

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Senate Committee on University Priorities
Memorandum

S.05-111

*As amended by
Senate 7 Nov 05*

TO: Senate

FROM: John Waterhouse
Chair, SCUP
Vice President, Academic

RE: Proposal for a Course Scheduling
Policy – T.30.01 (SCUP 05-058)

DATE: October 13, 2005

At its October 5, 2005 meeting SCUP reviewed and approved the proposal from the Course Accessibility Implementation Committee for the establishment of a Course Scheduling Policy – T.30.01, which is now forwarded to Senate for approval.

Motion

That Senate approve the Course Scheduling Policy – T.30.01. *Effective Sept. 2006.*

Rationale

This policy was developed in response to concerns expressed by Senate about the increasing shortage of classroom facilities and the need to make more effective use of classroom resources. This policy establishes principles and priorities for the assignment of classroom space, and codifies procedures for equitable scheduling and full utilization of classrooms.

encl.

c: M. Hayden
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Simon Fraser University

Course Scheduling Policy – T.30.01

Preamble

An effective course schedule is one that maximizes access for students within the constraints of classroom space and the number of instructional hours available, and accommodates a range of pedagogies. The University's course scheduling policy applies to all SFU campuses but it must also be responsive to the distinct scheduling needs of each.

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 This policy applies to all Simon Fraser University (SFU) campuses.

1.2 The purpose of this policy is:

- 1.2.1 To define university policy as it pertains to the use and management of classroom space;
- 1.2.2 To define university policy as it pertains to the development of class and final examination timetables;
- 1.2.3 To establish and enumerate guidelines for the allocation of classroom space;
- 1.2.4 To encourage the university community to make efficient and coordinated use of classroom space.

1.3 This policy recognizes and accounts for the fact that appropriate pedagogy requires different class durations, meeting patterns, tutorial structures, and facilities depending on the discipline and level at which a particular course is taught.

2. Goals

2.1 The university timetable is developed for students and instructors. In developing the timetable, the following goals must be balanced:

- 2.1.1 Classes should be scheduled so as to best utilize teaching resources and classroom facilities;
- 2.1.2 Students should be able to take courses needed for graduation in their program in a timely manner. Classes should therefore be scheduled to allow students as much choice as possible and to avoid as many course conflicts as possible;
- 2.1.3 Instructors should be able to obtain schedules that permit them to integrate their professional duties of teaching, research and service in a reasonable way.

2.1.4 The scheduling of graduate and undergraduate classes should be approached in an integrated manner.

2.1.5 In scheduling classes, the University must, if requested to do so, make accommodations under the provincial Human Rights legislation to avoid discriminatory practices.¹

3. Classroom Space

3.1 Centrally scheduled classroom space is a university resource that is allocated to and managed by the Scheduling Section of Student Services. All academic units have shared access to centrally scheduled classroom space for teaching credit courses.

3.2 Normally, classrooms will not be removed from the centrally scheduled classroom pool without replacement in kind as soon as practicable. If there are deemed to be good reasons for removing one or more classrooms from the pool, those requesting the removal must present a business case, which includes a cost/benefit analysis, to the Associate Vice President Academic. The Associate Vice President Academic will make the final decision on whether or not the classroom space is converted to other uses as proposed in the business case.

3.3 Classroom space that is specialized in nature (e.g. language, science or computer labs, dance studios) is normally controlled and managed by the specific academic unit that uses the space for its instructional activities. Such space is not typically available for use by other academic units.

3.4 Some general classroom space is also controlled and managed by specific academic units. This space should be used efficiently and made available for use by other groups within the university community when not being used by the unit that manages it.

4. Instructional Times

4.1 Normally, the instructional hours of the University are Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 22:30. Daytime hours are defined as 8:30 to 17:30. Evening hours are defined as 17:30 PM to 22:30 PM.

4.2 Normally, final examinations each semester will be scheduled Monday through Saturday and may be scheduled on Sunday.

5. Standard Timetabling Principles and Patterns

5.1 The following standard timetabling principles apply to classes offered at all SFU campuses, whether or not they are held in centrally scheduled space.

¹ See GP 18 Human Rights Policy

5.1.1 To the greatest extent possible, classes in each academic unit should be spread evenly Monday through Friday 8:30 AM to 17:30 PM, including times which typically have low utilization, i.e. early mornings, late afternoons and especially Friday afternoons.

5.1.2 The use of evening hours is encouraged in order to meet the needs of students and reduce the number of course conflicts in the overall timetable.

