

SOAS Timetable Policy

Purpose and Principles

This policy aims to

- a) Ensure that the SOAS timetable promotes a positive student experience and student success.
- b) Reduce administrative workload on academic and support staff during timetable construction.
- c) Ensure that timetable creation prioritises students' programme of study, especially core and compulsory modules.
- d) Ensure a distribution of teaching and learning events across the teaching week to allow students to choose from as wide a selection of guided and open options, where possible.
- e) Ensure core and compulsory modules will be scheduled clash-free. Guided options will be scheduled clash-free where possible while open options will be scheduled depending on staff and room availability while maximising choice.
- f) Students may work with Academic Advisors to choose guided and open options that are most suitable to their programme of study and fit within the timetable.
- g) Ensure teaching spaces are used efficiently, taking into consideration teaching and accessibility requirements.

Teaching Year, Weeks and Day

- a) The academic calendar as approved by Academic Board provides the broad framework for timetabling, including term dates, reading week dates and campus closure dates.
- b) During term time, teaching and learning activities are scheduled between 9am and 6pm. Evening slots may be made available as and when required.
- c) Teaching and learning events that are two hours in length may only be scheduled to start at every two hours, between 9am and 5pm. Teaching and learning events may be requested from 5pm to 7pm.
- d) Undergraduate core and compulsory modules will not be scheduled on Wednesday afternoons. Where possible, undergraduate guided options will also not be scheduled on Wednesday afternoons. Postgraduate modules and open options may be scheduled any day of the week.
- e) To allow time for setup and to ensure the room has been emptied ahead of the following event, teaching and learning activities will start 5 minutes past the hour and end 5 minutes to the hour.
- f) Where possible, a one-hour break will be scheduled where events have been scheduled for 3 hours back to back.

Timetabling at SOAS

The following stipulations apply:

- a) All members of the SOAS community have the responsibility to ensure the published timetable is adhered to.
- b) The timetable is constructed by Registry in liaison with departmental Directors of Teaching and Learning (or equivalent) and support staff, and is published at least four weeks before the start of term 1 for the academic year in advance. Timetables for Year 1 modules may be released or updated closer to the start of term.
- c) The timetable is to be constructed in a logical manner, avoiding unnecessary travel across campus and ensuring suitability of rooms.
- d) A minimum occupancy threshold of 60% applies except when no other suitable room is available.
- e) Requirements for specialist rooms and/or equipment must be communicated to Registry by the end of module sign-up for returning students. Where additional specialist rooms and/or equipment are required, Registry will coordinate with the department, Estates and IT to ensure the requirements can be met. Where accessibility requirements only become known closer to

or after the start of term, departments must ensure that these requirements are communicated to Registry in a timely manner and no later than one week after the need has been identified.

- f) Full-time academic staff are assumed to be available between 9am and 6pm, Monday to Friday but can reasonably expect one day per week free from timetabled teaching and learning activities. Academic staff cannot normally request for this to fall on any particular day. Full-time academic staff with caring responsibilities may request adjustments to their availability from the Head of Department.
- g) Exceptions to availability of full-time academic staff may be agreed with the Heads of Department in liaison with the department's learning and teaching lead. Availability of non-full-time staff will also be agreed with the learning and teaching lead. In both cases, they have a responsibility to ensure Registry is informed in a timely manner to ensure this can be considered during timetable construction. A deadline for submission of non-availability of staff will be included in the key dates calendar.
- h) In-year changes to the timetable will not normally be approved.
- i) Departments have the responsibility to ensure teaching and learning events take place as scheduled and that appropriate cover is arranged where required.

Unavoidable in-year changes may be requested by the department's Director of Teaching and Learning (or equivalent) who will need to ensure that any approved changes do not lead to any clashes or major disruption to the established timetable.

Process

- 1) Modules running in the following academic year will be confirmed no later than February in the current academic year.
- 2) Exceptions to availability of full-time academic staff and availability of non-full-time academic staff will be confirmed by departmental learning and teaching leads no later than February in the current academic year.
- 3) A draft timetable in line with this policy is provided to departments for review no later than May.
- 4) Meetings between Registry and departments will take place over the course of May and June to finalise the timetable for returning students by July.
- 5) The final timetable for first year undergraduate and postgraduate students will be finalised no later than the end of September.

Religious Observance

SOAS appreciates the diversity of its student body that includes people from many different religious groups. Some of the faiths represented at the School have religious observance requirements during particular times of the week or year.

The SOAS timetable is designed to promote student success and to ensure teaching and learning is delivered efficiently and effectively. For these reasons, the timetable cannot take religious observance requirements into consideration.

The School understands, however, that there may be occasions where a student may be absent due to religious observance. The School endeavours to accommodate students who require to be absent due to religious observance:

- a) Where possible, departments will arrange for students to switch to a different seminar or tutorial slot. This change may be made on a temporary or permanent basis.
- b) Where alternative arrangements cannot be made, the School will normally mark students who are absent due to religious observance as 'excused' on the register. However, it is expected that this is not a common occurrence and students should be aware that requests to miss core or compulsory modules may be refused by staff. Students may otherwise jeopardise their ability to successfully complete the module or programme of study.

Estate & IT

- a) Estates is responsible for ensuring that all teaching spaces are fit for purpose and adhere to comparable standards.
- b) When hiring external space, Estates will ensure the rooms meet the relevant requirements.
- c) The IT team is responsible to ensure that all teaching spaces are equipped with a basic set of resources that is comparable across the university.