

Timetabling Policy
Strategic Planning and Performance/

Timetabling Office

DOCUMENT CONTROL & APPROVAL

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Teaching Timetable Policy and Practice

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1 Timetabling policy

1.1 Purpose and scope

The purpose of this document is to:

- provide the framework of designing and implementing the teaching timetable at the University of Kent
- provide an overview of designing and implementing the exams timetable at the University of Kent
- ensure equity between divisions and other departments and consistency of practice across campuses
- outline the relevant functions and responsibilities of the Timetabling Office and other staff and students at the university with regards to the above.

[Room booking procedures](#) are not included in this document.

The appendix lists relevant and associated documents or file locations.

1.2 Guiding principles

1.2.1 Guiding principles of the teaching timetable

The university's principal timetabling aims are to:

- support students in their taught activities by providing a clash-free timetable and support staff to deliver teaching by providing a "best fit" timetable each year, balancing competing demands as much as possible
- optimise the use of the university's teaching spaces
- support other functions of the university by providing accurate data
- optimise staff resources in the development, drafting and maintenance of the timetable.

CMIS is deemed to be the primary record of the timetable, which can be viewed by staff on the On-line Timetable Information System (OTIS).

1.2.2 Guiding principles of the exams timetable

The university's aims are:

- produce an exams timetable that spreads student exams across the designated exams period, taking into account key deadlines, such as marking return deadlines.
- produce an exams timetable that supports administrative processes including processing for exam boards.
- Produce an exams timetable that adheres to the exam timetable principles and constraints

2 Implementation of policy

2.1 General teaching timetabling principles

2.1.1 *The teaching year*

The university operates through the year with teaching usually taking place within regular term-times as advertised on the university webpage.

Exceptions to this will be advertised within programme and module literature.

Weeks are numbered in accordance with the numbering system as advertised on the [Timetabling Office's webpage](#) and timetables in all published formats may use this system.

2.1.2 The teaching day

The teaching day is defined in the [Student Charter](#):

Normal teaching hours are 9am to 6pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and 9am to 1pm on Wednesday except where courses are specifically advertised as including or being provided by evening or weekend delivery.

Teaching will not normally take place outside normal teaching hours as defined above, unless exceptionally:

- i) it is necessary to timetable a seminar on a Wednesday afternoon (where no other timetabled slot and a venue are available) and there should always be one or more alternative seminar times;
- (ii) one-off changes need to be accommodated (arising, for example, from illness or other unavoidable commitment of the member of staff), by agreement between the member of staff and the students concerned;
- (iii) or where changes need to be made on a permanent basis. This will require the written permission of the relevant Director of Education and Student Experience (ESE)/Director of Graduate Studies, in conjunction with the Division's Education and Student Experience Manager.

The Timetabling Office is required to ensure compliance with these requirements.

Teaching times run from the hour to ten minutes to the hour to allow for smooth change over between classes.

2.1.3 Availability to teach

All full-time staff are regarded as being available to teach throughout the regular teaching weeks and regular teaching day except where the Timetabling Office has been notified of a constraint at the appropriate time in the annual timetable planning process. Teaching constraints are governed by the [University's Teaching Constraints policy](#) (approved by Senate, 2019)¹.

Part-time staff should also inform the Timetabling Office via the Division's timetabling administrator of all restrictions on availability and any constraints agreed under the Flexible Working Policy at the appropriate time in the annual timetable planning process. These dates will be published annually in advance to support compliance.

The timetabling database will hold the definitive record of all approved constraints. Any constraints not recorded within the timetable at the appropriate time in the planning cycle cannot be considered for exemption from teaching duties. Teaching staff are required to check their constraints have been recorded correctly at the appropriate time in the timetabling cycle.

Flexible working requests can be submitted in accordance with the [University's Flexible Working policy](#). Approved requests must be submitted to the Timetabling Office no later than **6 weeks before the start of the academic year**. It may not be possible to accommodate agreements submitted after this date. Divisional Education and Student Experience Managers (or their nominee)

¹ See section 3.4.5

should keep a record of approved requests and update the Timetabling Office at the appropriate time in the annual cycle.

