



Room and course scheduling from Autumn Semester 2020 onwards

Rationale

Continuously increasing student numbers and growth in the number of courses have placed great pressure on teaching rooms and led to capacity bottlenecks in the last few years. It has become increasingly difficult to produce good timetables.

There is no plan to increase the number of rooms in any significant way. To ensure that teaching runs smoothly in the middle to long term the aim is therefore to use existing rooms more efficiently. This can be achieved by extending the main daily teaching window; by better deployment of marginal hours; by abolishing the one-hour lunch break; and through fundamental changes to booking capacity and the basic booking structure.

Sub-issues involved in these changes are peak demand times for public transport and the ETH Link, and the midday rush at eating facilities. Efforts are being made to avoid peak times wherever possible, i.e. to distribute transport and eating times more widely.

In a preliminary study in spring 2018 the firm Corphis Management Consulting was asked to investigate how the situation is being addressed by other universities in Switzerland, Germany and Austria; what course scheduling timetables these universities are using; and what approaches they deploy to circumvent peak demand times.

The study showed that ETH Zurich is the only university among comparable institutions which has a main teaching window of only eight hours per teaching day, and this in combination with a well-established one-hour lunch break. Most of the universities investigated (14) deploy the teaching window 8:00–20:00, followed by other universities (9) with the window 8:00–18:00.

Implementation

Abolition of the fixed lunchtime hour

Today's fixed lunch hour between 12.00 and 13.00 will be abolished, and lunch breaks will be planned variably in individual degree programmes and semesters. The following variations are feasible:

- Two-hour lunch break: 10.00–12.00, 12.00–14.00 or 14.00–16.00
The two-hour lunch break takes place between two double lessons. It gives students room for independent study, sport and other activities (student associations, projects, language courses, music etc.). It is also useful for moving between campuses or buildings.
- One-hour lunch break: 11.00–12.00, 12.00–13.00, 13.00–14.00 or 14.00–15.00
The one-hour break takes place next to one- or three-hour courses or laboratory exercises (etc.) which begin or end on uneven hours. One-hour breaks give students time to eat and make for a compact day.
- No lunch break
No lunch break is required if teaching is only half-day. Breaks between classes allow students to "eat on the fly".

Variable lunch breaks allow the schedule to be planned more flexibly and extended. Students can use any longer lunch breaks for their own purposes, whether for sports, changing campus or buildings, studying or anything else.

Scheduling should wherever possible take a meaningful lunch break into account. During the first four semesters 6-hour blocks without a lunch break should be avoided. In higher semesters and Master's degree programmes it is impossible to avoid this situation due to the large number of individually planned electives.

From autumn 2020 onwards the EduApp will display free teaching rooms and meeting rooms where students may work.

