You Can’t Please All of the People All of the Time...!

Mark Lister/Amanda Leverett – Loughborough University
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Session Overview:

• Talk about experiences at Loughborough?
• Share good practise – learn from others?
• Reassure ourselves that we’re all doing a good job?
Case Study – Loughborough University

- 17,000 students
- 10 Schools/19 Departments
- Loughborough Student Experience
2014-15 Semester 2 Exam Session

- 599 Exams (37,718 separate papers)
- 26 May 2015 to 17 June 2015:
  - 51 sessions across 17 days
  - AM/PM/EVE (Monday – Friday)
- One central venue
  - 990 seats
Loughborough University – Exam Principles

• No more than one exam per student per day
• Three “bunched” exams in three days deemed acceptable
• Four “bunched” exams kept to minimum
• School/Dept. requests (on 50% of modules in Sem. 1)
• No Examination Timetabling Policy!
What do our students want?

• Less bunching (or is this just the vocal minority?)
• Timetable published as early as possible
• Marks released in a timely fashion
What do our staff want?

• More time to mark scripts
• Accommodate non-exam commitments
• Exams Mon-Fri (not Saturdays!)
• Happy students!
Loughborough University – Timetabling Tools

Pre-2012: Excel and in-house ‘clash detector’

Post 2012: CMIS
Discussion Point 1: What makes a good timetable?

What takes priority when timetabling exams?

a) Students (bunching)?
b) Academics (larger papers first)?
c) Finalists?
d) All of the above!
e) None of the above!
Pulled from pillar to post!

Students

Timetable

Staff
Discussion Point 2: Managing Expectations

• How much input from ‘stakeholders’ is healthy/unhealthy?
• How do you manage ‘stakeholder’ expectations?
Discussion Point 2: Managing Expectations

Pre-timetable

School A request that four large modules are scheduled in the first week of the exam period...

Post-timetable

School A raise concerns that four modules have been scheduled so close together!
Discussion Point 2: Managing Expectations

Pre-timetable

Students want exams spaced out across the exam period…

Post-exams

Students want results as soon as possible after exam period ends!
Discussion Point 3: Exam Hall etiquette

- Are mobile phones allowed in your exam hall?
- Are students allowed toilet breaks?
- Are paper queries handled during exam sessions?
Discussion Point 3: Exam Hall etiquette

Mobile Technology
• Are telephones allowed in the exam hall?
• Where are they kept?
• What action is taken when a telephone is discovered?
Discussion Point 3: Exam Hall etiquette

• Toilet Breaks?

• To pee or not to pee…
Discussion Point 3: Exam Hall etiquette

- Toilet Breaks?

- To pee or not to pee…
Discussion Point 3: Exam Hall etiquette

Managing paper queries? Does one query lead to another?
Case Study – Loughborough University

- New Examination Timetabling Policy
- Better communication to students
  - Three exams in three days acceptable
  - Four exams in four days is possible!
- No School/Dept. requests
First day of exams
Semester 1 2015 –
jubilation greets the
individual responsible
for the timetable!