

# It's about time

A handbook to timetabling,  
non-contact hours and  
class size provisions in  
the Secondary Teachers'  
Collective Agreement



**2023-2025**

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PPTA represents the professional and industrial interests of some 20,500 secondary teachers in state secondary, area, manual training and intermediate schools, as well as tutors in community education institutions, alternative education and activity centres, and principals in secondary and area schools. More than 95% of eligible teachers choose to belong to the association.

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## Introduction

Every school has a timetable. For students, the timetable specifies the range and organisation of the curriculum and learning support available to them. For teachers, it identifies how their expertise and time is to be used through the year, whether for teaching, managerial or pastoral responsibilities. The timetable is both the most fundamental learning document and the most fundamental workload document in any school.

This handbook provides background information on the factors influencing the structure of the school timetable and the rights and entitlements of teachers associated with it.

More detailed advice and guidance can be found at [www.ppta.org.nz](http://www.ppta.org.nz) in the *It's About Time 2023-25* toolkit.



## Your rights

The Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement (STCA) contains workload control provisions for teachers.

These workload provisions are legal obligations. A number of schools have achieved a very different approach to curriculum delivery and student courses through innovative timetabling while working within these entitlements.

The provisions include:

- ☐ a school timetable policy which is compliant with the provisions of the STCA.
- ☐ teacher involvement in timetable policy development.
- ☐ maximum timetabled teaching through guaranteed non-contact time.
- ☐ a maximum average class size for each teacher.
- ☐ compensatory mechanisms for certain circumstances.

They acknowledge the growing and changing demands on secondary teaching, particularly NCEA, the changing delivery of the NZ Curriculum and senior school programmes and ultimately the challenges of recruitment and retention of secondary teachers.

## Key ingredients of a school timetable policy

The core requirements are:

1. Development in consultation with teaching staff.
2. The non-contact time entitlement.
3. Average class size.
4. Other class size matters.
5. Other matters, including duty, which impact on timetabling practices.
6. A process for when for genuine reasons the entitlements can't be met (ie. agreeing how to compensate).
7. Genuine endeavour.
8. Genuine consultation.

## Non-contact time entitlements

Each full-time teacher is timetabled for 25 hours per week. Salary payments and leave are based on this 25 hours.

With five hours non-contact time each full-time teacher can, at most, be scheduled for 20 timetabled contact hours with students in organised instructional programmes (including teaching and learning activities such as academic mentoring programmes, SSR, etc).

If your school's timetable for students is shorter or longer than 25 hours, your maximum contact time remains at 20.

The maximum 20 hours is reduced for each of the first three permanent units and there are additional time allowances for the following:

- ☐ Specialist classroom teachers.
- ☐ Beginning teachers.
- ☐ Te Atakura.
- ☐ Heads Of Department with beginning teachers.
- ☐ Overseas teachers
- ☐ Kahui Ako teachers.
- ☐ Pastoral care teachers (from 2025).

Contact time doesn't include purely administrative time with students that does not involve teaching and learning programmes (ie. taking the form roll).

You can't be required to forgo any of your non-contact entitlement but can be asked, for a genuine reason. If you agree to do so there should be an agreed compensation, preferably one that provides an equivalent reduction in workload in some other way.

#### *Full-time secondary teachers*

(Includes specialist technology teachers in technology centres in intermediate and primary schools.)

- ☐ Maximum timetabled contact time with learning groups is 20 hours per week.
- ☐ Contact is reduced by one hour per week for each of the first three permanent units. (The employer must also endeavour to provide further reduction for the fourth and subsequent units, and can also provide more.)
- ☐ Reduce this contact time further for any additional time allowances specific to the teacher (ie. beginning teacher time allowances etc).

#### *Part-time teachers until 27 January 2025*

(Maximum part-time employment is 22.25 hours per week.)

- ☐ Part-time teachers employed for 18 or more hours per week (0.72 full-time teacher equivalents [FTTE]) must have some non-contact time within their paid hours (see STCA clause 5.2.6(b)).
- ☐ Employers must endeavour to provide, or to work progressively towards providing, part-time teachers employed for 12 hours (0.48 FTTE) or more with one non-contact hour for each four hours of teaching as part of their total paid hours.

*From 28 January 2025, there is no upper limit on part time.*

- ☐ All part-time teachers must have pro-rated non- contact as part of their timetabled hours, i.e 1 hour of non-contact for every 4 hours of contact.

If you're not timetabled for regular learning groups (for example you're a guidance counselor or non-teaching DP) you're within entitlements if you see students in each week for no more than your maximum contact entitlements (including units etc.).

For example, a guidance counselor with one permanent unit sees students by appointment less than 19 hours per week (25 hours less 6 non-contact hours) then they are within minimum entitlement in that week.

#### *Provisionally registered teachers*

Full-time first-year teachers have five hours advice and guidance time per week and can be timetabled for no more than 15 hours per week, less any other time allowances they have.

Full-time second-year teachers have two and a half hours advice and guidance time per week and can be timetabled for contact for no more than 17.5 hours per week, less any other time allowances they may hold.

Part-time first-year teachers employed for more than 12.5 hours must have two and a half non-contact hours for advice and guidance time per week included in their paid hours subtracted from their prorated contact hours, less any other time allowances they may hold.

Agreed compensatory mechanisms must be available if the teacher agrees to temporarily forgo some of their non-contact entitlement.

### Class size matters including average class size

There is no maximum size for an individual class, except those imposed by sensible educational practice and health and safety requirements.

If you have more than one learning group the employer has to use reasonable endeavour to achieve for you an average class size of no more than 26 students.

Average class size is based on the official roll of each of your timetabled learning groups.

1. Individual classes can be larger or smaller than 26.
2. A teacher's average class may be less than 26.
3. A balance of large and small learning groups can achieve an acceptable average class size.

When the maximum average of 26 cannot be achieved you are automatically entitled to an agreed compensatory mechanism.

### Calculating average class size

This calculation can involve four variables: the number of learning groups, the number of periods, the length of periods and the number of students.

#### *Ave. class size calculation for same length periods*

Learning group 1	25 students x 4 periods per week
Learning group 2	28 x 4
Learning group 3	21 x 5
Learning group 4	27 x 4
Learning group 5	26 x 3
<b>Total</b>	<b>503 students over 20 periods</b>
<b>Therefore average class size = <math>503 \div 20 = 25.15</math> students</b>	

When learning groups are timetabled for different length periods then average class size is the sum of the number of students on each group roll multiplied by the total number of minutes you are timetabled to be with the group in a cycle divided by the total number of minutes in a cycle the teacher is timetabled to teach. For example, let's say you have the five learning groups shown below. Your average class size is calculated as follows.

#### *Ave. class size calculation for variable periods*

<i>Learning group</i>	<i>Roll</i>	<i>Minutes</i>	<i>Roll x minutes</i>
1	20	150	3000
2	25	240	6000
3	28	200	5600
4	30	190	5700
5	12	200	2400
<b>Totals</b>		<b>980</b>	<b>22700</b>
<b>Average class size</b>		<b>= <math>22700 \div 980 = 23.16</math> students</b>	

Normal day-to-day changes in the group learning time (ie. shortened periods) or student attendance (eg. a student absence or the temporary addition of a student for supervision) will not change your average class size.

Permanent additions to, or deletions from, the official group roll or ongoing changes to the time you are in contact with a learning group or groups will alter your average class size and you should recalculate the average.

Relief cover for a class will not change your average class size for that day. (This situation is covered by the non-contact provisions if you exceed your weekly contact time.)

### Meeting the test of “Endeavour”

“Endeavour” is an ongoing responsibility on employers to make genuine efforts to achieve a provision for you. However, it recognises that there may be genuine reasons why an employer is unable to provide the particular provision immediately. The employer is expected to show that they have genuinely tried and are making changes over time to implement the requirement.

The endeavour test is met if the employer has:

- ☐ Genuinely considered all options open to them, within the resources available, to meet the provision; and
- ☐ Genuinely considered any proposals you’ve put to them to achieve that aim; and
- ☐ Have either met the provision or have explained to you why the options proposed and considered are not

possible and why the provision cannot be met at that time; and

- ☐ Where they could not meet the provision and where there is a link to clause 5. 1A.1 (d), have agreed to one or more compensatory mechanisms.

### Situations where the entitlements can’t be met

#### *Genuine reasons*

When your employer gives you a genuine reason to ask that you temporarily forgo any non-contact entitlements or exceed the average class size limit, they should do so only in exceptional circumstances rather than as general practice. Though in large schools genuine reasons may be used more extensively around average class size.

#### *What constitutes genuine reason?*

- ☐ It’s not simply administrative convenience, or saving money on relief cover, or to cover for inadequate planning.
- ☐ All reasonable options have been investigated and no alternative to a temporary reduction in entitlement has been found.
- ☐ It applies in individual cases, not a blanket incursion into the non-contact or average class size entitlements.
- ☐ It may be a sudden emergency that requires supervision of a group of students for their ongoing safety.
- ☐ It may be the absence of any available day relievers in your local area.
- ☐ It may involve, after all reasonable endeavours have

been exhausted, one or two staff members being asked to teach for a term, or a year, at a higher level of contact or average class size in order to allow the timetable to operate.

Before asking for agreement to temporarily reduce your non-contact entitlement the school should have considered alternatives, including (where appropriate):

- ☐ Temporarily increasing the hours of part-time staff.
- ☐ Hire extra full- or part-time staff from operations funds.
- ☐ Use of day relief teachers.
- ☐ Timetable adjustment.

Pressure on non-contact hours or average class size for several teachers could mean that a structural change is required in the timetable, or in the administration practices, or there's a need to reorganise resources.

### Compensatory mechanisms

Specific compensatory mechanisms are to be agreed between you and the principal. They commonly include time in lieu, reduction in other duties, or a combination of these. As a last resort, it may be an additional payment.

Where payment is the only viable mechanism there should be an agreed mechanism in the timetable policy for determining how much that should be.

For long term situations (ie. timetable rigidity in a small school) you and your principal could agree to:

- ☐ The issuing of a fixed term unit for the duration.
- ☐ The issuing of a board-funded responsibility payment for the duration.

For emergency day-relief type situations you could agree to:

- ☐ A fixed term unit for a period that generates the equivalent payment to the overtime rate.
- ☐ A board-funded responsibility payment for a period that generates the equivalent payment.

**Note:** Where there is no compensatory option agreed you don't have to agree to a reduction in your entitlement to non-contact time and the principal is advised to look for an alternative.

### Other matters for the timetable policy

There are many other decisions that shape a school's timetable and which can be part of the policy and the consultation. Policy discussions should seek to find agreement on answers to a range of questions.

Having transparent and understood policy derived from genuine consultation will usually gain greater acceptance and understanding of the dilemmas faced with the tight resourcing of schools.

There is an extensive range of examples of questions which can be asked about the timetable in the *It's about time 2013* toolkit at [www.ppta.org.nz](http://www.ppta.org.nz). Other matters impacting on timetabling practices include:

- ☐ Student supervision.
- ☐ Form times.
- ☐ Rest and meal breaks.
- ☐ Meetings.
- ☐ Co-curricular activities.
- ☐ Multi-level classes/multi-subject classes.
- ☐ Room allocation.
- ☐ Minimum and maximum classes.
- ☐ Class distribution.

*Until 27 January 2024*

As a guide to reasonable additional duties, part-time teachers are paid an additional hour for every nine hours of timetabled time to compensate for non-timetabled duties, meetings and activities. For a full-time teacher this would equate to 112 hours per year for “other duties”.

*From 28 January 2024*

Part-time teachers can be asked to do a prorated number of hours of other duty (meeting, grounds supervision etc). It may be helpful to think of these as hours per year rather than hours per week.

## Timetabling

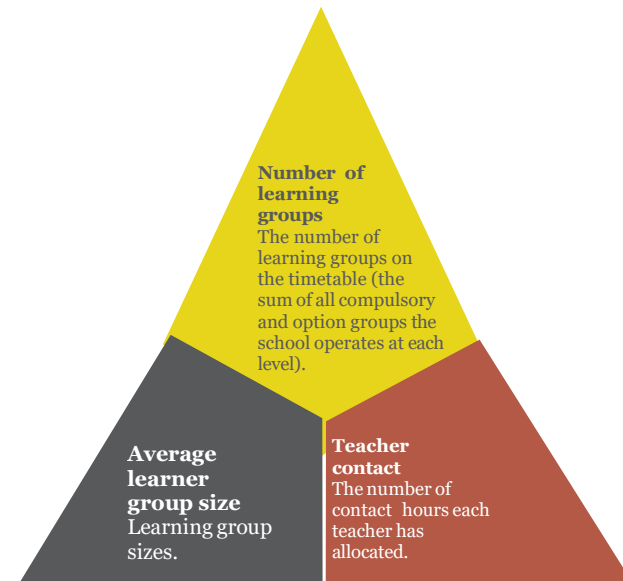
### Constraints on a timetable

A timetable is the balance between all the teacher time available to the school and the spread of available student programmes.

There may be other constraints such as the number of rooms available.

There are three interlinked factors in a timetable as illustrated below.

Timetable decisions in one area may affect many teachers because unless more staffing is added it is impossible to alter any corner of the triangle without changing at least one other.





For example, a new course at senior or junior level (extending the curriculum width) may produce a small learning group for one teacher and reduce the overall average learning group size at senior level but increase learning group sizes and/or reduce curriculum width elsewhere within the timetable and/or the contact load of some teachers.

## The framework for timetabling

### The National Education Guidelines (and NAGs)

- ☐ A balanced curriculum within the NZ Curriculum framework, programmes meet individual need, appropriate special needs support, students access nationally and internationally recognised qualifications, Māori education initiatives advanced.
- ☐ Policies promote high levels of staff performance, use educational resources effectively, recognise student needs, be a good employer and comply with collective agreements.
- ☐ Provide a safe physical environment for students and teachers. (Reinforced through Health and Safety in Employment legislation.)
- ☐ Comply with legislation requirements such as attendance, length of school day and school year.

### School staffing order in council (STOIC)

Based on the school's roll, the SOIC provides a number of full-time teacher equivalents (FTTEs) each year to the

school for its curriculum, administrative and pastoral needs. Schools may also employ extra teachers using the operations grant, locally raised funds or other sources.

### Collective agreements

The STCA provides parameters about hours of teachers' work and class size that are legal obligations.

### School goals and charter

The school will wish to reflect its goals through the timetable.

## A possible processes timeline

Term	Stage	Action
Term 1 (current year)	Policy setting or review	Establish/review policies. Review previous year's process. Make available to new teachers or board members.
Term 1-2	Subject scoping	Nominate potential new subjects, or alteration to or disestablishment of subjects, for following year. Assessment of proposals.
Term 3	Data dissemination and gathering	Advise students on option range. Indicate preferences back to school. Identify subject staffing needs Identify subjects teachers can take.
Term 3-4	Decision making Timetable construction Audit Adjustment	Make decisions about viable options, number of learning groups, etc. HODs make recommendations for allocation of staff. Construct preliminary timetable. Identify and resolve problems. Audit timetable for problems. Display timetable for checking. Adjust timetable.
Term 1 (next year)	Adjustment Policy review Adjustment	Adjust timetable. Display timetable for checking.

## Timetable policy development

Demands such as the student-centred NZ Curriculum, Trades Academy type programmes and the Vocation Pathways approach will continue to pose timetabling challenges for schools. Timetable policy development and review is about striking a balance, engaging all concerned and making change for the right reasons in the best way.

A timetable policy does not predetermine the form the timetable will finally take. Policies may underpin the traditional to highly flexible models. It is the questions asked in the consultation process, and the selection between the possible answers to those questions which determines this for each school.

Your school's timetabling policy consultation should establish a clear understanding about what are acceptable workloads for effective teaching and about how decisions around the timetable will impact on individual and collective workloads. The allocated and expected duties of a classroom teacher should be able to be completed within 1816 hours over the school year (an average of 40 hours per week).

Teaching-related workload is affected by the:

- ☐ Number of student-contact hours.
- ☐ Number of contact periods.
- ☐ Number of different courses taught.
- ☐ Average learning group size of individual teachers.
- ☐ Distribution of senior and junior learning groups.
- ☐ Distribution of more difficult learning groups

A good timetable optimises these factors and accommodates them against the needs of students.

### Consultation – a requirement of the STCA

The school must have a current timetabling policy developed in consultation with its teaching staff.

The consultation process may vary from school to school, but teacher input would normally be through the PPTA branch.

Any school/PPTA branch can initiate a policy review. A review can serve as a useful collaborative exercise in scrutinising how things are done here. Are we being fair and doing things for the right reasons? Can we improve how we do things?

### Who should be involved?

The timetable should not be the responsibility of one or two teachers working in isolation. While the process of

Basic to successful consultation is:

- transparency of process,
- open mindedness and
- full staff involvement in establishing the policy.

It will take time;

Genuine effort has to be made to accommodate the views of those being consulted;

Consultation is to be a reality, not a charade;

A good faith approach will guide the staff and employer towards agreed outcomes.

You will find a full legal definition of consultation in PPTA's *It's About Time 2023-25* toolkit.

creating a timetable involves technical skill, this should not prevent any teacher from being involved in decisions that underpin this process.

Schools can have major problems when timetabling expertise is concentrated in a few people who subsequently leave. Training new people each year in the processes of timetable development helps to spread the risk, the workload and the understanding of the processes and its limitations.

A timetable committee should incorporate those with the technical expertise in timetabling, as well as representatives from the departments, senior management team, the general teaching staff and the school health and safety or workload committees. Meetings of the committee should be open to all teachers.

There will be instances when circumstances necessitate compromise, and in these cases if all the information has been made available and people understand the issues, the fairest outcome to all concerned can be agreed.

The committee should operate openly and communicate with all teachers and the PPTA branch.

### **A model process**

The following steps should assist in situations where a school either has no timetabling policy – or it is undergoing a review.

#### *For PPTA members*

Branch officers should read *It's about time 2023-25* and make it accessible to all.

Draft policies are available from [www.ppta.org.nz](http://www.ppta.org.nz) as a starting point.

A branch meeting of the teaching staff should be held to:

- ☐ Have a timetable audit.
- ☐ Choose representatives to work on its behalf with the timetabling committee and/or principal on development of the policy and processes. (These representatives would refer back to the teachers regularly.)

#### *For the principal*

- ☐ Ensure authority is delegated to represent the board in the process.
- ☐ Arrange early meetings with teaching staff representatives to review existing timetable policy and determine what potential changes are identified to align the policy with entitlements.

#### *For the principal and teaching staff representatives*

- ☐ Propose and discuss mechanisms for situations where for genuine reasons a teacher may be asked to forego a non-contact period or the average class size limit is exceeded. This must include agreement on what constitutes “genuine reason”.
- ☐ Determine the nature of the process of consultation on other policy elements, the policy development timeline, and a process for resolving disputes or impasses.
- ☐ Develop the policy document by reviewing all aspects of the timetable until there is a consensus on each item.

- Complete the policy in time to feed into the timetable to be implemented in the next school year, or at the earliest point in the year if the school has a semester or modular system that changes during the year.

PPTA field officers are available to help if issues arise.

Successful policy development will give students the widest and best opportunities possible within the resources available to the school. Good timetable policies acknowledge teachers' professional concerns about how they and their expertise in their learning areas fit into the timetable and meet the contractual obligations placed upon the work of teachers.

### Some of PPTA's timetable-related policies

- Efficient and fair allocation of learning groups to teachers by whatever decision-making process the school uses.
- A reasonable upper limit for a fully registered base scale teacher is 550 student-contact hours, i.e. 22 learning groups of 25 students, per week. Most schools can aim for this goal within their staffing allocation
- Practical learning groups limited to no more than 20 students, or fewer if there are specific health and safety concerns associated with the activity or the plant.
- Learning groups and responsibilities should be allocated equitably amongst the teaching staff, having regard to levels of experience and job responsibilities to which units are attached, and to the age and family responsibilities of each teacher.
- Best practice education change management guidelines should be followed when changes are being considered that have impacts on the timetable.

## Quick checklist

My school ...

Indicate Y or N or NA

- has a current timetable policy developed in consultation with teaching staff.
  - has policy statements on class size.
  - has policy statements on non-teaching duties.
  - has no more than 20 hours contact time for full-time teachers.
  - has contact reduced by one hour per unit for the first three permanent units.
  - has all additional reductions in contact for SCTs, beginning teachers, Te Atakura, and HoDs with PRTs.
  - (a) has minimum non-contact time given to part-time teachers employed 18 hours per week or more. (2023-25)  
(b) provides prorated non-contact time for all part-time teachers (2025 onwards)
  - endeavours additional non-contact time for more than three permanent units.
- I have ...
- an average class size of 26 or less or have an agreed compensatory mechanism.
  - an agreed compensatory mechanism when, for genuine reasons, I agree to forgo some of my non-contact entitlement.
- I know ...
- I can decline to forgo my non-contact time entitlement.
  - what compensatory mechanisms are available.
  - of no full-time first-year teacher in my school who has more than 15 hours contact per week.

## Research & resources

### Research

#### *Class size*

- www.ppta.org.nz/index.php/-issues-in-education/ class-size

### Other timetable-related resources

#### *Non-contact time, average class size & timetable policies (About time)*

- www.ppta.org.nz/index.php/resources/publication-list/2162-about-time

#### *Change management toolkit*

- www.ppta.org.nz/index.php/resources/publication-list/2460-change-management

#### *Sample timetable policies*

- www.ppta.org.nz/index.php/resources/publication-list/2162-about-time

#### *Quality teaching*

- www.ppta.org.nz/index.php/resources/publication-list/2427-quality-teaching-report

## PPTA contacts

For further advice consult your nearest PPTA field office

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