2.1.4 Timetable clashes

The Timetabling Office can check for timetable clashes where at least one event involves a compulsory module but with the following conditions:

- Where one or more event is being changed as part of routine timetable updates. Wholesale checks based on module diets are not possible due to the number of module combinations and exceptions.
- The Timetabling Office will provide student clash check reports at appropriate times of the year once students are registered on modules.
- Divisions are responsible for actioning the student clash check reports as driven by local policies such as requesting students change modules, or change group allocations.

Clash checking for optional modules, including quasi-compulsory modules, is not possible due to the volume of potential combinations.

Any clashes which cannot be clash checked automatically should be monitored within the divisions using local knowledge. Divisions can work with the Timetabling Office on how best to do this with the resources available.

The timetable will not be changed to accommodate wild module choices.

2.1.5 Equality and Diversity

Where the Timetabling Office have been notified in accordance with timetable planning, the team will make relevant adjustments to provide suitable central room allocations for all staff and students requiring accessible rooms or rooms with audio enhancement. In unforeseen circumstances, the Timetabling Office will endeavour to make these relevant adjustments. Students should inform the Student Support and Wellbeing office and teaching staff should inform their Divisional Timetabling Administrator.

2.1.6 Room allocations

Central rooms allocated to teaching will be allocated using the following principles. The Timetabling Office will endeavour to meet as many principles as possible for each event but due to the variety of demands it may not be possible to satisfy all.

- Suitable capacity. Rooms will ordinarily be between 50-100% of class size. In exceptional circumstances rooms may be allocated outside this guideline.
- Proximity of room to the owner of the event. Zones will be used where possible and where other principles are not violated to reduce travel time for staff and students during the appropriate phase in timetable planning.²
- Accessibility requirements of staff and students. Accessible rooms and rooms equipped with hearing enhancement equipment will be allocated where the Timetabling Office has been notified of such a requirement

² See section 3.3.5 for more information on the zones used.

- Equipment requirements must be submitted in the Block 2 and will be accommodated wherever possible
- Room layout. Wherever possible lectures will be allocated to lecture theatres or classrooms, seminars to seminar rooms, PC classes to PC rooms; other types of event will be allocated on the principles above. Specific room layouts must be submitted in the Block 2 and will be accommodated wherever possible
- Priority will be given to classes that occupy the same slot throughout the term.

Owners of private rooms are responsible for the allocation of teaching, ensuring classes are of the appropriate size, that slots are clash-free and usage is optimised on a par with central rooms of a similar nature.

Rooms may be changed without notice during the draft phases of the timetable. Divisional Timetable Administrators will be informed when rooms have been confirmed for the appropriate term and any room changes after this date will be notified to the Divisional Timetabling Administrator.

2.2 Summary of responsibilities³

2.2.1 *The Timetabling Office*

- Construct the draft and maintain the current teaching timetables for Canterbury and Medway campuses
- Facilitate the timetabling of other University centres
- Facilitate the publication of draft and current timetables and attendant information
- Advise on strategic provision of quantity, capacity and layout of teaching spaces on all campuses as identified through demand
- Uphold equality and diversity principles by allocating accessible or suitably equipped rooms where staff and students' requirements have been provided, where possible
- Provide support to staff on timetabling matters
- Provide an equitable service across all non-teaching functions of the university
- Management of timetabling data and the timetable database and timetabling software CMIS
- Provide appropriate, agreed reports for divisional staff
- Construct the summer and re-sit exams timetables for Medway and Canterbury

Divisional responsibilities

2.2.2 *Directors of Education & Student Experience and Graduate Studies or nominee*

- Approve or decline late changes (from August) to staff availability and teaching constraints
- Approve or decline regular teaching outside standard teaching times where required under the conditions of the student charter
- Ensure the module offer within the Division can be timetabled at course level
- Sign off on teaching outside the regular teaching day where exceptions have not been advertised in advance to students for example if teaching must occur abnormally on a Wednesday afternoon

³ See also summary of timeline section 3.5.5

- v) Arbitrate and resolve timetabling related challenges

2.2.3 Heads of Academic Schools/Department or nominee

- i) Ensure teaching staff submit timetable information at the appropriate time during the timetable production cycle
- ii) Apply and uphold the principles of the teaching constraints fairly and equitably across teaching staff and across the teaching week
- iii) Uphold fairness to students in terms of timetable scheduling and changes
- iv) Ensure that Module Convenors comply with the responsibilities outlined in 2.2.4
- v) Arbitrate and resolve timetabling related challenges

