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Academic Policy 8:

Timetabled Student Activity Cancellation and Postponement Policy

2024-2025

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Timetabled Student Activity Cancellation and Postponement Policy

Context and main processes

1. The University must ensure that student experience is not compromised by last minute rescheduling, postponements or cancellations of lectures and tutorials. A rescheduled, postponed, or cancelled teaching event leads to loss of learning for the student, confusion through failure to reach and inform all affected students and additional burden on other staff who are approached to cover sessions or help students who have not received the cancellation message.
2. This policy is designed to ensure that expectations and procedures for postponing, rescheduling, or cancelling classes are clear. The guiding principle is that,

Teaching is of the highest priority and no classes should be rescheduled, postponed, or cancelled, except where this is absolutely unavoidable and specifically authorised by the Head of Department / School.

Timetabled teaching takes priority over any other activity.

3. Staff may not attend conferences or other commitments if they conflict with timetabled teaching unless the absence has been agreed with the Head of Department/School and another member of staff can cover the class.
4. Once the timetable has been confirmed, staff organising other activities that clash with a scheduled class discuss this with the Head of Department/School as soon as the clash is identified.
5. No member of staff (professional, administrative, or academic) may cancel a class without approval from the Head of Department/School, or in their absence, the Associate Dean, or, in the final instance, the Dean.
6. Staff must try to contact the module leader/course director first (and then the Head of Department if the issue is not resolved) to discuss alternatives to cancelling as soon as they are aware there may be a problem.
7. Staff must (where possible) make advance arrangements for appropriate 'cover' – i.e., another member of staff who can assist with teaching (preferably with a complementary knowledge base) who may be able to take over in the event of sudden sickness.
8. On team taught modules it is the expectation that another member of the teaching team will cover for others and the team should agree this in advance. The Head of School/Department should be informed of the

cover agreements and updated immediately of agreed switches as soon as the need is recognised. The Course and Student Administration Manager (or equivalent) and the course/ module administrator should also be informed in advance.

9. If a guest lecturer is unable to give a class, a member of the teaching team or module leader must run the class with an alternative session and module leaders should have substitute classes planned for such instances. There should always be a replacement activity available for modules, preferably stored online in the module area, for staff to use for substitute classes.
10. If as a last resort, approval is given and the class needs to be cancelled, the room must also be cancelled immediately through the Faculty's Timetabling Rep and students must be informed immediately through the Student Offices. (Data on cancellations will be collated for analysis as there are cost implications).
11. In the event of a cancellation, students must be contacted by a range of media, including email, text messages and social media. Information relating to the session must be loaded onto Canvas as soon as possible (if not already available). Whilst it is not generally guaranteed that an additional replacement lecture can be timetabled, this should be attempted in all instances.
12. Should an issue arise where a member of staff has not informed anyone of their absence, and students are in a class with no academic to teach them, they must directly update their Student Office or Course Leader. In such a scenario, the person informed of the situation should ask the students to discuss their assignment or last week's class for a few minutes whilst the situation is resolved. It is advisable here to request that students themselves are involved in running an appropriate session for example a peer run session on study skills; course representatives and/or student mentors could be asked to help (this has been agreed with the student union as part of the development towards student-staff collaborations).
13. The person informed of the staff absence must then contact the Head of Department/School immediately (or Associate Dean if the Head is not available), who must attempt to find cover or a member of staff that can offer a suitable relevant activity for students to complete or work with students on a student-led activity, depending on which is deemed most appropriate.

Staff Sickness

14. Where a member of staff is suddenly taken ill and cannot take a class, s/he must:
 - contact the Head of School/Department immediately to inform them of the problem. This is a requirement of the University's Sickness Absence Procedure.
 - where possible, previously agreed alternative cover arrangements should be mobilised and the Head of School/Department and Course and Student Administration Manager informed.
 - if the Head of School/Department cannot be contacted a message should be left with the Head's secretary (if available) and also contact made with the Student Office or the Faculty Office if they are unable to speak to anyone in person.
 - where the member of staff does not have any suitable cover for his or her teaching, the Head of School/Department/Associate Dean will attempt to find alternative cover for the session.
15. Whilst it is acknowledged that a delay in cancellation of a class as cover arrangements are sought can create problems for students, the priority is to strive to cover the class before it is cancelled, and the process outlined in 7 above must be followed.

Any other reasons for absence

16. Examples of reasons for requesting a replacement member of staff to cover teaching other than sickness include:
 - Blocks of time already agreed for research and developmental projects that will be difficult to change.
 - Conference attendance already approved by the Dean
 - Commitments to national / international professional bodies already approved by the Head.
17. If, however no suitable cover can be found for the above, the teaching must take priority.
18. If hourly paid staff (HPL) are requested to cover the teaching, the Head of School/Department must ensure that the HPL is suitably qualified to teach the session(s) and is likely to teach to a high standard.

