

TEACHING CONSTRAINTS: Policy and procedure



Created:	18 May 2018, edited last on Nov 26 th 2018
Updated:	
Version:	3.0
Owner:	Senate, who will remit to appropriate senior staff (e.g. EG member or Faculty Dean) and/or University Boards/Committees for review when required. Reported to Senate on 13 March 2019.
Author:	M. J. Burchell
Approved by:	EG: Sept. 11 th , 2018. JSNCC: Oct. 2018 SPC: Nov. 2018
Go Live Date:	2 July 2019

Contents:

1. Introduction
2. Aims and objectives
3. Scope
4. Responsibilities
5. Guiding Principles
6. Teaching Constraints Required for Non-Operational Reasons
7. Policy
8. Procedure
9. Timetable for Applications
10. Review
11. Associated Policies

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University is committed to supporting its academic staff and students in developing the best possible scholarly environment.
- 1.2 The primary activity of each member of Education, Scholarship & Professional Practice (ES&P) and Education & Research (E&R)¹ staff is to advance knowledge in their relevant subject area and to give instruction, advance education and disseminate knowledge by teaching, scholarship and research.
- 1.3 One important support mechanism for this, is the timetabling of the University's curriculum, within the finite space available to do so. This is a major logistical and administrative exercise. The normal University teaching day remains as before, i.e. weekdays between the hours of 9am to 6pm inclusive. Wednesday after 1 pm is not usually allocated for teaching but is used for many staff meetings etc.
- 1.4 It is also recognised that the efficient use of staff time may be facilitated by the limited use of Teaching Constraints.
- 1.5 This policy and procedure therefore sets out the circumstances in which individual members of staff can be designated as unavailable to teach on agreed days or half days (permitted "Teaching Constraints"), and the relevant responsibilities and processes. In so far as possible, this should be done in advance at the student timetable planning stage. Later changes should take regard of the University Student Charter.
- 1.6 One of the reasons for setting teaching constraints in some Schools is to allow uninterrupted periods for research or scholarship during the week. **Schools which do this should use this policy to make such requests.** This does not limit the total amount of time staff spend on such activities; that is agreed by the HoS in the School WAM model. What the policy will try to do is allow some of that time to be in uninterrupted blocks. Other Schools can continue as at present if they wish, and not set aside time in this fashion.
- 1.7 Notwithstanding the above, it may be necessary in-extremis to suspend any Teaching Constraints agreed under this policy in order to deliver necessary teaching. In such an event the relevant Head of School will be notified and may consult their Faculty Dean if necessary.

2. Aims and objectives

- 2.1 The aims of this policy are to ensure that:
 - the University is able to timetable its curriculum effectively and efficiently within the teaching space available;
 - that the teaching timetable is known and notified well in advance of the beginning of each academic year;
 - that academic staff (ES&P or E&R) can make applications (known as Teaching Constraints) to ring-fence time for other duties;

¹ Education, Scholarship & Professional Practice (ES&P) is also referred to as "Teaching & Scholarship" and Education & Research (E&R) as "Teaching & Research". The University expects to transition to the new terminology for the two contract types during 2018/19.

- the process for seeking approval for an individual Teaching Constraint is clear and consistent;
 - the principles for assessing individual applications for a Teaching Constraint are transparent;
- decisions to accept or reject Teaching Constraint applications will be made in line with this policy.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to academic staff on either an ES&P or an E&R UK contract of employment (including GTAs). It does not apply to timesheet staff.

4. Guiding principles

- 4.1 Teaching Constraints are approved by exception and no member of staff has a right to teach only at times of their choosing.
- 4.2 The requirements of the curriculum and the need to provide students with the educational experience they reasonably expect is of paramount importance.
- 4.3 The University will seek to optimise the teaching timetable and available space to provide the best experience for its students.
- 4.4 Normally, general research/scholarship/innovation time inside a School will be distributed across a working week.
- 4.5 This said, it is recognised that it may be in the interests of both the University and individual members of staff to agree that an individual can be designated as unavailable to teach on specific days or half days. Time is allocated in these block amounts to permit un-interrupted use of the time for scholarly purposes.
- 4.6 In addition, requests can be made that specific hours be blocked out for regularly occurring, strategically important activities/meetings. Normally these should occur on Wednesday afternoons, but there may be some need to use other times during the working week.

5. Teaching Constraints Required for Non-Operational Reasons

5.1 This policy sets out the circumstances in which a Teaching Constraint may be permitted for operational reasons. In general, applications that relate to non-work needs, e.g. caring for dependants and childcare, should be made in accordance with the University's Flexible Working Policy:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/hr-staffinformation/policies/family/flexible-working.html>

Requests related to Caring Needs (e.g. child care, etc.): Note that for the first year of requests (2018/19) which will be entered into the timetable for 2019/20, requests to start teaching at times later than 9 am or cease teaching before 6 pm should still be made via the Teaching Constraints route set out herein, and not via the Flexible Working Policy. This will allow the Flexible Working Policy to be adjusted to accommodate such requests in subsequent years.

