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Timetabling Report, January 2020

By Lauren Stevens

Methodology & Sampling

- **Aim:** This research aims to gather student feedback on their timetable. The purpose is to identify how we could better adapt the timetabling policy and procedures to better suit students.
- **Research Method:** Focus groups.
- **Sampling:** We chose to do 2 focus groups (8 participants in each) and recruited via the Insights Panel.
- **Data Analysis:** NVivo Qualitative Analysis Software and Excel.
- **Findings:** The findings of this project are laid out in distinct areas below:
  - Positive and negative feedback on TB1;
  - Positive and negative feedback on TB2;
  - What factors are considered to contributed to a 'student-friendly' timetable;
  - The satisfaction level of the current core hours;
  - What information students want to be made accessible to them in relation to the timetabling policy and procedures.

N.B: Incidences refer to how many times a theme occurs in the data.

Timetabling - Overall Satisfaction

Teaching Block 1

All participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction, on a scale of 0 to 10 to indicate how happy they were with their teaching block 1 timetable.

- The average score was **7.25 out of 10.**

Positives

- Module Structure (Manageable with 3 modules per term);

  - *"In comparison to last year, I liked that I have 3 modules. It is easier with 3 modules in semester compared to old structure of all modules running throughout."*

- Good Lectures/ supportive academic staff;
  - *"We do have supportive lecturers with this problem though so that was nice"*

- Varied hours;

  - *"Varied hours: 3pm one day; 9am the next."*

Timetabling - Overall Satisfaction

- Gaps between lectures and practical lessons;

  - *"Spread out structure allows for time to complete extra work."*
  - *"Large gaps in between lectures and practicals"*

- Changes to timetabling (Made in advance);

  - *"All events were put up with good time, no surprises etc."*

- More free time (Fridays off).
- Two participants said they had no issues to report regarding TB1.

Negatives

- Stubborn Timetabling Departments;

  - *"We asked academic staff about it and they said it could not be moved because timetabling will not allow it."*

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- Technological Issues;
  - *"Timetable malfunction at one point. None of the students knew where they were supposed to be."*

  - *"I expected teething problems with initial timetabling because I am the first cohort of students for mental health nursing with technology, including ID not working on specific rooms and emailing admin as students weren't allocated rooms. This issue would then show up as red on our myport and it is never changed or rectified even if you were there."*

  - *"Issues with ID scanning. The first three weeks it did not scan properly if we were in a particular room."*

- Attendance not taken seriously
  - *"Attendance monitoring (ID scans), which weren't working for a lot of students at the start of term, cannot be changed by students - they can put a reason on moodle however is anyone monitoring this as students have noticed their attendance mark hasn't actually changed? Attendance is important for people on certain courses or those with visas."*

- Lecture Locations;
  - Different buildings

    - ***"Classes in Northern Quarter, then next class unnecessarily at UCL(Opposite Eldon). Long journey, rush to class."***
  - Frustrating Room Changes
    - ***"Room changes on the day are frustrating."***
  - Uncomfortable Seating
    - ***"Uncomfortable seating (Small desk)"***
- Lecture Times
  - Crammed days or too spread out
    - ***"Sometimes classes are spread out too much and clustered in other places. (E.g some days run from 9-6 but may have another day in the week where they have nothing)."***
  - Late Evening Classes
  - Gaps inconvenient for commuters
    - ***"Some days 4 hour gaps between lectures/seminars are inconvenient for people who have to travel. Or travelling in for one lecture/seminar, which are sometimes cancelled."***

Timetabling - Overall Satisfaction

Teaching Block 2

Participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction, on a scale of 0 to 10 to indicate how happy they were with their teaching block 2 timetable. The average score was **7.43 out of 10.** *(Only 7 participants voted because the majority were unaware of their TB2 timetable)*

Positives

- Consistent Times each week;

    - *"Almost all 9am but consistent"*

- More free days;
    - *"I have Wednesday and Thursday off so I can go home"*
    - *Friday "off"*
- The majority of participants could not comment because they were unaware of their teaching block 2 timetable or has no issues to report.

Negatives

- Different Buildings;
  - *"Some lectures are one after another in different buildings at busy times of the day."*

- More Crammed;
  - *"Because of the having one particular day with everything, although I don't mind it."*
- Issue with their exam timetable.

Core Teaching Hours

- Not start before 10am
- Do not finish later than 4pm
- 8pm is too late

- Later finishes/evening classes - for part-time students.
  - *"I gave it a 7 for the 1st teaching block because my class are in the evening. Late evening classes inconvenient for some however understandable considering part-time students."*

These are the suggested parameters for the core teaching hours. The rationale behind their decision was because this was the general consensus when participants could concentrate the most.

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Student Friendly Timetable

The following list were a set of factors that should be considered when organising a 'student-friendly timetable:

- Consideration for specific student groups such as:
  - Part-time workers;
    - ***"An issue for students that are also working - particularly if there is only 1 hour schedule in the day students find it difficult to schedule work around it. Sometimes each week is not consistent."***
  - Non-campus based students;
    - ***"One which is tailored to meet the needs of different groups of students for e.g. students who commute daily or live far away. It would be useful if there were not four-hour gaps in the timetable. Better grouped together lectures or practical sessions"***
  - Separate Full-time and part-time;
    - ***"Separate hours for full-time and part-time students so full-time aren't required to go in at later hours."***

- More Flexibility - Student choice:
  - *" More flexibility to allow students to choose their timings"*
  - *"Business has a shared 1st year where there are several lectures for each unit - students would like to be able to choose which one is most convenient for them. This would also be useful for students to attend more than one lecture/seminar if they are struggling with the topic."*
- Convenience;
  - Lectures close together (Buildings)
  - Finish earlier than 8pm

- Timetabling;
  - Timetable sessions for feedback opportunities;
  - Ensure lectures are before the practicals;
  - Offer 'Drop-ins' for personal tutoring;
  - Spread over a week to enable flexibility.

Timetabling Information Available

Participants identified what information they wished to be made accessible to them with regards to timetabling policies and procedures:

- More transparency;
  - *"Being more transparent with timetabling process then students would be more understanding."*
  - *"Needs to be more explanation of why issues aren't sorted out - even when lecturers request changes there is no explanation as to why there are no changes. Showing students that they have tried to move timetables."*
- Information available via Moodle or Email;
- Advance Notice;
  - *"Needed to know timetable in advance (more than 1 week) in TB1 to inform employer of hours they're available. This is the same for exam periods."*
- Exam Timetabling;
  - *"Would like to better understand how the structure of timetabling is built - particularly with exam timetabling."*