



Late Penalties

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In 2016 the UWA Assessment Policy was revised, increasing the penalty for the late submission of assessments from 5% per day to 10% per day. Although a seemingly trivial change, this has been reported to have a negative impact on the student experience. We have received anecdotal support from both students and academics in reducing the penalty, and we believe that the policy should be changed back to a penalty of 5% per day to better support equity & diversity at UWA and promote positive student wellbeing.

The late penalty should return to 5% per day

10%, a harsh penalty

A 10% penalty means that student marks rapidly decrease with each day the assessment is late. This occurs so quickly that an assignment that would have been awarded a high distinction will be failed if submitted four days late. Although it is important that students submit their work in a timely manner, we believe that 10% per day is too harsh, and has negative impacts on student wellbeing and equity, as described below.

Student Wellbeing

Evolution of the student lifecycle has led the vast majority of students at UWA to lead crowded lives, balancing study, work, extracurricular, family and social commitments. 76.8% of students ages 18-25 find that these competing pressures have affected their mental health while studying at university (1). A big part of the stress of balancing study with other commitments completing assessment tasks on time, and to a high quality. As such, 79.5% of the cohort cite course workload and deadlines as having effected their mental health (1). The environment that the students of 2018 find themselves in is a highly stressful one, which is exacerbated at by the stress of losing a high proportion of an assessment mark to the late submission penalty.

Equity

Increased late penalties have the potential to disproportionately affect students from marginalised groups – chiefly Indigenous students, students with disabilities, LGBT+ students, and students from low-SES backgrounds. These students often face stressors that can make it difficult for students to consistently complete university work on time, meaning they often submit assessments late. Furthermore, some circumstances are not captured by the UWA Policy on Special Consideration, and as such, students cannot acquire special consideration. Without being granted special consideration, these students currently receive a large late penalty, further disadvantaging relative to their peers. Participation of these groups is not currently meeting targets set at UWA, only 9.5% of our students coming from low-SES backgrounds, and just 1.5% of our students identifying as Indigenous (2). It is our duty as a university to support the participation of these students in education at UWA in every way possible, whether it be through scholarships, or through a lower late penalty.

Risks

The main foreseeable risk of decreasing the late penalty is loss of incentive for students to submit assignments on time. Although a concern, we believe that a lower penalty still provides a similar incentive to submit work in a timely manner, but does not have such a profound impact on student equity and wellbeing.

References

1. Headspace, The National Union of Students. National Tertiary Student Wellbeing Survey. Melbourne, Victoria; 2016.
2. Sadler D. Vision 2030: Education and Student Experience (Green Paper). 2018.