- 5.2 Similarly, applications that relate to the need to accommodate a Disability should be

made in accordance with the University's Disability in Employment Policy:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/hr-equalityanddiversity/documents/disability-in-employment/disemppol.pdf>

- 5.3 Changes to teaching hours due to Maternity leave should be made in accordance with the University's Maternity Leave and Pay Policy

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/hr-staffinformation/documents/policies/family-friendly/maternity/1.%20Family%20Friendly%20-%20Maternity%20Leave%20and%20Pay%20-%20Policy%20and%20Procedure%20%20June%202017.pdf>

6. Responsibilities

- 6.1 Faculty Deans are responsible for:

- 6.1.1 Ensuring that this policy is applied across their schools by annual consultation with Heads of School.
- 6.1.2 Ensuring that Heads of School pay due regard to the room occupancy "Heat Map" (to be produced by the Timetabling Office and supplied to HoS before December each year), in the allocation of the approved half-days or day (where appropriate) and determination of approved Teaching Constraints.

- 6.2 Heads of School/Centres are responsible for:

- 6.2.1 Considering all applications for Teaching Constraints in accordance with the terms of this policy, advising staff and the timetabling office of the outcome and securely maintaining copies of applications and outcomes for a period of 3 years.
- 6.2.2 Making both provisional and final determinations relating to each individual application on an annual basis.
- 6.2.3 Considering as a part of the determination of individual applications for Teaching Constraints, the cumulative effect of the numbers which receive their initial, provisional approval and adjusting judgements accordingly.
- 6.2.4 Notifying the Timetabling office, in accordance with timescales set out in this policy, of any group Teaching Constraints that relate specifically to the ability of the School to conduct its business through the activities of appointed role holders (e.g. Chairing of committees, attending formal meetings, etc.). Such meetings would normally be expected to occur on Wednesday afternoons.
- 6.2.5 Ensuring that notifications to the Timetabling Office take account, in the scheduling of research/scholarship/innovation days within the School, of the "heat map" produced by the Timetabling office. This will avoid periods of excessive pressure on the timetable and, unless essential/unavoidable, the use of the same day for large groups of staff across the school.
- 6.2.6 Ensuring that all Study Leave applications are considered and agreed by each Christmas (or earlier if other University policies specify, and this includes signoff at senior management level outside the School) for the

forthcoming academic year, so that applications for Teaching Constraints can be considered within the context of agreed Study Leave.

- 6.2.7 Similarly, decisions on externally “bought out” research/scholarship/innovation days will normally need to be made before Christmas each year when known in advance. Flexibility will have to be retained for later grant announcements.
- 6.3 Staff are responsible for making applications which they believe are consistent with this policy document, in the timelines indicated and on the application form provided.
- 6.4 The Timetabling Office is responsible for:
- 6.4.1 Making active and positive efforts to accommodate Teaching Constraint applications that have been approved by individual Heads of School in accordance with this policy within the limits of the finite space available for teaching and impact on student experience.
- 6.4.2 Notifying Heads of School, in accordance with timescale set out in this policy, whether all provisionally approved school applications can be accommodated or whether further review of provisional decisions is required before they can be finalised.

7 Policy

- 7.1 Where required, applications for Teaching Constraints must be made annually in accordance with the timescales set out in this policy.
- 7.2 Decisions are effective for one academic year only.
- 7.3 Approval of a Teaching Constraint in one year does not entitle an individual to have the same application approved in subsequent years.
- 7.4 A valid reason for an individual to seek approval of a Teaching Constraint for activities not already accommodated (e.g. agreed research days would normally be expected to include most research external meetings, etc.) will be one of the following:
- Training (e.g. PGCHE) and development.
 - Regular and fixed external meetings and networks where these are central to agreed research/scholarship/innovation plans.
 - Innovation activities where the individual can show that there is no flexibility in scheduling these (e.g. due to Corporate Partner’s own fixed timetable).
 - Inability to access essential resources/facilities for research/scholarly purposes on anything other than fixed days/times.
 - Travel between campuses for required activities
- Other compelling reasons relating to a non-discretionary/essential and regular activity that needs to take place on a particular day of the week will also be considered, e.g. see paragraph 4.6.
- 7.5 Commuting times to a normal place of work are not a valid reason for applying for a Teaching Constraint. Nor are generic, unspecified reasons such as ‘other work commitments’ or ‘personal commitments’. Office hours and time for general administrative duties should be taken in time under the staff member’s own control.
- 7.6 Teaching Constraints where approved for work related reasons will be for one whole day or two half days. Constraints in hourly blocks are not permitted for work related

reasons². When making such requests, normally it will be left to the HoS or Timetabling to determine when in the week it will occur. Where there is a particular reason for requesting a specific day, then this request may exceptionally be made but has to be accompanied by a justification.