2.2.4 Education and Student Experience Managers

- i) Liaise with the Head of School/Department and Divisional Timetabling Administrator to uphold the principles of this policy and the constraints policy
- ii) Uphold fairness to students in terms of timetable scheduling and changes
- iii) Arbitrate and resolve timetabling related challenges

2.2.5 Divisional timetable administrators

Designated Divisional Timetable Administrators will provide the key operational link between the Timetabling Office and teaching staff to:

- i) Provide information to the Timetabling Office at the appropriate times during the draft timetable production cycle as requested by the Timetabling Office
- ii) Work with the appropriate academic leads and the Timetabling Office to identify reasonable optional module pathways for students and viability of compulsory module pathways
- iii) Inform the Timetabling Office of any changes requested to the live and draft timetables
- iv) Inform students of late timetable changes (i.e. changes within one week) via e-mail and undertake any necessary work to ensure the events are visible to students
- v) Undertake any additional work which enhances the students' experience of the timetabling function as outlined in the administrator's guide document provided by the Timetabling Office
- vi) Uphold the principles for changes to the current timetable as outlined in this policy, escalating to ESEMs where required

2.2.6 Module Convenors

- i) Ensure that published timetable information (current and draft) is comprehensive, accurate and up to date including day, time, location, module, groups, essential equipment or private room and teacher are accurately recorded. This must be submitted in the Block 2 in time for the relevant deadline and as required by the Divisional Timetabling Administrator and the Timetabling Office.
- ii) Ensure that the module specification of delivered content matches the timetable at the point of Block 2 submission and following any subsequent changes. Inform the divisional timetabling administrator of any queries at the appropriate time.⁴

⁴ Teaching staff will be advised of deadlines within the planning process as appropriate through the year

- iii) Ensure all approved constrained hours for teachers on the module can accommodate the delivery of the module. Work with teachers, Timetabling Office and the Divisional timetabling administrator to find resolutions.
- iv) Module convenors should ensure that contact hours are recorded and delivered as advertised in the module specification
- v) Provide full information to Divisional Timetabling Administrators in time for the exams timetable deadlines

2.2.7 All teaching staff

- i) Adhere to the conditions of room use as outlined in section 2.9
- ii) Ensure that the timetable is an accurate record of what teaching is delivered by the member of staff through the draft timetable production process and as published to students
- iii) Raise any logistical concerns for example adjacent events over different campuses with the divisional staff at the appropriate time⁵
- iv) Be available to teach through the standard teaching day or as advised by the course literature unless a teaching constraint has been recorded in accordance with the University's teaching constraints policy (or in light of any approved Flexible Working arrangements) approved at the appropriate time in the timetabling cycle.

2.2.8 Other university staff

- i) Adhere to the conditions of centrally timetabled room use as outlined in section 2.9

2.2.9 Students

- i) Register for modules in line with timelines as advised by the Central Student Administration Office, Division or other responsible office
- ii) Regularly check for timetable updates
- iii) Notify any issues to the divisional timetabling administrator, such as timetable clashes or inaccuracy of timetable information
- iv) Be available during the standard teaching day or as advertised by course literature

2.2.10 Information Services

- i) Work with the timetabling office and relevant suppliers to maintain the timetabling system, including support for database and integration as relevant.
- ii) Maintain and develop electronic timetable publication, including outside the core timetabling system to ensure appropriate timetable visibility and availability
- iii) Maintain audio visual equipment in centrally owned teaching and meeting rooms
- iv) Provide and maintain PCs in centrally owned PC rooms
- v) Notify the Timetabling Office of any issues with AV equipment during term-time so alternative rooms can be provided for users of rooms.

2.2.11 Estates

- i) Provide sufficient centrally managed teaching space to satisfy demand in consultation with Timetabling Office, Divisions, and IS based on data driven evidence or need

⁵ Teaching staff will be advised of deadlines within the planning process as appropriate through the year

- ii) Facilitate pedagogical developments in teaching spaces in line with strategic teaching room policy and practices
- iii) Notify the Timetabling Office of any issues with rooms during term-time so alternative rooms can be provided for users of rooms.

