University of Kent timetable process for teaching staff

Document overview

The purpose of this document is to explain the timetabling system at the University of Kent. The process of developing a timetable takes a full academic year, the stages of which are explained below. Timely submission of information from teaching staff will mean that resources can be allocated fairly across the university and be optimised for the staff and students involved. All information and requests should be relayed through your school's timetable manager or administrator.

Actions required by academic staff through the year are indicated by the symbol.
Common questions are indicated by the symbol.

Introducing the Timetabling Office

Each of the five campuses has an office or staff dedicated to timetabling.

Canterbury campus - The Timetabling Office in the Registry is a small team of four full-time members of staff. The learning and teaching manager has responsibility for the strategic management of teaching rooms and oversees the timetable process. The timetable officer is responsible for creating the new timetable through much of the process. All of the information submitted to the Timetabling Office for the coming year's timetable is assessed and input by the timetable officer. The timetabling officers also maintain the current year's timetable, making last minute changes, for example, where a class has been missed due to illness, and making ad hoc room bookings.

Medway Campus – a team of two within the Medway Campus Administration Team, located in the Medway Building. The timetable officer is responsible for creating the new timetable and liaising with schools, as well as co-ordinating other university event functions and maintaining the current year's timetable. The team's clerical officer deals with ad hoc room bookings in addition to other non-timetabling duties.

Tonbridge, Brussels and Paris Campuses – Each has a dedicated member of staff dealing with the timetable and allocating teaching rooms.

The importance of the timetable

The timetable is the building block of all teaching delivery to students. Having an accurate indication of where to go, when and by whom they will be taught is key to the student learning experience. Increasingly, part-time work is arranged around the timetable well in advance of the start of the year and late changes can affect students' other commitments. As the student population becomes more mature other factors, such as childcare, also have to be taken into account when formulating the timetable. Feedback shows great dissatisfaction where the students are not informed of changes to their timetables, especially late cancellations due to illness.

Equally, for teaching staff, having rooms suitably equipped in the most appropriate layout is important for the delivery of the module. The Timetabling Office endeavours to satisfy these requirements but pressure on resources means that this is not always possible.

Many of the computer systems across the university are inter-dependent and the timetable database makes a significant contribution to this process. Information held on the timetable database drives Moodle, the Module Catalogue, Module Handbooks, the Work Allocation Model (WAM), Key Information Set (KIS) data and several university webpages, among other sources of information. Any inaccuracy in the timetable information has consequences in a host of other areas key to university business.

Special note for 2017-18 timetable planning

The new student records system, Kent Vision, will be implemented during the planning process for the 2017-18 timetable. This will mean long periods through the summer of 2017 when the Timetabling Office will not be able to work on the timetable.

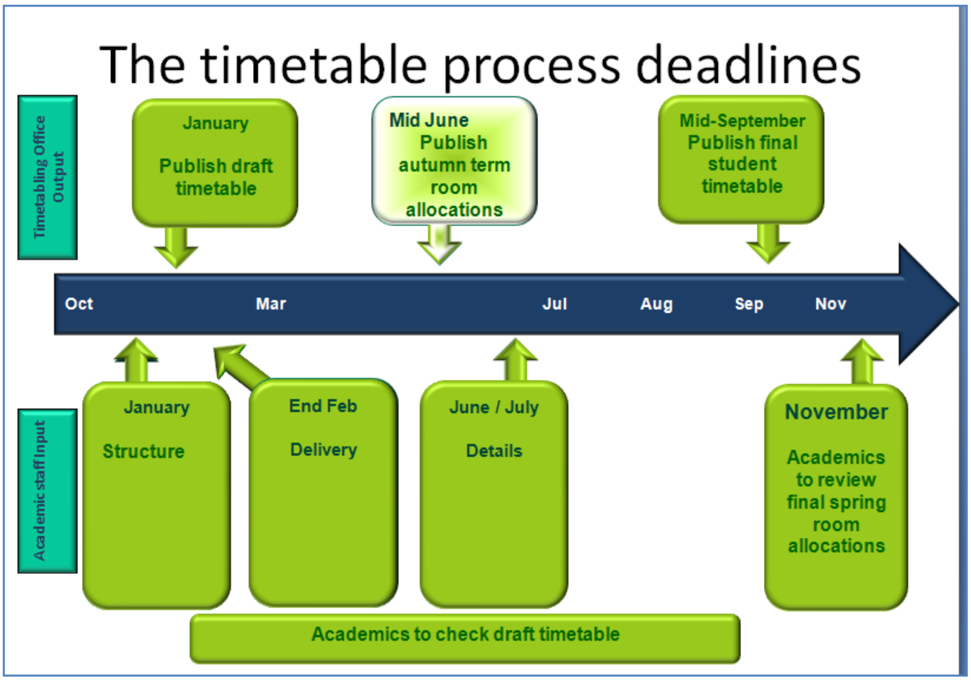
It is essential, therefore, **that all deadlines are met** so that the bulk of the work will be done at the appropriate times. It will not be possible to make late changes to the timetable without exceptional cause.

