Report from the Working Group on Scheduling Principles

The Working Group on Scheduling Principles is recommending that the University of Toronto establish a goal to develop a student focused academic schedule. This includes developing a schedule of classes that reduces conflicts for students, increases a student's ability to register in the courses needed to complete degree requirements and provides a reasonable distribution of course options across the days of the week and times throughout the day.

Background:

Space and the use of space for academic purposes is becoming more complex for the University of Toronto. A combination of increasing enrolments, renovation projects, and new approaches to enhance the learning experience have placed a strain on instructional space inventory.

A recent study conducted by ECS provided insight into our classroom inventory and how we use space on the St. George Campus (STGC). The study provided several recommendations including:

- *Developing and adopting consistent policies and best practices for instructional space management to enhance the efficient utilization of space and the development of timetables for student*s.
- *Improving the matching between section size and classroom capacity to mitigate scheduling pressures*

These recommendations align with the results of an administrative Peer Review conducted for Learning Space Management (LSM) and the CARB report. Both reports highlighted the need for the development of common principles for academic scheduling and included feedback from UTM and UTSC in addition to the STGC.

Considering these recommendations and the strategic priorities for the Division of Vice-President and Provost Strategic, which include enhancing the in-person learning experience for students and championing a student-centric approach to enrolment activities, the Universities Registrar's Office (URO) in collaboration with divisional registrar's offices, established a working group to develop common scheduling principles.

The working group is proposing that the University of Toronto adopt a goal to take a student focused approach to academic schedule. This includes developing a schedule of classes that reduces conflicts for students, increases a student's ability to register in the courses needed to complete degree requirements and provides a reasonable distribution of course options across the days of the week and times throughout the day. To accomplish this and to maximize classroom utilization, academic units and instructors will be asked to provide scheduling information in a way that allow for the greatest flexibility.

Adopting these principles will also assist with managing upcoming renovations plans that will reduce classroom space over the next three years and will help the university achieve the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) space utilization standards, which sets the day-time usage target at 80%.

Working Group Members:

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The working group met monthly from February 2023 to January 2024 to gather information, discuss options and identify principles. The group recognizes that some changes in practices will be required to support the onboarding of the principles. Due to possible changes, timelines were also discussed to identify an implementation term.

Consultation & Communication Plan

Consultation Groups
- Faculty/Campus Registrar's
- OGAS
- ACAS
- Academic Roundtable (Vice-Dean)
- Provost Advisory Group (PAG)
- Graduate Deans Meetings
- Council of First Entry Deans
- VPSEM Student Advisory Group
- Divisional Meetings (e.g., A&S C&C meeting, Faculty Council, Information, OISE, UTSC, UTM)
- Provost & Deans (P&D)
- PDAD&C

Timelines
- January to April 2024: Consultation and feedback from community on draft principles
- May to October 2024: Launch communication plan regarding the principles
- Phased implementation over of the 2024-25 and 2025-26 academic years:
    - Fall 2024: At a minimum, principles 1, 2, 3, and 9
    - Fall 2025: Full implementation

Scheduling Principles

The University of Toronto strives to take a student-centric approach to academic schedule. This includes developing a schedule of classes that reduces conflicts for students, increases a student's ability to register in the courses needed to complete degree requirements and provides a reasonable distribution of course options across the days of the week and times throughout the day.

The University endeavours to maximize classroom usage as set out in the COU space utilization standards. COU has established a target day-time utilization rate at 80%.

 The following principles will be used to guide scheduling activities.

1. **Teaching Days of the Week:** The University's standard instructional week is from Monday to Friday. Divisions may schedule weekend academic activities such as cohort model programs, mid-terms, workshops, music lessons etc. as needed.

2. **Hours of Instruction:** Daytime hours of instruction are typically between 9:00am to 6:00pm. Some divisions may schedule classes earlier than 9am. Evening instruction is from 6:00pm to 9:00pm. Regulations regarding the scheduling of evening instruction is determined by the division. Divisions will consider the total number of instructional hours scheduled per day for students.

