

REVIEW OF EXTENSIONS AND LATE SUBMISSION OF STUDENT WORK UPDATE

The current Assessment Regulations permit local arrangements to be approved by Boards of Studies in relation to allowing programmes to accept late participation and extensions to student work. It was agreed by Education and Student Committee that this variation in practice should be reviewed and a policy and guidance be produced to ensure that students are treated equitably.

This paper outlines a policy proposal for extensions and late submission of work following the outcome of the Board of Studies and SU consultation.

Recommended Actions

Educational Quality Committee is asked to

- i) **Approve** the principles of the outline policy proposal
- ii) **Consider** the proposed process
- iii) **Note** the next steps

REVIEW OF EXTENSIONS AND LATE SUBMISSION OF STUDENT WORK

The current Assessment Regulations permit local arrangements to be approved by Boards of Studies in relation to allowing programmes to accept late participation and extensions to student work. In late 2017, it was agreed by Education and Student Committee that this variation in practice should be reviewed and a policy and guidance be produced to ensure that students are treated equitably¹.

Education and Student Committee noted that:

- There should be a standard policy on late participation and granting of extensions to make the process fairer and more transparent
- City should convey a message to students that submitting work on time is professional practice
- The current variable approach to granting extensions impacts on other processes, such as managing assessment and feedback turnaround times
- Some students may be benefitting from an unfair advantage by being granted longer to complete work

Consultations on extensions and late submission of student work were undertaken with Board of Studies and the Students' Union. Three broad themes emerged from these consultations:

1. There is a will to adopt more consistent, fair and transparent assessment submission procedures across the institution in order to enhance student satisfaction and progression on the condition that the new procedures preserve the message that submitting work on time is professional practice.
2. In order to avoid unmanageable workloads, a set of simple, institution-wide procedures is required to ensure speedy processing of requests.
3. Exemption provisions for programmes with agreed rationale must be included in the policy.

1. OUTLINE POLICY PROPOSAL

- Sending a clear message about the value of time management skills is of paramount importance and will determine whether the extensions policy is perceived as a success. This can be achieved by designing the policy which unequivocally disapproves all instances of unauthorised lateness.
- Reasonable constraints should be placed around the range of circumstances in which students are allowed to apply for extensions and strict time-limits should be adhered to. The eligibility criteria should include, but not be limited to those falling under the EC Policy. They can be expanded to incorporate all instances in which the student is able to demonstrate that an incident, which can be work, family, or transport-related caused them significant problems and will prevent them from meeting the deadline. Only requests with supporting evidence should be considered, however the types of evidence considered as acceptable should be less rigid than in the case of ECs and could include written statements from employers and personal tutors.
- The extra time allowed by the extensions policy should be carefully calibrated to give students an opportunity to finish their assignments if a minor incident causes disruption to their ongoing work prior to the deadline whilst discouraging any attempts to gain extra time and/or advantage over their peers. Limiting extension of deadlines to three days for coursework and

¹ Education and Student Committee November 2011 (paper 19b)

five days for dissertation would persuade students that extension is not intended to constitute an additional tool in their assessment planning toolkit but rather it is to be applied in very particular situations and therefore cannot be taken for granted. The proposed timescales would still enable the student to apply for ECs if their circumstances have had a detrimental impact on their ability to complete the assessment.

- The late submission penalty should deter students from missing their deadlines without making prior arrangements for an alternative due date. It should be considered as a last resort solution in situations in which students do not meet the criteria for an extension or ECs. It is not intended to award students more time for working on their assessments but rather to moderate the high-stakes nature of the zero tolerance policy which can result in students failing their courses due to missing deadlines by as little as just a couple of minutes.
- The proposed process would include a mechanism for professional services oversight (to triage requests and alert the personal tutor to concerns) and academic judgement to consider and approve or reject the request. The student should also be directed to sources of help and support at key points.
- Exemption provisions for programmes with agreed rationales would be considered.

Key points from the SU:

It is important to note that the SU have been strongly advocating for longer extension periods than those proposed above as well as for a sliding scale of penalties for late submission. The proposed approach for extensions would give students an alternative to the EC process and allow them to make informed choices based on their circumstances as to which route to take (including the possibility of applying for both extension and ECs simultaneously).

With regard to late submission, the SU endorse the implementation of a sliding scale of penalties whereby the final mark awarded to the student is reduced progressively for each day the work is late (for instance deduction of 5 marks per day for 5 days). The SU believe that a more stringent late submission policy would continue to hinder student progression and put City students at disadvantage when compared to their peers at other universities which apply more generous sliding scales to penalise late submission.

Key points from the BoS:

The feedback on late submission from Boards of Studies is less unanimous and it does not propose a specific mechanism for dealing with unauthorised lateness. It can however be inferred that the BoS are skewed towards replacing the zero tolerance policy with a more compassionate approach, one which does not lead to withdrawal for minor lateness on one hand but also does not dilute academic standards by condoning failure to submit on time on the other. The BoS give much consideration to the administrative burden and practicalities any set of penalties could give rise to. The sliding scale of late penalties is not recommended and deemed 'un-implementable' due to the heavy administrative and academic burden it could create on larger programmes with increased late marking and calculation of penalties.

2. PROPOSED PROCESS

During the consultations with stakeholders it was agreed that students should receive a prompt decision on their extension request so that there would still be time to submit an Extenuating Circumstance claim if appropriate or necessary. It was noted that requests and decisions should be monitored for oversight and so that personal tutors can be made aware, particularly where repeat requests are being made.

Stakeholders noted that

- decision by Panel can be resource intensive and would potentially delay a decision outcome being made and communicated to students
- to ensure that requests are being seen and processed by more than a single person, an alternative model would be for e.g. the Course Officer to log the request and pass it to a designated academic for consideration/approval (plus the personal tutor for oversight)
- the rationale for the approval or declination of the request should be recorded

Appendix 1 – illustrates a draft process diagram for submission and approval of extensions. Key points include the initial triage of requests, logging of requests, alerts to the personal tutor and the provision of a rationale for the decision. The timing of the decision would need to ensure that the student could still submit ECs if necessary.

3. NEXT STEPS

Further discussions with stakeholders will take place with regard to

- the decision making process
- the timescales for deadlines of submission requests, consideration of the requests and release of decisions
- the proposals for extra time for coursework (3 days) and dissertation (5 days) for successful requests
- the penalty to be imposed for unauthorised late submission (e.g. sliding scale or capped mark), and whether this should be applied for work that is e.g. 24 hours late or 48 hours

The policy and proposed process will be brought to the next meeting of Educational Quality Committee.

Appendix 1 - Example process diagram for submission and approval of extensions

- Key points:
- initial triage of requests
 - requests are logged and personal tutor alerted
 - rationale for decision provided
 - timing of decision still enables student to submit ECs if necessary

