# Teaching Planning 2026-27

The University's approach to planning teaching for students studying within our Gilmorehill, Dumfries, and Garscube campuses, for 2026-27 is informed by:

- Our learning and teaching strategy.
- Requirements within the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).
- Our compliance duties to the Home Office in our capacity as a sponsor of Student Route Visas.
- The University's policy on Space Management and Timetabling.

The Learning and Teaching **strategy** has committed to a campus-based, active learning experience.  As such, the expectation is that we are designing teaching to be engaging, interactive, and a valued experience for students that enables them to connect with one another and with staff teaching their courses.  Teaching that is timetabled on our campuses is expected to be carefully considered and intentionally designed.  It must have been approved in advance through course approval processes.

When designing and then timetabling teaching, we need to keep in mind the obligations we have under the **Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)** regulations, that mean students must be given accurate information about their courses and programmes in good time to make informed choices.  Moreover, given students' expectations can be reasonably informed through a range of sources of information provided to them, there is an onus on the University to ensure clear, consistent and reliable provision of information about the student experience. This ensures that what we provide by way of the learning experience is what was advertised to students and underpinned their study choices.

In January 2025, the Home Office released a Remote Learning Policy which was updated in March 2025 and is available on the UK Government website.   A helpful summary is available from the Mills and Reeve legal team website and from this WonkHE blog. The University has liaised directly with the Home Office to seek clarifications on the requirements and has sought guidance from the University's lawyers.

In the context of teaching planning and timetabling, if a course is to be taught remotely or in blended form it must have gone through course approval in accordance with the normal timeframes ahead of teaching starting, and all course documentation must have been updated to reflect this in good time to inform student choice.  This has always been a key principle within our academic quality framework.  However, the requirements of the Home Office Remote Learning Policy (Jan 2025), make this approval process all the more important.

What follows is an outline of the principles that will underpin space allocation for teaching followed by clarification of the **Home Office policy with which we must comply** and that has informed the development of our space allocation principles.

## Space Allocation Principles

In planning teaching, our approach is underpinned by the following **space allocation principles**:

- Discussions about teaching space need to be framed around supporting a consistent and high-quality learning experience for students.

- The balance of online and in-person teaching must be understood across a programme for any year group given the Home Office stipulations around remote learning for Student Route Visa students (see below).

- Lecture recordings, live streaming and synchronous remote delivery are not intended as substitutes or alternatives to in-person teaching.  It is, therefore, not appropriate for courses to adopt these forms of delivery as a strategy to teach a single large cohort in the absence of a sufficiently large teaching space.

- Allocation of teaching spaces will be undertaken in light of "Talk the Timetable" discussions where the Space Management & Timetabling Team will work with Schools and the Deans of Learning and Teaching to understand teaching requirements and allocate space accordingly.  It is essential that Schools engage with the College meetings in discussions about their planned teaching approach at an early stage so that suitable spaces can be allocated.

- As part of this engagement with SMTT, and when planning and requesting teaching space, due consideration should be given to the sizes of teaching spaces available on the campus.   For example, our largest flat-floored teaching space holds 282 students, we only have five rooms that can accommodate over 250 people, and only one that accommodates more than 300. Thus, the majority of 300+ cohorts will need to be taught more than once.

- Schools will be asked to provide a range of sizes for sub-groups where there are multiple instances of a class (e.g., sub-groups for tutorials) rather than submitting requests for multiple rooms of equal size.

- Where feasible, larger spaces can be used to teach multiple, small sub-groups in parallel.  This would be where Schools see merit in this from a course, teaching team and student perspective.

- Laboratory teaching planning should proceed as normal with consideration given to the efficient use of laboratory space, dependant on the type of laboratory exercises planned. The same applies in the case of other specialist space types.

- Planning for exams will continue to assume a mixed-diet of online and on-campus exams.  As in previous years, exam planning arrangements will be communicated with Schools ahead of the exam diets, and it is essential that any potential requests for on-campus exams are not made without prior discussion with the Dean of Learning and Teaching.

- In support of this process and to reduce the need for late changes and reworking of allocations, in keeping with our published processes and deadlines, all courses for 2026-27 should be uploaded onto PIP and have the structure/delivery pattern built in

CMIS by the end of April 2026. If this will prove problematic due to staff appointment dates, Schools should raise this with their Dean of Learning and Teaching in order that contingency plans can be put in place.  No new courses can be approved after this date without sign off from timetabling and the Dean to ensure that proposed timeslots and class sizes can in fact be accommodated.

## Implications of UK Home Office Student Route Sponsor requirements

As noted above, the Home Office has set out expectations concerning remote learning. These can be read in full on the [Home Office website under "Courses"](#) from para 4.17 onwards.  Please note, reference to "courses" in England, equates to Programmes in Scotland.   A separate document outlining the details of what will need to be in place for us to demonstrate our compliance will be prepared.  Meanwhile, the implications of the policy for teaching and for timetabling are as follows:

- We need to be able to demonstrate for any student, the proportion of their teaching that will be delivered remotely across the programme and thus within any year of the programme.  As such, there will need to be a mechanism for us to record and report at programme level not only at course level.
- How courses and programmes are *designed* to be delivered is crucial. We can continue to deliver blended learning programmes where online materials and activities are offered as part of private study and preparation. They must be designed and approved through our course and programme approval processes as per University policy.
- We **cannot** switch teaching from on campus to remote/online for whole or parts of courses where it is not part of the approved course design or we jeopardise our ability to comply with Home Office requirements for our programmes and/or we compromise a student's ability to comply with the guidance.  Only in exceptional circumstances (outlined within the Home Office policy) can a move online be made. Colleagues must not interpret that guidance on an individual basis but, if they feel the exceptions apply, must raise a change request with SMTT in the first instance. The SMTT team will liaise with Academic Policy and Governance and the School before any change is enacted, in order to ensure compliance with the Home Office Policy and appropriate recording of teaching activity in the event of any permitted change.