Teaching times

All teaching at the University of Kent takes place Monday to Friday 9am – 6pm, except Wednesday afternoons from 1pm which is kept free for students to pursue extra-curricular activities as outlined in the Students' Charter. Regular undergraduate and postgraduate teaching takes place in weeks 1 - 24 in the autumn and spring terms although other modules may run outside these weeks.

All classes start at 5 minutes past the hour and end at 5 minutes to the hour to allow staff and students travel time between teaching events. Classes booked by the Timetabling Office are identified as starting on the full hour and are booked in blocks of 60 minutes.

Timetabling process overview



The production of the timetable takes a whole year from copying the database to publication of the final timetable to students at the start of the year. This is driven by three main deadlines which the Timetabling Office has to meet to comply with the Students' Charter and to offer a period of review for academic staff.

The Timetabling Office's Deadlines

The key deadlines the Timetabling Office must meet are:

January

Release of the draft timetable in OTIS.

June

The publication of autumn term room allocations. This is to enable a period of review for academics.

September

Publication of the final timetable two weeks before the start of term as codified in the Students' Charter.

November

Notification of the spring term room allocation.

Teaching Staff Deadlines

In order for the Timetabling Office to achieve these deadlines academics are required to submit information so that the timetable can be built. The deadlines for these are:

December

1) Indicate which modules will be running in the following academic year.
2) Indicate which term the module will run in.
3) Predicted student numbers for the module.
4) Who will be convening the module.

Your school's timetable manager will notify you when this information will be required and advise you of the procedure to have your constraints approved.

Why is this information important in December for the following September or even January?

The modules and the constraints are the basic building blocks of the timetable. This information is required so early to allow time to input the data, identify and remedy any problems and identify the viability of any requested changes.

What happens if I don't know which modules will and won't be running next year?

Inform your school's timetable manager of the ones you do know about and what the most likely status is of the others. Equally, if you are proposing a new module but it hasn't yet been approved or you are aware that there are likely to be major changes to a programme inform your timetable manager. Changes to one module can have a significant impact on the delivery of and numbers of students on other modules. The Timetabling Office needs to take this into account when planning resources and workloads.

What happens to the information?

In Canterbury your school's timetable manager updates the Module Session Running pages in SDS; in Medway this can be either an administrator within the school or the Student Administration Team. Module Session Running also informs:

- Student Data System which modules should receive module registrations
- Online module catalogue which modules to advertise
- Which modules need to synchronise with Moodle
- The timetabling database which modules require timetabling

The timetable officer in the Timetabling Office enters constraint information into the timetable software so that the timetable can be built around them. Constraints can be checked in OTIS at all times (see section on OTIS below).

February

Your timetable manager will approach you requesting information regarding:

1) The number of lectures/seminar groups/lab classes etc. required for each module and how long each event should be.
2) The weeks in which the module will be taught are correct.
3) Predicted student numbers for each event.
4) What equipment is required for each event e.g. a DVD player may be required for the lecture but not the seminars.
5) Indicate your teaching constraints, that is, which day or times you will not be available for teaching. Reasons for not being available to teach might be that it has been designated as your research day or that you are required to attend school meetings or research seminars.