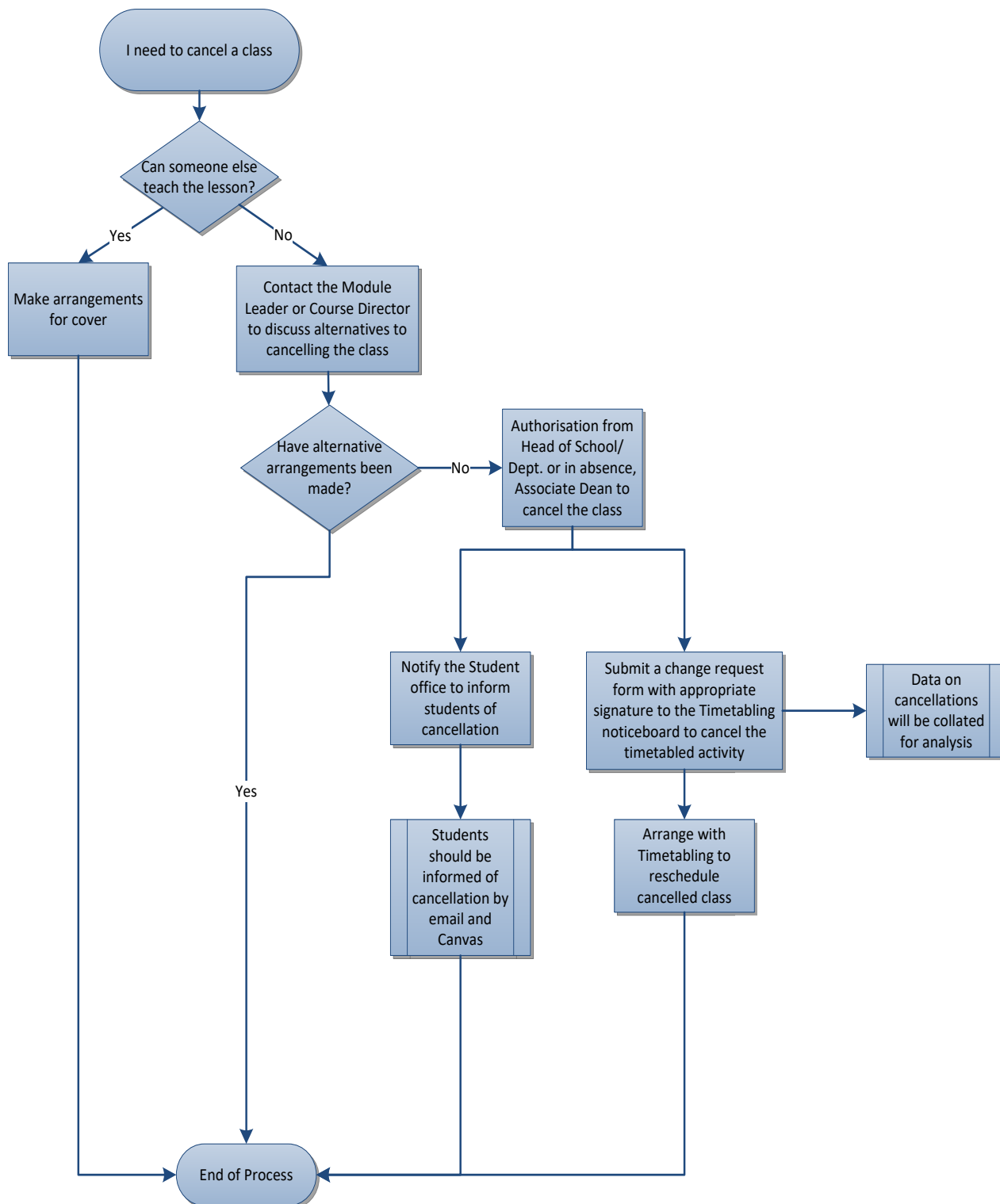
Cancellation due to severe weather conditions or transport disruption

19. If a member of staff is unable to get to a class due to severe weather in their own area but the campus is still operating, or in a situation where transport has been disrupted the procedure above related to sickness must still apply.
20. If the campus is closed this will be announced on staff space and student space and the adverse weather information telephone line (0844 2096642). Clearly the class will not be able to go ahead but information should be posted on Canvas and where possible an alternative date and rooming communicated. It is acknowledged that finding alternative space is problematic and this may not always be possible. If the cancelled class relates to an assignment or assignment feedback it is vital that these aspects be discussed in another class as well as being posted on Canvas, unless this was the final class for the module and no other dates can be found, although it is recommended that a relevant online session is made available (e.g. through the use of collaborate, podcasts, online discussions and tests).

Staff Availability

21. Staff should ensure that they are available during contracted working hours; consequently, they should:
 - Be readily contactable by phone, voicemail, and email during working hours.
 - Be able to respond promptly to reasonable requests for non-recurrent duties requiring on-site attendance (e.g., non-scheduled meetings, sickness cover).

Flow Diagram to Cancelling or Postponing a Timetabled Student Activity



Flow diagram to cancelling or postponing 1