2.2.11 Central Student Administration Office

- i) Liaise with Timetabling Office regarding core course and module information required by timetabling software
- ii) Liaise with the Timetabling Office on exam procedures and deadlines

2.3 Draft teaching timetable

The Timetabling Office and related staff European centres are responsible for production of the new teaching timetable for the forthcoming academic year.⁶

A copy of the current year's timetable is taken at an advertised point during the autumn term. This forms the basis of the following year's timetable and modules are added or removed as required but this does not guarantee that slots or rooms will remain the same from year to year. The teaching events are modified in CMIS in accordance with the new programme and modular offer, as are any changes to requirements for existing modules as identified by teaching staff and reported to the Timetabling Office by the divisional timetabling administrator. Changes can be made to the draft timetable until the point of publication to students but requests should be submitted at least 6 weeks before the publication date and in accordance with divisional policy before this date to allow sufficient opportunity for the request to be actioned. It may not be possible to accommodate late changes and it is less likely appropriate slots, rooms or equipment can be provided.

2.4 Teaching timetable maintenance

The Timetabling Office is responsible for maintaining the current timetable and making any in-year amendments as requested by divisional Timetabling Administrators.

Amendments to the timetable can be made once the timetable has been published to students which are the result of unavoidable circumstances and which could not have been anticipated prior to publication. Such reasons may include:

- Unavoidable late changes to teaching staff where this results in a lecturer clash or violation of a recorded teaching constraint which cannot change
- Student clashes of whole cohort events for compulsory modules
- Fluctuations in module registrations which impacts the room allocations or number of sub-groups
- The allocated room becomes unavailable due to maintenance or other issues and no alternative is available at that timeslot
- Staff sickness where this cannot be covered by other staff
- Re-organisation of ad hoc classes due to industrial action, the fall of bank holidays, adverse weather conditions which cannot be covered by other staff

Changes which would not be considered to satisfy the above criterion may include:

- Staff teaching constraints which are not recorded in CMIS

⁶ See section 3.3 for the timeline of timetable production.

- Preferences with regards to venues or timeslots
- Failure to comply with deadlines and timelines outlined in this policy

The divisional timetabling administrator should determine in the first instance if a request meets this criterion. In case of query the request should be referred to the Education and Student Experience Manager or their deputy. In all cases, the Timetabling Office will advise on availability of resources to undertake the change and it may not be possible to implement all change requests.

Divisions must notify students of any late changes to their published timetable by the appropriate channel.

2.5 Standard time slots

All bookings can only be made in full hours or multiples thereof in central rooms. For teaching bookings the standard start times are:

- 1 hour events: start and end on the hour
- 2 hour events: start at 9am, 11am, 2pm or 4pm
- 3 hours events: start at 9am, 12pm, 3pm
- 4 hours and over: depending on room availability after other events have been scheduled

This is to facilitate flexibility of room allocations and to optimise use of university rooms.

All events should start on the hour and finish 10 minutes before the end of the booking to facilitate crossover.

2.6 Timetable publication

The lecture timetable for the whole academic year is published to students at least two weeks before the start of the academic year. The remainder of the timetable, such as sub-group allocations, is published periodically before teaching starts as determined by module stage, student module registrations and the group allocation process. Although every effort is made to ensure that the timetable is final at the point of publication, changes may be necessary and it is the responsibility of the Divisions to notify students of late changes and of staff and students to check their timetables and university e-mail accounts regularly.

See section 3.2 for a schedule of the timetable planning process.

2.7 Timetable data

The Timetabling Office is the owner of timetable data. Use of timetable data is governed by the Timetabling Office who will ensure compliance with General Data Protection Regulation. The data may be used to support other university functions such as, but not limited to, calculation of the space charge and attendance monitoring.

2.8 Non-teaching bookings

Teaching takes precedence in centrally timetabled teaching rooms; teaching also takes precedence in terms of Timetabling Office staff resource.

Central rooms not in use for teaching can be booked by staff and student societies which support other university functions.