All of the information can be viewed in OTIS but your timetable manager will provide the necessary information at the time.

Why is this detailed information required so early in February?

So that the timetable officer has time to input the information into the timetabling system for the whole university and identify and resolve any problems before the timetable is published to students. Moving an event of even 30 people potentially has over 100 possible clashes, depending on student choice. It therefore takes a lot of time to identify suitable alternative timeslots and rooms and negotiate these with the school should these be required. The timetable officer deals with over 14,000 individual events at the start of the timetabling process.

Once the information has been input into the timetabling software and stage 2&3 students have made their choices, the room allocation process begins. Rooms are allocated strictly based upon accessibility requirements, the size of the event and the equipment requested, illustrating how important it is that this information is correct. Location is taken into consideration where possible. Please note personal preferences cannot be accommodated due to pressure on resources. Some rooms are more popular than others but all have to be used for teaching.

The module I convene is a new module so I don't know how many students will choose it.

Please give your best guess. It is likely you will know if it will be closer to 30 than 300. If it is likely that the new module will mean fewer students will take other modules please also inform the Timetabling Office of the decreases elsewhere.

June

The draft timetable is published at the end of June and will include rooms allocated to autumn term events. Your timetable manager will contact you to inform you of this. Please read their e-mail carefully as it will contain a lot of additional information including room refurbishment which may enhance the suitability of the rooms you have been allocated and dispel the need to request a room change.

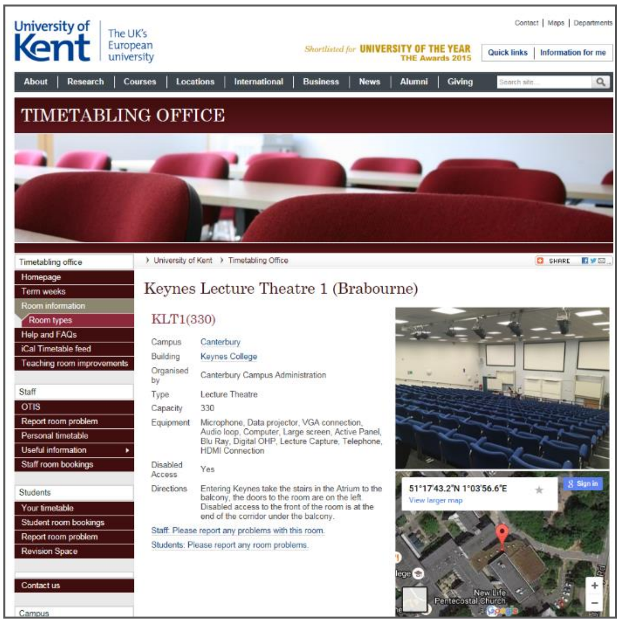
Module convenors and teaching staff will be asked to check:

1) The number of lectures/seminar groups etc. are correct for the modules you convene and that you have been allocated the correct teaching events.
2) The day, time, length and weeks are correct.
3) The number of students is correct. By the end of June stage 2 and 3 modules will be driven by actual registered students which may differ to what had been predicted in February. All further work by the Timetabling Office on stage 2&3 modules is driven by this actual number; stage 0&1 and postgraduate modules are still driven by the predicted number of students.
4) Check for clashes or problems with the constraints information submitted in February.
5) The room is appropriate for your *minimum* requirements, that is, it is of a sufficient size and has the equipment which you requested. Wherever possible rooms are allocated close to the school but this is not always possible. Please remember that all teaching rooms and all timeslots have to be used to accommodate the teaching required. This includes the less popular rooms and timeslots.

I have been allocated a room but I don't know where it is. How do I find out?
How do I know what equipment is in the teaching rooms?

Information about teaching rooms is available on the Timetabling Office's webpage. Go to www.kent.ac.uk/timetabling and click on the link to *Room Information*. Either scroll down the list or begin typing in the name of the room. The information shows on which campus the room is located, the building, the layout of the room, how many people it holds, what equipment is available, and whether or not it is disabled accessible.