5.1.3 Normally, classes will begin on the half hour and will be scheduled in one-hour units and multiples thereof. The final hour of the class will end at 20 minutes past the hour to allow for transition. This allows for classes with a total duration of 50 minutes, 110 minutes, 170 minutes, 230 minutes, and so on.

5.1.4 A class must begin or end at the same time every day that it meets in order to fit within the standard timetabling pattern. For example, a lecture course scheduled MWF 8:30 AM to 9:20 AM (i.e. beginning and ending at the same times) would meet this criterion, as would a laboratory course scheduled T 14:30 PM to 17:20 PM and R 15:30 PM to 17:20 PM (i.e. ending at the same time). A class scheduled M 10:30-12:20 and F 14:30-16:20 (i.e. neither beginning nor ending at the same time) would not meet this criterion.

5.1.5 Classes with a total duration of 80 minutes are also permitted within the standard timetabling pattern, as long as they are scheduled from 8:00 AM to 9:20 AM, from 15:30 PM to 16:50 PM, or during evening hours.

5.1.6 Requests for non-standard timetabling patterns must be approved by the Dean of the Faculty.

5.1.7 Classes may be held on Saturday or Sunday if so requested by an academic unit.

6. Scheduling Priority: Academic Courses

6.1 Courses that are offered on a regular basis or that are required for completion of a degree program will be given priority for scheduling requests.

6.1.1 Fixed-Schedule Courses are courses that are offered in the same semester(s) every year at the same time(s) and on the same day(s). These courses provide students with the highest level of certainty in planning their schedules, and will be given scheduling priority. The designation of specific courses as fixed-schedule offerings will be advertised in the SFU Course Timetable and Exam Schedule.

6.1.2 Periodically-Scheduled Courses are courses that are offered in the same semester(s) every year but at times and/or days of the week that may vary. These courses provide students with a degree of certainty in planning their schedules, and will be given priority over aperiodically scheduled courses. The designation

of specific courses as periodically scheduled offerings will be advertised in the SFU Course Timetable and Exam Schedule.

6.1.3 Mandatory Courses are courses that are required for completion of a degree program and for which no alternative course is ever offered (as indicated in the university calendar). Mandatory courses will be given priority over courses for which some choice is offered.

6.2 Courses offered in six-semester cycles rather than three-semester cycles are eligible for designation as fixed- or periodically-scheduled courses.

6.3 A course will be designated as being a fixed- or periodically-scheduled course after having met the necessary criteria for three consecutive offerings in a particular semester. It will not lose that designation unless it fails to meet the necessary criteria for at least three of the last four offerings in a particular semester. A fixed-schedule course will not lose its designation if severe scheduling constraints force the university to change the time at which the course is offered. Likewise, courses will not lose their designations as fixed- or periodically scheduled courses if permanent scheduling changes are negotiated with Student Services in order to alleviate congestion, correct course conflicts, or otherwise improve student access to courses.

6.4 Academic units are strongly encouraged to use fixed-scheduling practices for large enrolment first- and second-year courses.

6.5 Academic units are expected to coordinate their offerings so as to avoid substantial timetable conflicts with related units.

7. Scheduling Priority: Event Bookings

7.1 Events are university-related activities for which course credit cannot be earned. Normally, events receive lower priority for classroom space than credit courses.²

8. Course Scheduling

8.1 The task of producing an equitable and efficient timetable every semester is complex. It requires balancing the priorities and needs of all academic units within the context of shared university resources that are in high demand and often scarce. The Registrar has the responsibility to produce and revise scheduling guidelines that can best achieve the goals set out in this policy. To assist in this task a Course Scheduling Advisory Committee will be appointed to advise the Registrar, who will chair the committee. The committee will include a student and one representative from each Faculty, except Arts and Social Sciences, which will have two. The committee will report to the Associate Vice President, Students and International. In addition to advising the Registrar, the Course Scheduling Advisory Committee will oversee the implementation of this policy

² See Appendix II and GP 36 Use of University Space

and will adjudicate requests for and conflicts regarding the designation of fixed-, periodically-scheduled, and mandatory courses. *Finally, the Committee will solicit input on scheduling issues from faculty and departments, and will report its findings to Senate on an annual basis.*

8.2 The following prioritized (but not exhaustive) list identifies criteria that can affect scheduling priority:

- Credit courses will receive priority over events for classrooms.
- The need to accommodate a disability for an instructor or a student.
- Fixed-schedule courses will receive priority for classrooms over flexibly-scheduled courses.
- Periodically-scheduled courses will receive priority for classrooms over aperiodically-scheduled courses.
- Mandatory courses will receive priority for classrooms over courses for which some choice is offered.
- Courses scheduled in accordance with the standard timetabling patterns will receive priority over those that do not follow standard patterns.
- A large class will have priority for a given classroom (to the upper limit of classroom capacity) over a smaller class, regardless of requests for permanent (installed in the room) technical equipment.
- Requests by departments that make full use of the teaching week may be given priority over requests made by departments that cluster their courses during periods of high utilization.