3. **Prime Time**: To help reduce schedule conflicts for students and to maximize room utilization across the days of the week and hours of the day, units are asked to schedule 30% of all course components outside of prime time. Prime time is defined as 10:00am to 3:00pm Monday to Thursday. Units that schedule 30% outside of prime time will be prioritized for room allocations.

4. **Pass time:** Pass time is the time between classes to ensure students and instructors have sufficient time to move between course components. A 10-minute pass time has been adopted as the university standard. Classes will begin 10 minutes after the hour and end on the hour to all passing time between scheduled activities for students and instructors. This will help reduce confusion and ensure alignment for students and instructors who are associated with more than one division. The start and end time of class will be reflected in the schedule to provide clarity to students and instructors.

5. **Start Times:** To optimize the use of space and to avoid creating time conflicts for students, divisions are encouraged to use the following start times for scheduling course component. Units that schedule with the following start times will be prioritized for room allocations:

   a. **1-hour components**: 9:10AM, 10:10AM, 11:10AM, 12;10PM, 1:10PM, 2:10PM, 3:10PM, 4:10PM, 5:10PM, 6:10PM, 7:10 PM, 8:10 PM
   b. **2-hour components**: 9:10AM, 11:10AM, 1:10PM, 3:10PM, 5:10PM, 6:10PM, 7:10PM
   c. **3-hour components**: 9:10AM, 10:10AM, 1:10PM, 2:10PM, 5:10PM, 6:10PM

Divisions that utilize student demand scheduling[1]: while every effort should be made to align with the above start times, 3-hour and 2-hour components scheduled in divisional space may use the following start times in addition to those listed in b. and c. above:

    d. **2-hour components:** 10:10AM 12:10PM, 4:10PM
       i. Divisions will ensure that any gaps between 2-hour components is scheduled with 1-hour components to maximize room utilization.
    e. **3-hour components:** 12:10PM, 3:10PM

6. **Scheduling Limitations:** To support the successful creation of the schedule of classes and to balance student and instructor needs. Units are asked to consider the following when scheduling course components:
   - Instructors should have a break after 3 consecutive hours of teaching.
   - Courses that require a room for breakout sessions, should have a tutorial scheduled to support the lecture.
   - Components with infrequent meeting patterns (e.g., alternating weeks) must be scheduled to accurately reflect the meeting pattern.
   - Mid-term examinations and term assessments that occur outside of regular scheduled class time, should submit a separate room request for the assessment/test.

7. **Scheduling Requests:** Scheduling requests will be allocated based on a combination of enrolment demand and pedagogical needs (equipment, furniture, etc.). While every effort will be made to accommodate requests, there may be limitations due to available room inventory. The same effort will be made to assign course components that are scheduled back-to-back in the same campus precinct. There may be limitations due to available room inventory, thus there is no guarantee components can be assigned the same room or building. Room requests based on preference may not be considered.

8. **Instructor Accommodations:** There are two methods for instructors to request a scheduling accommodation (e.g., time of day, location):
   - Accommodations approved through health and wellbeing <https://people.utoronto.ca/inclusion/accessibility/accommodation/accommodation-guidelines-for-employees-with-disabilities/
   - Division approved accommodations process established by the Office of the Dean.

9. **Scheduling Large Classes:** Large classes will be scheduled first to ensure the availability of rooms and to avoid schedule conflicts with course components such as tutorials and labs. A large class is generally defined as a course component with an expected enrolment of 140 or more. This enrolment number may be adjusted annually based on available classroom inventory.

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[1] Student demand scheduling: Scheduled are built based on students indicating which courses they plan to take during the intended scheduling cycle.

10. **Scheduling Systems and Data:** There are many systems that support academic scheduling activity across the university. Divisions are encouraged to use enterprise systems such as Infosilem and ROSI for all scheduling activities to assist with room allocation processes and to reduce data discrepancies across systems. Streamlining systems will also assist with the collection and tracking of scheduling data for reporting purposes. Divisions are encouraged to ensure full scheduling details are available with course information in ROSI.

