

Overcrowding in Teaching Spaces Procedure

Section 1 - Scope / Purpose

(1) This Procedure is to assist UOW staff recognise when a venue is overcrowded and provides clear recommendations, preventative and response measures to overcrowding in teaching spaces. This document also outlines roles and responsibilities of staff and students.

(2) This Procedure applies to all onshore University of Wollongong campuses including regional campuses.

Section 2 - Recommended Capacity

(3) Common teaching spaces have a recommended seating capacity as advised in the [UOW List of Teaching Spaces](#). This capacity may be based on a number of factors including:

- a. availability of resources e.g. computers and other equipment; and
- b. physical size and layout of the teaching space, based on:
 - i. UOW's [Work Environment Guidelines](#);
 - ii. Building Code of Australia; and
 - iii. [Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association \(TEFMA\) Space Planning Guidelines](#).

(4) Recommended seating capacity for non-common teaching spaces can be established locally by using the [UOW List of Teaching Spaces](#) and [TEFMA Space Planning Guidelines](#) as guides.

(5) The University makes every effort to ensure that the total number of seats available for classes are not less than the total number of students enrolled. Faculties and Schools provide detailed information to the Central Timetabling Unit biannually which assists with determining the allocation of rooms and lecture theatres.

(6) It is common for enrolment and attendance numbers to fluctuate within the first few weeks. If Academic Staff foresee that the recommended capacity of the teaching space is to be temporarily exceeded a risk assessment shall be performed based on expected initial enrolment numbers to ensure class comfort and safety (refer to Roles & Responsibilities).

(7) If actual enrolment numbers are expected to continue to exceed the recommended capacity, the academic unit shall contact the Central Timetabling Unit for assistance with arranging alternative options. Note: if there are no alternative venues, schools will have to investigate different methods of delivery for the subject, for example recording of the lecture or a repeat class. Refer to Section 4.

Section 3 - Overcrowding

(8) Overcrowding occurs when the recommended capacity is breached in such a way that the health and safety of the occupants of the teaching space is affected. This may take the form of occupation of aisles, staircases and/or doorways. Overcrowding of teaching spaces increases the potential risk of an injury to staff and students as it creates health and safety hazards in relation to emergency egress, and the general safety of the work/teaching environment.

Refer to [UOW List of Teaching Spaces](#) for University defined room capacities.

(9) Non-fixed furniture (e.g. tables and chairs) is not to be introduced to the room if it will exceed the recommended capacity. This excludes the provision of specifically supplied furniture for staff/students which may be required for reasonable adjustment, so long as a risk is not created in doing so.

(10) Equipment or furniture relating to student accessibility and reasonable adjustment will be recommended by the Student Accessibility and Inclusion Team. The Accessibility and Inclusion Advisor will identify the type of equipment or furniture required to support access and inform the Manager, Space Utilisation (Infrastructure and Property Division) who is responsible for installing the equipment. Consultation is to occur between the DLO, Manager, Space Utilisation, Timetabling Coordinator and WHS Advisor to ensure the introduction of the non-standard equipment or furniture will not have a detrimental effect on any capacity, manoeuvrability, emergency egress, ergonomics, or other requirements prior to ordering and installation.

Section 4 - Preventative Measures

(11) In the event that overcrowding occurs, the following preventative measures shall be implemented to reduce the risk of injury and disruption to teaching and learning.

Notification of Requirements

(12) Academic units have a responsibility to notify Timetabling Services promptly when it is evident that a room allocation is not large enough to accommodate the class. Notification by the academic unit is vital. Similarly, notification should be made promptly when a room is no longer required or too large for the number of students. This will ensure that larger teaching areas remain available for use where required.

Alternative Teaching Options

(13) Units should consider the use of alternative teaching options such as:

- a. scheduling repeat classes; and/or
- b. utilising Echo360 to record lectures for off-campus review.

(14) Timetabling Services can assist by outlining options available.

Student Entry/Exit from Classes

(15) Students shall not be permitted to enter a teaching space before the end of the previous class. Academic staff should ask any student doing so to leave. At the end of a class, students need to vacate the teaching space promptly via the designated exits. Refer to [Timetabling Policy](#), relating to Teaching Times.

Seat Saving

(16) Teaching staff should make it known that “seat saving” is not allowed and that all seats are occupied on a “first-in” basis. At the beginning of the class, the academic staff member is to instruct those who do not occupy a seat to proceed to a vacant seat. Once all seats are occupied teaching staff must instruct further students not to enter.

Section 5 - Response Measures

(17) If overcrowding occurs, any student without a seat (or refusing to occupy a vacant seat) is to be asked to leave and return to the scheduled repeat class. In the event that there is no scheduled repeat class, student names should

be taken and alternative arrangements for teaching planned by the academic unit.

(18) If excess students refuse to vacate the teaching space, academic staff shall remind students of obligations under [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#) and [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017](#), including:

- a. the University is required to provide a safe environment for staff and students; and
- b. staff and students are required to take reasonable care for their own safety and the safety of others, and comply with any reasonable instructions, policies or procedures enforced by the University.

(19) Excess students should again be asked to leave.

(20) If students do not leave, the following options are available:

- a. call Security to request their assistance; and/or
- b. refuse to begin teaching, in effect cancelling the class.

(21) Academic staff must inform the Head of Unit and Dean of Faculty of the overcrowding issue and actions taken.

Section 6 - Roles and Responsibilities

Academic Staff

(22) Implement the control measures as outlined in sections 3, 4, 5 and 6 for instances where overcrowding occurs or is likely to occur.

(23) If the class is suspended or cancelled due to overcrowding notify the subject Coordinator, Supervisor and management as necessary.

(24) Request the subject coordinator advises the Central Timetabling Unit if the allocated room becomes too large or small for class requirements as enrolment numbers fluctuate.

(25) If a risk assessment is required due to the recommended capacity being temporarily exceeded, ensure this is completed and implemented.

Timetabling Services

(26) Assist with the provision of suitable teaching spaces and where this is not possible outline options available.

(27) Determine recommended capacity for common teaching spaces in consultation with Infrastructure and Property Division.

Student Accessibility and Inclusion Team

(28) Identify equipment or furniture required to make reasonable adjustments, without negatively affecting occupant safety.

Infrastructure and Property Division

(29) Install equipment or furniture as required to furnish the teaching space appropriately or to make reasonable adjustments, without negatively affecting occupant safety.

(30) Determine recommended capacities for common teaching spaces in consultation with Central Timetabling Unit.

(31) University Security to assist with overcrowding issues when requested by staff.

Schools

(32) Locally establish recommended seating capacity for non-common teaching areas by referring to the [UOW List of Teaching Spaces](#) and TEFMA Space Planning Guidelines.

(33) Follow the requirements of this document.

Students

(34) Follow the reasonable direction by academic staff which includes not sitting in aisle ways and leaving an overcrowded lecture theatre.

Wellbeing Health and Safety Unit

(35) Assist as required to ensure furniture and equipment does not negatively affect occupant safety.

Section 7 - Definitions

Word/Term	Definition (with examples if required)
Capacity	The maximum number of students the room can hold without affecting health and safety of occupants, recommended by Infrastructure and Property Division as guided by TEFMA Space Planning Guidelines.
Overcrowding	When the health and safety occupants is adversely affected within a room, for example due to too many persons and/or belongings as well as inappropriate placement of computers, cables and other equipment and furniture.

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Responsible Executive	Matthew Wright Chief Operating Officer and Vice-President Operations
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