Extension of the main time window for teaching; two-hour blocks as the standard

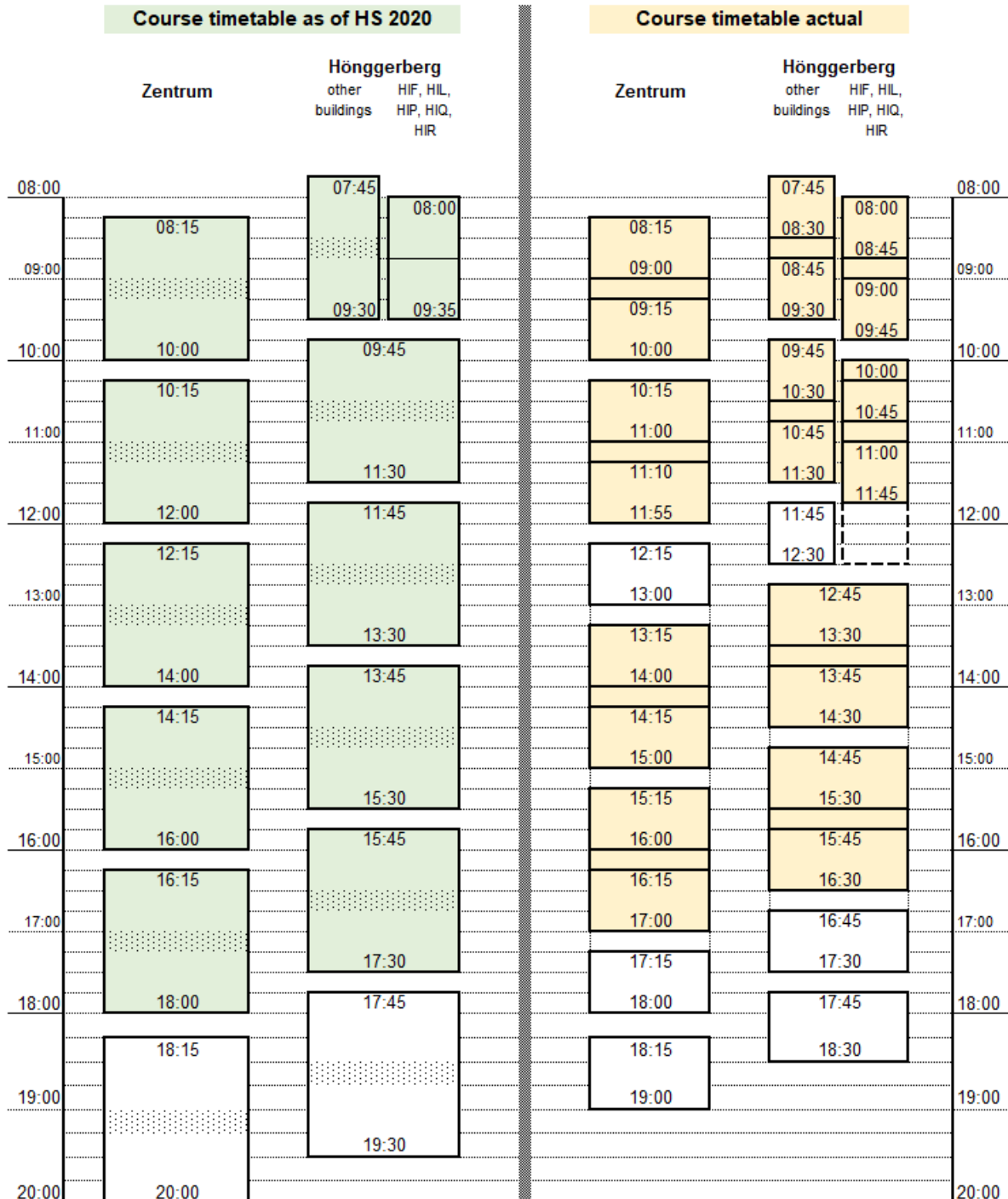
The new basic structure will comprise 5 two-hour blocks for courses in Rectorate rooms, from 8.00–18.00. They will mostly be filled with two-hour and four-hour courses.

Courses with an uneven number of hours (one or three hours) or courses which begin/end on an uneven hour are possible under the following conditions:

- The department's own rooms are used, e.g. for laboratory work, exercises and seminars.
- The course is combined with another "uneven hour" course to fill a two-hour block.
- The course takes place at one of the following times: 9.00–10.00, 9.00–12.00, 16.00–17.00, 14.00–17.00); this will also help to circumvent peak commuter times.

Starting times of courses

The current starting times of courses are confusing. They will now be synchronised from the second hourly block onwards:



Binding rules for course scheduling

The transition will be subject to binding rules. Partially these already exist, but have not been formally binding. At a second workshop in winter 2018 these rules were examined and extended; in June 2019 they will be adopted as binding. They will serve as an important instrument, particularly for schedule coordinators.

Milestones

Spring 2018	Preliminary study
Winter 2018	Discussion of possible solutions in two workshops involving all stakeholders
Spring 2019	Discussion of details, bilateral discussions with stakeholders: ASVZ; libraries; D-GESS / SiP; Facility Management / Building Administration; KdL; LET (EduApp); cafeterias / eating facilities; student Exchange platform; Study Conference; schedule and study programme coordinators; UZH; Event Organisation; VPPR; VSETH
May 2019	Executive Board resolution
June 2019	Executive Board resolution to implement the transition Executive Board enacts binding rules for course scheduling
November 2019	Start of planning for Autumn Semester 2020 (6 weeks earlier than usual) according to the new system; support for degree programmes in implementation
July 2020	Start of planning for Spring Semester 2021 (8 weeks earlier than usual) according to the new system; support for degree programmes in implementation
September 2020	First semester deploying the new system
February 2021	Second semester deploying the new system

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