Timetabling Office's webpage information for KLT1



Why aren't all the changes I've made this year on the draft timetable?

The draft timetable is created mid-September for the following September e.g. the 2016-17 timetable was created in September 2015. Any changes made to the current year's timetable will not be carried forward to the draft timetable unless specifically requested.

August

Teaching staff are asked for a final check before the final timetable is published two weeks before the start of term. Only urgent, unavoidable changes, such as a new member of staff being employed, can be accommodated at this stage. After the final timetable is published two weeks before the start of term any changes to the time or day has to be in agreement with the students under the terms of the Students' Charter.

November

Rooms allocated for the spring term will be published. Your timetable manager will advise you when this is published. Teaching staff will be asked to check that the room meets the minimum requirements i.e.

1) It is of sufficient capacity
2) It has the equipment you requested in February.

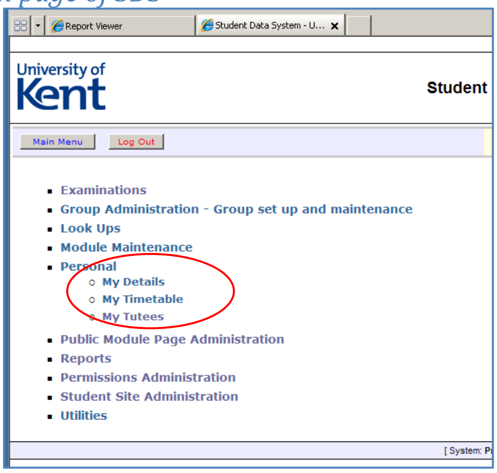
How to check your timetable

The timetable has two forms: the current timetable and the draft timetable.

The current timetable

The current timetable can be viewed in SDS from late August. For SDS go to the main SDS page, click on *Personal* and then *My Timetable.* You can select a week at a time, a whole term or the whole year. This is the same information that your students see and so is the best means to check your current teaching commitments. You can also integrate your timetable with iCal, Outlook and Google calendars. To do this, go to the Timetabling Office webpage and click on the link to iCal feed and follow the instructions.

The navigation page of SDS

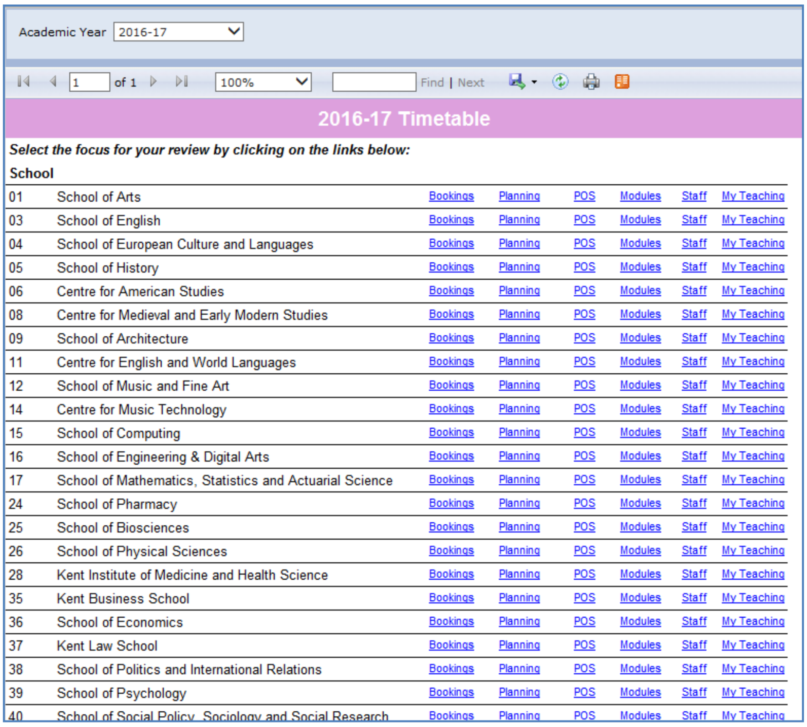


The draft timetable

The draft timetable can be viewed in the On-line Timetable Information System (OTIS) and is available from January for the next academic year (e.g. the 2016-17 draft timetable was available from January 2016). Go to the Timetabling Office's webpage (www.kent.ac.uk/timetabling) and click on the link to *OTIS*, then *Open OTIS*. This will only work if you are connected to the network through a network cable on campus or, if you are off campus, if you have first connected to the Virtual Private Network (VPN).

