working arrangement had not been signed off before the timetable was scheduled, and therefore their needs had not been considered. During the BoSSEs, the Timetabling & Room Booking Team reiterated the fact that notifications of part-time or flexible working arrangements are welcome at any point, once they have been signed off by the Head of School.

If these notifications arrive after the final timetable has been published, Schools first need to consider how the affected activities can be resourced without requesting a change to the published timetable, and only request a change if this demonstrably cannot be done. As optional modules are offered across Departments, the vast majority of the timetable is interlinked and a change in one area has a knock-on impact elsewhere. Changing an individual's activity to suit their need, whether pedagogic or for personal reasons, will have an impact on both students and other staff.

Smart working

Smart working is a new approach to support flexible working practices launched during autumn 2021-22. The Timetabling Team is already starting to receive requests from individuals (forwarded on by SDTLs or Heads of Department or School) to have their on campus teaching condensed into two days. None of the requests specifically reference the Smart Working Policy, but the assumption is that there is a link between the wish to condense teaching and the experiences of our new ways of working. The [Smart Working Policy](#) refers to teaching twice:

4.8. It is recognised that any agreed smart working arrangement is subject to the requirement to attend the workplace on the reasonable request of your line manager or Head of School/Head of Function to accommodate the needs of the University, such as to attend training or meetings, or to deliver teaching, undertake research or provide other services to students, colleagues and customers.

6.6. *You agree to attend the workplace or other reasonable location to undertake teaching or research activities as required and for meetings, training courses or other events **which we expect you to attend on the dates and times required.***

The element in bold (author's formatting) gives some indication as to *when* academic staff are expected to be on campus to teach. However, it does not indicate that the decision of when this teaching will take place may need to be determined by student and estate availability, rather than by the individual. Further clarification to teaching staff is strongly recommended.

Recommendations

14. CILT to discuss and agree operational actions to support Smart Working within the context of timetabling.
15. The Chair of CILT to discuss with UEB (as owners of the Smart Working Policy) sending clarification to Schools outlining the following points:
 - Adequately resourcing teaching and learning activity is the responsibility of the Head of School and decisions to agree to formal flexible work arrangements and/or smart working must be seen in this context.
 - Smart Working is supported by the Timetabling & Room Booking Team, but this cannot be to the detriment of having insufficient staff availability within a School/Department to cover teaching sessions throughout the timetabled week. Timetable slots are determined by a combination of staff availability, student module choice, and estate availability.

2.5. Other suggestions for 2023/4 onwards

Consultation question

- Please list any suggestions or ideas that you would like to be further consulted on for 2023/4.

When the consultation was undertaken, the anticipated implementation timeframe for outputs from the Strategic Foundations Project was 2023/4. Some of the suggestions below may not now be possible until 2024/5.

2.5.1. Fixed timetables

The most commonly requested change for 2023/4 was a return to 'fixed' timetables. The timetable had been fixed for Part 1 and Master's programmes in 2019/0. Schools considered this a successful approach as it reduced the burden to review the timetable each year and provided a more consistent student experience. However, there are some challenges with this approach, particularly accommodating working patterns of new staff, and making the most efficient use of the estate during desirable timeslots.

It would no longer work to roll the 2019/0 timetable forward to 2022/3 as the module offering has changed significantly since then. If the final 2022/3 timetable is of good quality and minimal changes are submitted post-publication (a good test of timetable quality is how much it needs to be changed to suit deliverers' needs), it may be possible to roll parts of it forward for 2023/4. Note that the decision to roll forward to 2023/4 will need to be taken before spring term 2022/3 is underway; therefore, the quality of the timetable will have to be measured on autumn term 2022.

Recommendation

16. Create in partnership with Schools, a good quality timetable for 2022-3 with the aim of rolling forward the Part 1 and Master's module timetables for 2023-4, subject to a decision by CILT in late autumn 2022.

2.5.2. Wider consultation before finalising a Timetabling Policy

Schools strongly encouraged the Timetabling & Room Booking Team to further consult with them during the process to write and finalise a Timetabling Policy.

Recommendation

17. As was committed to in the original paper, the Timetabling & Room Booking Team will continue to consult with Schools and other stakeholders via CILT recommended routes. This may include further BoSSEs, and programme diet meetings with Schools and Support Centres.

3. Appendix

1. How the timetable is built

This summary of the end-to-end timetabling process shows at each stage which stakeholders are involved, how their data is utilised, and how their requirements are met within the process.

1.1. Data collection and input

Data is collected from various sources:

| Data | Source |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Room capacities | Estates |
| Staff availability | Heads of School |
| Programmes and modules in use | CQSD and RISIS |
| Programme diets | CQSD, RISIS, Support Centres |
| Activities to be timetabled | Schools |
| Estimated intake numbers | Admissions, PSO, ISLI (for NUIST) |
| Returning students' module selection choices | RISIS, Support Centres |
| Accessibility requirements for disabled students | Disability Advisory Service |

All data is input at the same time. Scheduling cannot commence until all elements of data input have been completed as all elements interact.

1.2. Scheduling

Scheduling is an iterative process.

Some activities must be placed into the timetable as there is no option for them to take place on a different day or time or in a different location, for example a field trip to Cadbury World which has been booked and paid for in advance. Currently all practical lab classes in SBS and SCFP are manually placed into the timetable. This also applies to field trips in APD and SAGES, and some practical activities in HBS and SPCLS.

The more activities which are placed on a specific day and time, or in a specific location, the less flexible the timetable becomes. Where possible, requests for specific days, times and locations should be avoided.

Once activities which require specific days, times and locations have been blocked into the timetable, all other activities are run through scheduling software to give them days, times and locations. This is an iterative process whereby various attempts are made until the Timetabling Team are satisfied that the software has produced the best possible outcome for the majority of activities.

Following this, the Timetabling Team manually place all remaining activities to give them a date, time and location.

During the scheduling process, returning students are allocated to module groups. This enables the Timetabling Team to use real student choices to best schedule the timetable for these students. This cannot be done for Part 0, 1, and Master's activities; programme diet information is used instead.

Prior to publication of the draft timetable, a number of checks are carried out to eliminate clashes from the timetable. The following levels of clash checking are undertaken:

- Programmes

- Staff
- Students at group and individual level

Where these cannot be resolved within given parameters, the Timetabling Team consult Schools to see whether any restrictions on timetabling which are causing the clashes can be relaxed. This most often applies to activities which have been blocked into the timetable on a specific day or time, or in a specific location. In some instances, students are contacted via Support Centres to ask them to change module as their clash is not resolvable.

1.3. Draft publication

The draft timetable is published to academic staff to provide an opportunity for them to review module and programme timetables and check that everything that was requested has been built and scheduled.

This phase often takes place a considerable length of time after data collection has taken place. The accuracy of the draft timetable is often compromised by:

- Schools having changed workload allocations, and
- academic staff having changed the way in which they wish to deliver their module.

Once the draft timetable has been published, making significant changes to a module or programme's delivery not only creates changes locally, but more broadly across any areas of the timetable which are interlinked.

The best possible timetable can only be built with good quality data at the outset. While circulating the draft timetable gives academic staff the opportunity to review and comment (particularly where build errors may have occurred), it should not be considered appropriate to make significant and substantial changes.

The deadline for submission of comments on the draft timetable is the final point at which changes should be requested. From now onwards, the timetable is refined so that a consistent and reliable timetable can be published for students and academic staff.

1.4. Changes made

Where changes are required following the publication of the draft timetable, these are made by the Timetabling Team in consultation with any areas or Schools which also require knock-on changes. Some changes are not possible and will require Schools to re-think delivery of that module within the time slots and locations allocated. Changes will not be made when they are:

- not essential,
- have a detrimental impact on other colleagues' timetables, or
- create clashes for students which require students to change modules.

1.5. Review of numbers following clearing

Once the number of students being recruited through clearing has stabilised, the Timetabling Team check that the locations allocated have sufficient seats. It is possible that further seminar groups need to be added, or large lectures divided in two if there is significant growth in some areas; Schools are contacted to advise on the best solution.

1.6. Final publication

The timetable is published to staff and returning students in advance of the start of term. As some programmes commence well before Welcome Week, students and staff on these programmes will receive their timetable earlier.

At the point of publication, all days, times, and locations are classified as 'confirmed'. The timetable is considered 'final'. Students value a consistent and reliable timetable so that they can plan their other activities around it. Making changes after this point is very detrimental to the student experience and is often reflected in NSS scores and comments.

1.7. Adding new students

New students complete enrolment and module selection during Welcome Week. As soon as this is completed for each student, the Timetabling Team allocates them to groups and publishes their timetable. Students on programmes with no optional modules will receive their timetables first (as their data is complete first), followed by students who have to select optional modules.

As module selection ends on the Thursday of Welcome Week, allocation of students to timetabled groups takes place on the Friday, over the weekend, and into the following week. First year modules should not have group activities in the first teaching week of term, as it cannot be guaranteed that students will have been allocated to their groups before the first teaching session.

1.8. In-term changes

In-term changes should be kept to an absolute minimum as they disrupt the consistency and reliability that students value in a timetable. If arrangements can be made to undertake activities in extant timeslots and locations, this should be the first option. If, however, a member of staff is signed off sick and there is nobody available to take their classes in the extant timeslot, then the Timetabling Team will work with the School to make the best possible arrangements.

2. Timeline

Below is the timeline that was shared with Schools during the consultation process. It is the existing timeline for all of the items mentioned in the end-to-end process. It shows dates for publication being split into autumn and spring/summer terms.

| Month | Activity | Owner |
|----------------|--|--|
| November 2021 | Schools asked via Estates Space Audit process to provide information on which teaching spaces will be used in the following academic year. | Space Management (Estates) and Schools |
| December 2021 | | |
| January 2022 | Schools submit the following year's programme and module list to CQSD | Schools and CQSD |
| | Last date for sign-off of new programmes to be taught from September | Schools and CQSD |
| February 2022 | Complete list of teaching spaces and capacities provided to Timetabling Team | Space Management (Estates) |
| | Module diets reviewed and built for all Parts | Support Centres and Schools |
| March 2022 | Timetabling data collection commences (relies on Schools having considered workload allocation, or doing this simultaneously while planning timetabling) | Timetabling Team and Schools |
| | Academic staff availability submitted by Heads of School | Schools |
| | | |
| April 2022 | Module selection runs over Easter | Support Centres |
| | Timetable build (autumn) | Timetabling Team |
| May 2022 | Timetable build (autumn) | Timetabling Team |
| June 2022 | Draft timetable published to staff for review (autumn) | Timetabling Team and Schools |
| July 2022 | Timetable changes made (autumn) | Timetabling Team |
| August 2022 | Student clashes resolved (autumn) | Timetabling Team and Support Centres |
| | Room usage optimised (autumn) | Timetabling Team |
| September 2022 | Timetable published to staff and returning students (autumn) | Timetabling Team |
| | New students allocated to timetabled activities on completion of enrolment | |
| October 2022 | Timetable build (spring/summer) | Timetabling Team |
| November 2022 | Draft timetable published to staff for review (spring/summer) | Timetabling Team and Schools |
| | Timetable changes made (spring/summer) | Timetabling Team |
| | Student clashes resolved (spring/summer) | Timetabling Team and Support Centres |
| | Room usage optimised (spring/summer) | Timetabling Team |
| December 2022 | Timetable published to staff and students (spring/summer) | Timetabling Team |