

**University at Albany, SUNY  
Course Scheduling Guidelines  
Draft 4.1**

**Preamble**

The Schedule of Classes is one of the primary tactical “artifacts” of a University. Requiring input from and interaction among all corners of the university, the scheduling process involves consideration of academic program needs, faculty availability and preferences, facility limits, finance and budget planning, and processes of the Registrar’s office. Schedules also seek to accommodate various individual need (students’, faculty, and departments) while allocating common resources (space, time, and dollars).

Because faculty best understand the curricula and pedagogical requirements of their courses, **a department’s proposed schedule will be accommodated to the greatest degree possible.** However, experience reveals that inevitably not all requests can be accommodated due, primarily, to facility limitations. In addition, overall student needs may produce demands at odds with the plans of individual departments. Therefore, common guidelines for managing the extremely complex process of developing a semester’s (and academic year’s) course schedule have been developed, with the goal of achieving a more effective schedule with more equitable and transparent allocation of space.

Portions of these guidelines have been “piloted” in the Spring 2007 schedule. It is intended that they will become fully implemented with the Schedule of Classes for Fall 2007, recognizing that departments may adapt to them at differing speeds.

**1. Time Zones/Class Start Times**

Establishing standardized time zones is the most effective and efficient way to ensure the maximum use of the instructional week, and to facilitate scheduling of facilities. This is done while recognizing that University facilities must accommodate the needs of many academic programs serving a variety of student populations. Making use of the standard time zones offers the best possible chance for departmental schedule requests to be accommodated. Classes at non-standard time zones can only be scheduled after other requests have been accommodated. Following are the standard times zones:

**Undergraduate Courses**

The following time zones are established by University Policy for undergraduate courses. The *BASIC* semester class periods last for 55 OR 80 MINUTES; thus a three-credit course normally meets on MWF for 55 minutes each day **OR** on TTH or MW for 80 minutes each day. Once-a-week three-credit courses meet for 170 minutes. Ten minute intervals separate the time zones to allow transition time from one class to another.

<b>UNDERGRADUATE Class Time Zones for Three-Credit Courses</b>		
Course meets: <b>Three times a week</b>	Course meets: <b>Twice a week</b>	Course meets: <b>Once a week</b>
MWF 8:15 – 9:10 AM	TTH 8:45 – 10:05 AM	M/T/W/TH/F 2:45 – 5:35 PM
MWF 9:20 – 10:15 AM	TTH 10:15 – 11:35 AM	M/T/W/TH/F 4:15 – 7:05 PM
MWF 10:25 – 11:20 AM	TTH 11:45 AM – 1:05 PM	M/T/W/TH 5:45 – 8:35 PM
MWF 11:30 AM – 12:25 PM	TTH 1:15 – 2:35 PM	M/T/W/TH 7:15 – 10:05 PM
MWF 12:35 – 1:30 PM	MW or TTH 2:45 – 4:05 PM	
MWF 1:40 – 2:35 PM	MW or TTH 4:15 – 5:35 PM	
	MW or TTH 5:45 – 7:05 PM	
	MW or TTH 7:15 – 8:35 PM	

Courses offering two, four, or five credits, must observe the **start times** for the time zones of days on which the class is held. This will minimize the number of standard time zones

occupied by the course and will give students the greatest flexibility to take other courses during the standard times.

Courses meeting four or five times per week for 55 minutes each must fall within a single TTH time zone. For example a course meeting Monday through Thursday for 55 minutes each day could be scheduled for 9:20 – 10:15 on MW and any 55 minutes within the 8:45 – 10:05 TTH time zone (e.g. 8:45 – 9:40 OR 9:10 – 10:05)

Any request for course offerings outside the normal time zones may not be able to be accommodated.

### **Graduate Courses**

Due to the differences in programmatic demands and populations served, graduate courses meet in a variety of time formats. These guidelines are not intended to interfere with the delivery of courses as designed by the faculties of those graduate programs. However, because graduate courses offered on the Uptown Campus utilize the same facilities as undergraduate courses, such graduate courses should **begin at the start of a standard undergraduate time zone** in order to maximize the use of the classroom. Requests for classrooms that do not begin during a standard time zone may not be able to be fulfilled.

Graduate courses taught at other campuses (Downtown, East, Nanotechnology), where the student populations are self-contained, have utilized different time zones from those on the Uptown Campus. Faculties are encouraged to review course offering patterns on these campuses to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of students served. In addition, the options for improving utilization of classrooms on these campuses, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of standardizing class scheduling to align more closely with the Uptown Campus, will be reviewed in consultation with appropriate faculties on a regular basis by the Schedulers Group (see #7 below) with designated individuals identified by the Deans of the Schools and Colleges

## **2. Schedule Balance**

At times, there are more requests for classrooms than there are classrooms available. The time periods of highest demand are TTH at 10:15, 11:45 and 1:15, and the demand for these times has been increasing. However, such clustering of academic offerings into a limited number of time zones or days has a significant ripple effect on the entire scheduling process. It can limit students' access to needed courses, affect negatively the intellectual climate and culture of the University, overtax facilities and services, and restrict opportunities for student-faculty interaction.