8.3 If, in the first instance, no classroom can be assigned for a course component at the requested time, the Registrar will contact the person who submitted the scheduling request and ask that the course component be rescheduled to a time when a classroom is available. Normally, more than one alternative time will be offered. If none of the alternative times is suitable, the Registrar will contact other Departments or Schools and resolve the problem through negotiation. If no resolution can be reached by negotiation, the Registrar will determine when the course component will be scheduled and assign a classroom for the course at that time.

9. Publication of the Timetable and Course Offerings

9.1 The timetable for the upcoming semester will be available at least two weeks before registration for the upcoming semester begins.

9.2 In addition to the schedule of courses for the upcoming semester, the timetable will include a listing of the courses to be offered in the subsequent two semesters, including all fixed and periodic courses.

10. Changes to the Timetable

10.1 Changes to the timetable after publication must be kept to a minimum to provide certainty to students. Normally, changes to the days and/or times when a course is

offered will not be permitted. Changes to assigned classrooms may be made for the following reasons:

- Enrollment increases beyond the capacity of the classroom assigned and a larger classroom is available.
- The assigned classroom does not have all or some of the room facilities (technical or other) requested and a classroom with the facilities is available.
- The number of students enrolled in a course can be accommodated in a smaller classroom, allowing another course with more students to use the larger classroom.

11. Interpretation

11.1 Questions of interpretation or application of this policy should be referred to the President.

Appendix I

Classroom Management

1. Classroom Technology Assistance (CTA) in the Learning and Instructional Development Centre (LIDC) is responsible for providing and maintaining technical equipment in centrally scheduled classrooms.
2. Facilities Management is responsible for maintaining, renovating, cleaning and furnishing centrally scheduled classrooms.
3. Campus Security is responsible for the security of centrally scheduled classrooms.
4. A committee, appointed by and reporting to the Associate Vice President Academic, will be established to ensure that centrally scheduled classroom space is maintained, suitably furnished and equipped with appropriate technical facilities on an ongoing basis. The committee will tour all classrooms annually and submit a report on their condition to the Associate Vice President Academic. The committee will consist of one member each from Schedules, LIDC, Facilities Management, as well as one member from each of the Faculties and a student representative.
5. The Schedules Section of Student Services will set up and maintain a clear description of centrally scheduled classroom space, which includes room capacity, facilities, design features and disability access. This description will be available to the university community on the web.
6. The Office of Analytical Studies will prepare an annual report on classroom utilization which will be distributed to the ^{Senate} Associate Vice-President, Academic, Deans, Chairs and Departmental Assistants, in addition to being posted on the web.

Appendix II

Event Bookings

1. Event bookings at campuses other than SFU Vancouver are made in accordance with the following guidelines:

1.1 A limited number of event bookings may be allocated space in advance of credit courses. For example, because of the associated noise problem, pipe band and junior pipe band practices are normally assigned to classrooms before rooms are assigned to credit courses. These bookings normally occur during the evenings and/or weekends.

1.2 Sets of rooms may be allocated in advance of credit-course bookings to groups such as Conference Services, Field Schools, Exchange Programs, and various on-campus groups offering camps during the summer semester.

1.3. Event requests for non-classroom space (such as Maggie Benston Centre) can be processed at any time.

1.4. Event requests for classrooms can be processed anytime if the event is held during a semester break or the event is held on a weekend (excluding final exam periods).

1.5. Event requests for classrooms during exam periods can be processed after Week 7, Day 5 of the same semester except events requiring smaller classrooms (capacity less than 50), which may be processed after Week 3, Day 5.

1.6. Event requests for classrooms for future semesters (excluding final exam periods) will be processed only after enrollment for that semester has been underway for 5 weeks.

2. Events at SFU Vancouver may receive higher priority than credit courses during designated timeframes. SFU Vancouver operates on a cost recovery model that allows for the planning of events years in advance and provides the necessary dynamic required for a multi-use facility. Event bookings at SFU Vancouver are made in accordance with the SFU Vancouver Event Booking Policy, which uses a block booking system designed to maximize utilization of space by the various constituent groups defined in that policy.