

To employees and students at
Aarhus University, School of Business and Social Sciences

Regarding classroom management in spring 2013 and beyond

Dear all,

Since there seems to be some confusion among the students and staff at School of Business and Social Sciences about the management of classrooms and the use of the planning system Syllabus, we find that there is a need to clearly communicate the principles.

The classroom management system Syllabus is an optimisation system that assigns a certain teaching activity, such as for instance a lecture, a suitable classroom based on the number of participants, study programme, year, class, etc. Use of Syllabus has previously shown to be an absolutely necessary tool to organise and handle the limited resources we have in terms of classrooms. Since the rent for the classrooms is also a very large item in the budget, streamlining the use of classrooms is an economic necessity, and statements show that this is far from having been the case in the past.

The most effective and economic use of classrooms occurs if the optimisation is carried out with as few restrictions as possible. But there are a number of important considerations to include, and one cannot optimise without applying appropriate constraints.

At BSS, there are a number of different study programmes but in general students have relatively many weekly lessons and often in large classes at the beginning of their study and a somewhat smaller number of weekly lessons in smaller groups/classes towards the end of their study. The limited number of large auditoriums which are geographically dispersed provides some limitations but it is very difficult to do anything about this. It also occurs that the available classrooms are not necessarily designed to match the needs that exist today.

At BSS, we will strive to meet the students 'and teachers' reasonable demands:

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1. that the classroom matches the given teaching activity and is sufficiently large to seat all the students who are enrolled in the class, and that the equipment is adequate for the teaching planned
2. that students have classes near their "base" and that geographical movements during the day are minimised, but also, if it is impossible to completely avoid movements, that appropriate time is included in the schedule for transportation between classes
3. that the weekly timetable does not change in terms of location and time more than once during a semester. For courses where the number of classes varies from week to week, i.e. where the period lasts longer than one week, such as for example 2 weeks, the 14-day timetable should not be changed more than once during a semester.
4. that each teacher has teaching-free days. This will also be our goal for each student, but for certain programmes and for certain classes with many weekly hours it might not be possible to achieve such a goal when we also have to take students' learning into account.

That the equipment in each classroom is adapted to teaching requirements means, in practice, that we should establish fairly similar equipment in each classroom. Consequently, we cannot have classrooms with equipment adapted to individual programmes, as was previously the case to some extent. There are for example programmes and courses which require more blackboard space than others, but then we should make sure to have enough blackboard space in all classrooms, if physically possible.

To optimise the use of classrooms for courses with a period of for example two weeks instead of the usual one week period, we will be able to ensure optimal utilisation of classrooms and, by pairing two relevant two-week courses and shifting one of them by one week according to the other, we will be able to even out the load on students.

An important prerequisite for meeting these reasonable demands is that teachers do not make absolute requirements for their teaching only to take place at certain times of the day, and a prerequisite in general is that teachers refrain from making requirements and wishes for special treatment. However, in order to meet teachers' reasonable wishes, we recommend that each teacher reports back to his/her department both on the times at which they cannot teach and the times at which they would prefer to teach. We are aware that some departments have already collected or are well in the process of col-

lecting inputs from teachers regarding their teaching. In this case, the above-mentioned prerequisites will not take effect for the time being, as it will not be practical to change the rules in midstream.

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In order to get a reasonably effective management of classrooms, we would like to urge the teachers to demonstrate a cooperative spirit. Fortunately, we have always seen good examples of such cooperative spirits among employees, so we are confident that we will get the system to work properly. Furthermore, it is a given that the university's classroom management system will be even more effective when it is extended to all faculties and not only to ARTS and BSS.

Just as we should take into consideration the full-time teachers' preferences and other obligations, due account should also be taken of the part-time teachers' preferences and obligations, and not least of their principal occupation.

Kind regards,

Peder Østergaard and Svend Hylleberg