2.9 University rooms

Rooms used for booked events fall into one of two categories:

- Centrally timetabled
- Privately owned

Conditions apply to all users of users of centrally timetabled rooms:

- Rooms must be booked through and confirmed by the Timetabling Office or appropriate office before use. CMIS will be considered the definitive source to identify authorised use in case of dispute for term-time bookings and Kinnetix for vacation bookings.
- Food and drink must not be consumed except where this has been provided by Kent Hospitality or sourced by University staff. Arrangements must be made with Kent Hospitality for the collection of refreshments at the point of booking within the booking period so rooms are left clean and tidy at the end of the booking.
- Rooms must be left in the standard layout with whiteboards cleaned ready for the next user of the room. Standard layouts are displayed in all centrally owned rooms.
- Users must leave rooms promptly at the end of their booking and not later than 10 minutes before the end of the booking to facilitate crossover
- Users of rooms must not disturb users of neighbouring spaces
- Other rules may apply to student society bookings as outlined in the Timetabling Office's terms and conditions

Private rooms are owned by Divisions or other departments who designate how the room is to be used. Use by student societies must comply with the Timetabling Office's terms and conditions for student bookings and any requirements by Kent Union.

2.10 Exams timetable

The Timetabling Office will facilitate the publication of the exams timetable to students two weeks before the end of the spring term and at least one week before the start of the summer re-sit exams.

Every effort will be made not to exceed three exams in two days for students. Students may have exams on consecutive days due to scheduling restrictions. Exams may be scheduled Monday – Saturday during the summer exam and resit exam periods.

Divisions will work to the deadlines outlined by the Timetabling Office in the annual deadlines timeline issued by the Central Student Administration Office each year. Changes can be made to the draft exams timetable within the timeframe issued by the Timetabling Office. Changes to the exams timetable after publication to students should only be made after all other possible solutions have been exhausted and where signed off by the Division, and agreed by the Head of Student Administration and DVC ESE.

3 Additional information

3.1 Glossary

Block 1 – modular level information collated and submitted to the Timetabling Office in January detailing which modules will be running in the forthcoming academic year, predicted class size and module convenor.

Block 2 – timetable information collated and submitted to the Timetabling Office in spring detailing event level requirements for teaching the forthcoming academic year.

CMIS – the university’s timetabling software used for processing the timetable and bookings in centrally owned rooms.

Current timetable – the timetable which has been published to students for the current academic year.

Draft timetable – the timetable which is being produced between December and August for the forthcoming academic year.

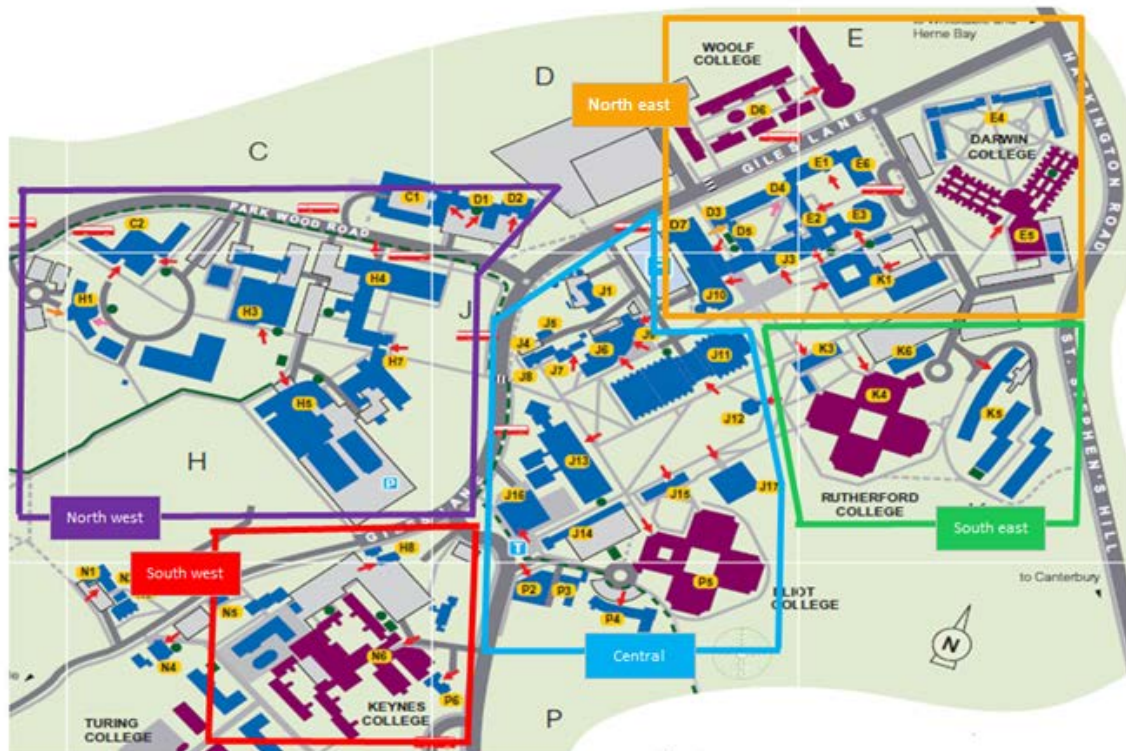
OTIS – the On-line Timetable Information System. The broadcast mechanism for draft and current teaching timetable information available to all staff.