11. **Scheduling Changes:** Students make enrolment decisions considering their academic and personal obligations, thus changes to the academic schedule, such as time or day, should be restricted after the schedule has been released and students start to plan their schedule.

    Changes to class location may be made up to and including the first day of classes. If a class location changes, students should be notified via email prior to the first day of classes and a notice should be posted on the former and new class location.

    If it becomes necessary to make a schedule change after the schedule has been loaded to ROSI, academics units are encouraged to consider the following when approving changes:

    - How essential Is the change for the success of the course?
    - Schedule change should be made before registration opens for students. Changes made after the schedule is loaded and prior to registration, can be made with the approval of the department head/chair.
    - Schedule changes after students are registered in the course should only be made with approval from the divisional registrar's office. Once the change has been made, registered students should be notified immediately by the department requesting the change.
    - Schedule changes should not be made once classes begin. Any required changes at that time, require decanal approval.

Related Policies and Guidelines
Principles for Setting the University Academic Sessional Dates: Direct Entry Divisions

Future considerations

The discussions of the working group highlighted several areas where additional principles or changes would be applied, however, the discussions focused on items that would require significantly more consultation, data modelling and potentially modifications to systems and course approval processes.

The following two items would like to be highlighted now to encourage discussions within divisions on the potential benefits and impacts.

1. **Increasing the passing time to allow students and instructors more time to travel between classes and to support students.**

   Pass time is the time between classes to ensure students and instructors have sufficient time to move between course components. A common pass time is being recommended as a university standard to ensure alignment for students and instructors who are associated with more than one division.

   Currently the university has adopted 10 minutes as the passing time. The working group would like divisions to consider increasing the pass time to either 15 or 20 minutes to ensure all community members have sufficient time to move between classes, to allow time for students to ask questions after class and to ensure there is sufficient time to reconfigure instructional spaces (if applicable).

   15 min pass time: Fifteen minutes will be scheduled between course components scheduled from 9am to 6pm to allow passing time between scheduled activities for students and instructors. The start of classes is outlined below.

   20 min pass time: Twenty minutes will be scheduled between course components scheduled from 9am to 6pm to allow passing time between scheduled activities for students and instructors. The start of classes is outlined below.

   The following are some options to highlight how adjusting the pass time will impact the start of classes. Common start times are a best practice to optimize the use of space and to avoid creating time conflicts for students.

   Option 1: 15 min Pass time

   a. **1-hour components**: 9AM, 10:15AM, 11:30AM, 12:45PM, 2PM, 3:15PM, 4:30PM, 5:45PM, 6PM, 7PM, 8PM
   b. **2-hour components**: 9AM, 11:30AM, 12:45PM, 2PM, 4:30PM, 5PM, 6PM, 7PM, 8PM
   c. **3-hour components**: 9AM, 12:45PM, 4:30PM, 5PM, 7PM

   Option 2: 20 min pass time

   a. **1-hour components**: 9AM, 10:20AM, 11:40AM,1PM, 2:20PM, 3:40PM, 5PM, 6:20PM, 7PM, 8PM
   b. **2-hour components**: 9AM, 11:40AM, 1PM, 2:20PM, 5PM, 6PM, 7PM
   c. **3-hour components**: 9AM, 11:40AM, 1PM, 5PM, 6PM

2. **Principles regarding the governance of cross-listed courses – need for identification and coordination, tracking in a single system (e.g., CM or CIS)**
Many divisions highlighted scheduling issues with cross-listed courses. These are courses where a course in one division is equivalent to a different course in another division, or between undergraduate and graduate courses within the same division.

Currently it is very difficult to track courses that have been approved to be offered as a cross-l-listed course, such that when a schedule change occurs in one division, they are not aware they need to notify another division or department. The working group would like to explore system options to improve the tracking and notifying processes for cross-listed courses. Curriculum Management (CM) and the Course Information System (CIS) were identified as two possible systems as they are designed to be the source of truth for course approval and syllabus related information.