**To address such an imbalance and its attendant consequences, each academic unit is expected to offer a schedule distributed across the full week.** The following principles of schedule balance should be followed by each department when developing its schedule:

- a. Each department or program should schedule at least 40 percent of its undergraduate courses on MWF or MW.
- b. Large lecture classes for 138 or more students with a department should be distributed evenly through the week's schedule (both day and time of day)
- c. Discussion sections of classes and labs should be scheduled before 10 am, after 2 p.m., or on Fridays.
- d. Required courses, where enrollment is assured, should be scheduled into lower-demand time zones (e.g. earlier or later in the day)

### 3. Rotation of course offerings

In order to improve students' ability to access courses, especially required courses, departments should rotate offerings into different times and days over the two semesters of an academic year. Some suggested ways to do so include the following:

- a. Courses offered every semester could alternate between a MWF or MW schedule in one semester and TTh schedule in the other semester. Time of day could also be alternated, for example, in the morning during one semester and in the afternoon for another.
- b. When more than one section of the same course is offered in a semester, it should be offered on different days (MWF/MW and TTh) and at a different time of day. Recognizing the possible impact on faculty schedules, this may not always be possible. However, sections of the same course should not be offered in the same or immediately adjacent time zones as this limits students' flexibility unless there are additional sections of the course available at different days and times.
- c. While instructor and department preferences will be accommodated to the greatest degree possible, there can be no "automatic entitlement" to a time/room slot.
- d. Several departments, for example in the sciences, offer complementary courses which have been scheduled together to ensure students may enroll in both. In such circumstances rotation is not advised without ensuring that there is no impact on the ability to enroll in the other course.

**Annual Course Schedule:** Departments should prepare plans for courses for both semesters of the academic year and should make this information available to students during the Advanced Registration for the fall semester. Students should be informed of courses that are only offered every semester, once a year, or once every few semesters.

### 4. Assignment of specialized spaces

Certain types of classrooms are limited in supply and often the most likely to produce more requests than can be accommodated. Assignment of these spaces will be as follows:

- a. **Large Lecture Centers (7 and 18)** -- The two large Lecture Centers will be scheduled by the Registrar using priorities developed in consultation with the School/College Schedulers Group.
- b. **Other Lecture Centers:** When requests for LCs during a particular time zone exceed available supply, the priorities for scheduling them will be:
  - Courses that fulfill General Education requirements
  - Large enrollment courses that are required in majors which cannot be accommodated in smaller classrooms.
  - Enrollment history of the course and potential enrollment impact of moving a course
  - Departments that otherwise adhere to the balance and rotation principles outlined above.
- c. **Department and school/college controlled classrooms**
  - Departments must schedule all classrooms under their control before requesting similar-size rooms from the Registrar's inventory of classrooms.

- During the scheduling period, all department-controlled classrooms not scheduled for classes must be available to the Registrar to schedule classes. The School-College Schedulers Group will be advised of all actions that assign departmentally-controlled rooms.

**d. Smart, electronic, and computer classrooms**

- Units should request specialized smart (Smart board), electronic (PC, CD,DVD,VCR), or computer classrooms(computer labs) only when such equipment is integral to instruction in a majority of the class sessions. Occasional need for such equipment should be done as separate requests. (The Registrar's Office will be developing a comprehensive list of rooms and their characteristics for department use during scheduling.)
- Departmentally controlled computer classrooms shall be available to other units after the department's courses have all been scheduled. (It is understood that scheduling of such facilities is complex and that maintaining these rooms is resource intensive, so every effort will be made to minimize impact on the department.)

**5. Changes to the Schedule of Classes**

Because of the significant disruption it causes to students, there should be **NO changes** to the schedule of classes once students begin registering, except under the following circumstances:

- a. Instructors of record may change
- b. Rooms may be changed if the Registrar's Office is notified of the room change and the Schedule of Classes is updated with the new room.
- c. Times may change only if 100% of the students registered for the class agree to the change.
- d. Classes may be cancelled if there is insufficient enrollment. Enrolled students must be notified by the department if a class is cancelled and every effort should be made to help them enroll in a suitable alternative.
- e. An emergency serious enough to warrant disruption to enrolled students such as a last minute instructor change that requires a new meeting time for the course.

If class changes are made, it is the responsibility of the department to contact all affected students and work with them to resolve any resulting conflicts or to find a suitable substitute class.

**6. Resolution of discrepancies**

When all requests for time/space cannot be accommodated, the following procedures will be followed:

- a. If the affected courses are within a department, or school/college, priorities should be resolved by the unit.
  - If the College controls a suitable space that is available during the overbooked time, that space should be utilized.
  - If no locally-controlled space is available, the chair or dean should determine the priority for scheduling and alternatives for the affected classes
- b. If the affected courses are across academic units, or conflicts involving Lecture Centers, these will be resolved by the Schedulers Group. The guidelines in this document will be the basis for resolving such conflicts. It is expected that the

**Class Schedule Guidelines**

**Page 5 of 6**

*Draft October 2006*

Schedulers Group as a whole will have options to generate creative solutions of mutual benefit.

## **7. Responsibility**

Responsibility rests with the academic department for producing a schedule that follows these University Guidelines of balance and provides maximum access to students. The School/College Dean must ensure that departments fulfill this responsibility.

To assist the Registrar, a Schedulers Group has been convened with membership from each of the Schools and Colleges, as well as the offices of Enrollment Management, Space Management, and the Provost. This group will review these guidelines annually and will advise the Registrar as the Schedule of Classes is prepared.

## **8. Classroom Space Management**

The responsibility for classroom space management reflects *ad hoc* decisions, which over time has led to under-utilization of much needed classrooms spaces. The University will be undertaking a review of these decisions with a goal of standardization, in order to maximize classroom resources and institutional flexibility in offering a schedule of classes. Any recommended changes to the current responsibility for space will be undertaken in close consultation with the relevant academic unit and will strive for mutual benefit.

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