Timetable – the scheduled plan of when, where and with whom teaching activities are undertaken.

Divisional timetable administrator – person/persons in each Division or centre responsible for collating timetable planning and change requests from academic staff.

3.2 Room zones

In Canterbury teaching room allocations schools will be allocated where possible in their home zone or adjacent zone:



In Medway, the two principal zones are the Pembroke campus and the Dockyard and every effort is made to avoid schools having to move from their home zone.

Requests for specialist equipment and timetable changes after the initial room allocations in May/June may affect the ability to apply zoning principles.

3.3 Timeline and summary of responsibilities

		All year	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
Current Academic Year	Teaching Staff	Ensure timetable is accurate. Notify divisional admin of unavoidable late changes. Be available to teach at standard or advertised teaching slots unless constraint is recorded in the timetable			Check spring room allocations and final check spring timetable. Report any issues to divisional admin		Submit exams scheduling requirements
	Divisional Administration	Act on student clash reports. Liaison between academics and Timetabling Office					Submit exams scheduling requirements
	Timetabling Office	Maintain timetable in accordance with unavoidable changes. Circulate student clash reports at appropriate times	Publish timetable. Finalise level 3,4,7 module group allocations. Confirm autumn room allocations		Confirm room allocations for spring		
	All Staff		Can make room bookings for events within teaching hours				
Future Academic Year	Teaching Staff						Provide module diet information to divisional admin. Begin flexible working request process
	Divisional Administration						Provide module diet information to CSAD (block 1)
	Timetabling Office			Rollover current year to forthcoming academic year	Data cleansing		Make draft timetable available on OTIS. Produce Block 2 and constraints forms
	Students						
	All Staff						Can make room bookings for events outside teaching hours

		Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Current academic year	Teaching staff		Check draft exams timetable, raise any concerns to divisional admin					Ensure timetable is accurate. Report any unavoidable issues to divisional admin
	Divisional administration						Submit relevant resit exams information	
	Timetabling Office		Produce draft then final exams timetable				Produce resit exams timetable	
	All staff							
Future academic year	Teaching staff		Submit constraints and agreed flexible working arrangements. Module convenors submit Block 2		Check draft timetable. Raise any issues with divisional admin			
	Divisional administration		Submit collated block 2 information		Provide liaison over required changes			Confirm registrations, groups sizes and numbers
	Timetabling Office		Input constraints and Block 2. Negotiate changes where required		Post OMR, produce regular student clash reports		Publish draft autumn room allocations	Finalise level 5 and 6 module group allocations
	Students		Returning students: complete Online Module Registration					New students: complete Online Module Registration
	All staff							

3.4 Useful links

3.4.1 OTIS – the Online Timetable Information System

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/timetabling/otis/otis.html> This is accessible for all staff who have a staff login and either a network or VPN connection.

3.4.2 Teaching Staff Guide to Timetabling

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/timetabling/information/Timetable%20Process%20for%20Teaching%20Staff%202017-18%20SDS%20Version.pdf>

3.4.3 Administrators' Guide to Timetabling

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/timetabling/information/Timetable%20Process%20for%20Timetable%20Managers%202017-18%20SDS%20Version.pdf>

3.4.4 Room information

Guidelines for teaching room use: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/timetabling/information/guidelines.html>

For details of type of room and capacity see <https://www.kent.ac.uk/timetabling/rooms/estate.html>

3.4.5 Teaching Constraints Policy

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/governance/policies-and-procedures/documents/Teaching%20Constraints%20Policy.pdf>

3.4.6 Flexible Working Policy

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/hr-staffinformation/documents/policies/family-friendly/flexible/Our%20People%20Practices%20-%20Flexible%20Working%20-%20Policy%20and%20Procedure%20January%202017.pdf>

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