More information on VPN plus tips on how to use OTIS are included in the User Guide on the Timetabling Office's webpage. Click on the link to *OTIS*, then on the link to the *pdf.*

The navigation page of OTIS



01	School of Arts	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
03	School of English	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
04	School of European Culture and Languages	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
05	School of History	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
06	Centre for American Studies	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
08	Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
09	School of Architecture	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
11	Centre for English and World Languages	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
12	School of Music and Fine Art	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
14	Centre for Music Technology	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
15	School of Computing	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
16	School of Engineering & Digital Arts	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
17	School of Mathematics, Statistics and Actuarial Science	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
24	School of Pharmacy	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
25	School of Biosciences	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
26	School of Physical Sciences	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
28	Kent Institute of Medicine and Health Science	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
35	Kent Business School	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
36	School of Economics	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
37	Kent Law School	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
38	School of Politics and International Relations	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
39	School of Psychology	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching
40	School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research	Bookings	Planning	POS	Modules	Staff	My Teaching

I have followed the link but I can't access OTIS

OTIS requires a secure network connection. If you are on campus make sure the network cable is plugged into your computer. If you are off campus make sure you are connected to the Virtual Private Network (VPN) first. See the user guide to OTIS on the Timetabling Office's webpage. OTIS displays best in Internet Explorer; Mozilla Firefox and Opera can have rather unpredictable results.

Changes to the timetable

Any changes you wish to make to the timetable, either the current or the draft timetable, should be first submitted to your school's timetable administrator (or manager) who will contact the Timetabling Office on your behalf. This is so that your school's teaching strategy can be maintained and that the background administrative work can be undertaken, such as to make late changes visible to students.

Please bear in mind that any changes made to the current year's timetable will not be mirrored in the following year's draft timetable.

Other questions

I need to cancel a class. What should I do?

There will be times you have to cancel a class due to illness or other unforeseen reasons. Contact your school's timetable administrator as soon as possible so the students can be informed. Not being informed of changes generates a lot of negative feedback from students.

It takes up to 6 hours to update the i-calendar and over an hour to update SDS. Any timetable information in Moodle does not get updated. These systems are not the best, therefore, for notifying of very late changes and cancellations and so should be used in conjunction with using the text messaging service and e-mailing the students. Please speak with your school's timetable manager to ask about the text facility.

How do the students see their timetables?

Students can see their timetables through Student Guide and through i-calendar. It is better to use your own timetable in SDS or in OTIS. Please do not include any timetable information in any other location. Only SDS, Student Guide and i-cal have a live feed and any other information can quickly become obsolete which is confusing for students and students can easily miss classes.

I am teaching on/convening a module and can't access Moodle.

Access to Moodle is driven by the login supplied to the Timetabling Office. Please make sure that the correct login has been supplied. This is your initials followed by a number. You can check which login the Timetabling Office is holding for you by going to OTIS, click on the staff link for your school, and click on your name. Your login is displayed along the top. If it is incorrect please inform your school's timetable manager or administrator.

How do I contact the Timetabling Office?

If your query is about changes to teaching you should consult your school's timetable manager in the first instance. Other queries can be directed to:

Canterbury campus: timetabling@kent.ac.uk or phone 16374
Medway campus: ukmtimetabling@kent.ac.uk
Brussels campus: bsis@kent.ac.uk
Tonbridge campus: tonbridgeadmin@kent.ac.uk or phone 4990
Paris campus: paris@kent.ac.uk