- 7.7 School meetings essential to the effective running of the school, at which staff in prescribed positions of responsibility are required, will normally be scheduled on Wednesday afternoons.
- 7.8 Where the volume of meetings at which key individuals are required precludes timetabling all of these on a Wednesday afternoon³, Heads of School will make group applications for Teaching Constraints to the Timetabling Office.
- 7.9 Specific days or half-days across whole schools/centres will be avoided where possible, and constraints should be equally distributed, as far as possible, across the week from Monday to Friday.
- 7.10 Note that if the Teaching Constraint is for research/innovation purposes, the total time allocated to an individual in a year is set by the School WAM. HoS should check that the requested constraint does not exceed the relevant allowance in the School WAM for that year.
- 7.11 Staff circumstances may change during the year which necessitate an alteration to the timetable at short notice (e.g. gaining access to an external facility, need for regular visits to industrial partners, new grant/contract awards being made etc.). Such cases will be dealt with outside this policy as they arise.
- 7.12 The Head of School/Centre's decision in relation to whether or not an application for a Teaching Constraint should be forwarded to Timetabling, is final, provided that it is in accordance with this policy. Any doubt on this matter will be dealt with by the relevant Faculty Dean.

8 Application Process

- 8.1 Applications will be made using the form at Annex 1 to this policy to the Head of School/Centre in accordance with the timetable set out below.
- 8.2 Heads of School/Centre will consider applications and approve or reject applications on a provisional basis initially.
- 8.3 Heads of School/Centre will notify the Timetabling Office who will, on the basis of all received applications, schedule the timetable.
- 8.4 The Timetabling Office will notify Heads of School/Centre whether all of the provisionally approved applications can be accommodated (see Section 9 for the timeline). At this point the determinations made by the Head of School/Centre may be regarded as final and affected individuals should be informed using the form at

² Hourly blocks continue to be permitted where relevant in response to Flexible Working Requests and Reasonable Adjustments in compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

³ By agreement with the Kent Student Union, Wednesday afternoon (post 2pm) is ring-fenced for sport or volunteering activities. It is therefore not available for teaching.

Annex 1. The Head of School should retain the original copy of the form for their records and send a copy to the individual.

- 8.5 Where the Timetabling Office indicates that not all provisionally approved Teaching Constraints can be accommodated and have been unable to offer a suitable alternative to the individual, the relevant Head of School/Centre will review the relevant applications and requirements of the School again. They will weigh the career benefit offered to the individual against the operational benefits of the application before rejecting some of the applications (if several have been returned), or adjusting the timing of ring-fenced research / innovation / scholarship time for some individuals, in order to try to meet the constraints set out by the timetabling office. In making this judgement Heads should consider the equality impact of their judgements. HR advice may be sought at this point if necessary. It may however, not be possible to satisfy all requests.

9. Timetable for Applications

- 9.1 Staff should submit constraints for the following academic year to the Head of School/centre in January using the form attached in Annex 1.
- 9.2 Heads of school/centre should submit provisionally agreed constraints for the following academic year to the Timetabling Office in early February using the standard Timetabling Office forms. This will include applications for group constraints and research/scholarly activity days/half days where appropriate. These should accompany the standard School timetabling information sent to the Timetabling Office at that time.
- 9.3 If these requests cannot be accommodated at all Timetabling will let Schools/centres know as soon as possible.
- 9.4 Timetabling Office will then work on the draft timetable during February and March aiming to produce a timetable in mid-April which will be communicated to Schools. This will aim to include the requested constraints. If it cannot, or if changes have to be made to the constraints, Schools will be informed when the draft timetable is issued.
- 9.5 Staff can request removal of Teaching Constraints at any time during the year.
- 9.6 Any requests for new constraints falling outside the timeframe outlined in 9.1 and 9.2, or during the active academic year will be considered a late application. These should again be submitted to the relevant HoS/centre using the form in Annex 1, who will then forward to the Dean of Faculty for outline approval before forwarding to Timetabling for possible action.
- 9.7 In exceptional circumstances the Timetabling Office may need to request a change to a previously confirmed constraint. In such cases there will be discussion with the Head of School, and the individual concerned where appropriate with a view to reaching a mutually acceptable outcome.

10 Review

- 10.1 There will be a review of this policy at the start of the 2019/20 academic year. As well as checking the general effectiveness of the new policy, it will look specifically at the question of how to accommodate the late start/early departure issue arising due to caring needs. In particular it will consider how this will be accommodated within the Flexible Working Policy, or if it is best left as is.

10.2 Subsequently, as and when required, this policy will be reviewed in accordance with operational requirements.

11 **Associated Policies and Guidance**

- Flexible Working
- Disability in Employment
- Maternity Leave and Pay
- School Governance

Annex 1: Application and Outcome Form for Teaching Constraints

School/Centre:	Date of application:
Applicant:	
Application: (Please specify number of ½ days or days, and if they are linked to specific times during the week, e.g. Thursday am. Also specify if this is to last all year or for a shorter, named, period. Please indicate the reason for each constraint.)	

Provisional decision: Approved/Rejected	Date:
Name of person making provisional decision:	
Reason for decision:	
If this is a late constraint (para. 9.4) please forward to the relevant Faculty Dean for approval	
Dean's decision: Approved/Rejected	
Signature and date:	

Final decision after consulting Timetabling: Approved/Rejected
Reason for decision:
Date: