

12 Scheduling ‘Sixth Forms’

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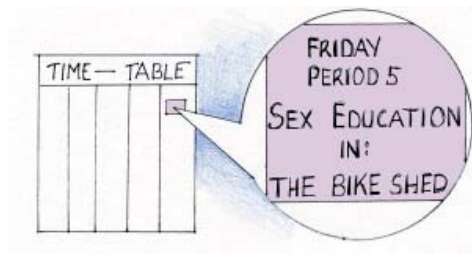
By a ‘Sixth Form’ we mean Years/Grades 12-13 (the older term of ‘Sixth Form’ is still often used).

Most of what has been discussed in previous chapters applies to the Sixth Form as well, but there are two main differences that affect our scheduling in Years 12 – 13.

- It is customary for Sixth Form students (aged 16–19) to have non-teaching (‘free’ or ‘study’) periods.
ie. they do not have a teacher for every period of the cycle, which gives some freedom and flexibility to the timetabler.
- It is customary for teaching-groups to have shared teaching (‘split classes’) by design. For example, the students have 5 periods of Maths: 3 periods with Mr Smith and 2 periods with Mrs Jones.
Although this may have arisen from the desire to give more teachers some Sixth Form experience, it is very helpful to the timetabler as it gives more flexibility. Timetabler software can take good advantage of this flexibility to give you more solutions.

It is often thought that schools with Sixth Forms are more difficult to schedule, but this is usually not true. There may be more data to handle than in an 11–16 school, but there is usually more flexibility as well.

Because of this misconception timetablers often feel that they must start by scheduling the Sixth Form, but often it is better to schedule Years 11 and 10 first — the main criterion is the size of the teacher-team, see section 11.10.



12.2 Curricular structures in the Sixth Form

	A	B	C	D	E
Year 13	Bio Lit Fre Phy	BSt ThSt Ma Mus	Che F Ma D&T Sp	Gg Ger Psy His	Art PE Re Soc

For larger Sixth Forms (>100 students) the common format is 4 or 5 blocks of subjects (eg. at AS or A2 level), from which the students choose up to 4 or 5 subjects to study.

For smaller Sixth Forms, see section 12.9.

These options blocks are heterogeneous (see section 3.3).

They are usually changed from year to year to accommodate the wishes of the particular population of students, and are usually designed using options software (see chapter 3 and the CD at the back of the book).

Each block typically occupies around 16–20% of the timetable cycle.

There may be an extra column for whole-year Games, or for Tutorials (PSHE).

12.3 Minority time

	A	B	C	D	E
Year 13	Bio Lit Fre Phy	BSt ThSt Ma Mus	Che F Ma D&T Sp	Art Gg Psy His	KeySkills: Maths KeySkills: English General Studies Maths units ASDAN Careers/PSHE

In this model the 'Minority' studies are all in one block, so as to be accessible to all students.

The timetabler will often use the last block's time to schedule subjects from the main blocks that otherwise won't fit (see section 12.10).

An alternative model, giving more flexibility is discussed in section 12.6.

In all these digrams it would be helpful to the timetabler if the blocks filled only 95% of the timetable cycle. The 5% spare would prove invaluable during the scheduling stage, and would get filled by lessons which were impossible to fit in the blocks because of other parts of the school. See also section 12.10.

12.4 Shared minority time

	A	B	C	D	E
Year 13	Bio Lit Fre Phy	BSt ThSt Ma Mus	Che FMa D&T Sp	Art Gg Psy His	Minority Subjects KeySkills: Maths KeySkills: English General Studies Maths units ASDAN Careers/PSHE
Year 12	Art Sp Ma Lit	Psy BSt FMa Bio	Gg Che Mus Fre	Phy ThSt D&T His	

In this model, block E is common to both years.

The other blocks may or may not be linked. ie. in some schools Block P must co-exist with Block A; Block Q with BlockB, etc., to give more choice to the students.

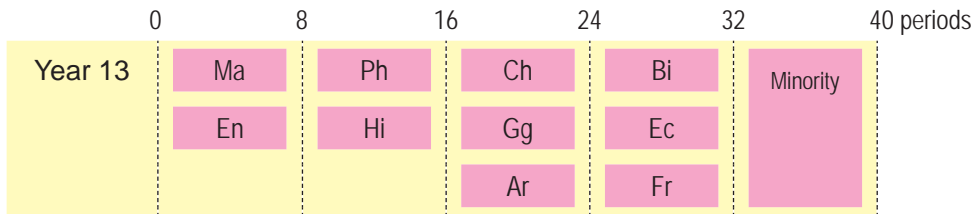
12.5 Courses spanning option blocks

	A	B	C	D	E
Year 12	Art Sp Ma Lit	Psy BSt FMa Bio	Gg Che Mus Fre	Phy ThSt D&T His	Minority Subjects KeySkills: Maths KeySkills: English General Studies Maths units ASDAN Careers/PSHE
	F BTEC course		G BTEC course		

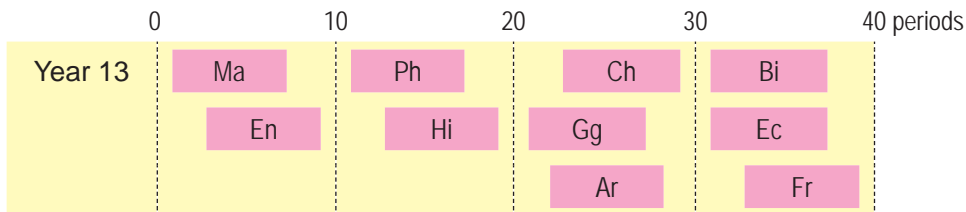
In this model the Block F for longer courses (eg. BTEC certificate) spans two (or more) AS/A2 blocks. In principle students could study F + C + D + E. Schools may also have IB (International Baccalaureate) blocks in parallel with the AS/A2 blocks.

12.6 The idea of 'spread'

Consider this simplified diagram, with the 'Minority' subjects kept in their own block:



In this school the 'Minority' subjects are given the same priority as the subjects in the main blocks, but this may not be an accurate reflection of the school's objectives. If, instead, the 'Minority' subjects are left until later in the scheduling process, to be fitted in where they can, then this allows the main blocks to **spread**, like this:

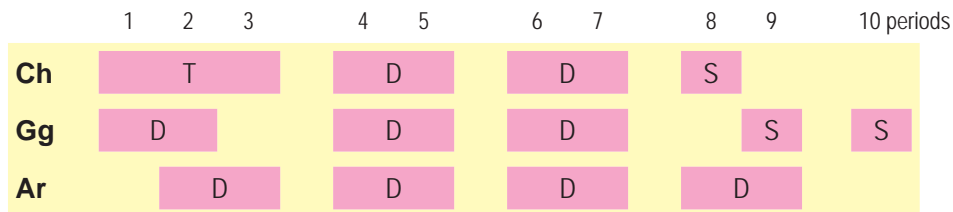


The 'minority' subjects will now be timetabled (later) into the gaps between the main blocks giving you more flexibility (but of course not all minority subjects will be available to all students, unless you duplicate subjects).

This policy allows the subjects in each block to spread over a greater number of periods (10 periods for each 8-period subject in the diagram).

This has two timetabling advantages:

- 1 It will be easier to fit this scheme against the Year 11 and Year 10 teacher teams (on average, fewer resources are needed in each period).
- 2 It allows subjects within the same block to have different period-breakdowns. In this example, if required, Ch could be scheduled as [a Triple + 2 Doubles + 1 Single], while Gg is scheduled as [3 Doubles + 2 Singles], while Art is scheduled as [4 Doubles], like this:



continued...

The chapter continues with:

- More on the topic of 'Spread' and how to use it effectively,
- Ways of aligning the blocks in the two parts of the sixth form, and with blocks in Years 11 and 10,
- Looking for more flexibility in the Sixth Form; the flexible day, the 'fifth hour'; shared teaching of subjects in blocks; how to use this flexibility,
- How to get extra flexibility into schools with small Sixth Forms; getting a greater degree of choice for the students,
- When something will not fit, what do I do?