

## UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

### Revised Unified Penalties Policies on Student Non-Attendance, Non-Participation in Group Work, Late Submission and Special Dispensations

#### Background

QSC of January 29 2008 considered a paper setting out concerns from a number of departments that the recently approved policy on penalties for the late submission of assessed work might be impeding departments in providing timely feedback to students on their work. The Sub-Committee accepted that the introduction of a 10-day limit had in some cases had the unintended consequence of slowing down the feedback given to students on their work.

The working group was reconvened to consider whether revisions to the existing policy were required. The group produced the following recommendations:

1. The Time limit for work submitted late in the absence of special circumstances should be reduced from 10 to 5 working days
2. The five percentage point scale for late submission grade reductions remains unaltered from current policy
3. Work submitted late in the absence of special circumstances should be awarded the penalised marks up until 5 days after the submission date, and awarded a mark of zero thereafter.
4. There should be an option of awarding zero for all late submissions in the absence of special circumstances for certain professionally accredited programmes.

Senate of 11 June 2008 approved these revisions and the updated guidance below reflects the outcome of the working groups recommendations. The policy covers:

- penalties for non attendance
- penalties for non-participation or less than full participation in group work
- penalties for late submission

A robust mechanism of **special dispensations** has also been developed to support the above penalties.

Other sources of information relevant to these precepts include:

- Guidance to departments on the use of unfair means in the assessment process
- Guidelines for the retention of assessed work
- Guidelines for the provision of information to students in student handbooks
- Notes on the preparation of examination papers (issued annually by the Exams office and available online at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/exams/>)
- General Regulations as to Student attendance at scheduled classes
- General Regulations as to Progress of Students
- General Regulations as to Academic Appeals
- General Regulations as to Examinations

## Policies

### 1. Non-Attendance

- a) Where attendance is deemed essential in the sense that the student's ability to practise in a profession would be compromised by less than full attendance, departments should draw up a list of units or sessions for which attendance is compulsory and monitor attendance. By way of programme regulations and departmental handbooks, students should be made aware of the compulsory nature of this attendance and that non-attendance will result in them being prevented from progressing between levels of their degree or from graduating until they had made good their attendance. Attendance may be made good in the current session, the subsequent one, or by the end of the degree programme as appropriate.
- b) Where attendance is deemed essential so as to allow participation in as well as observation of tasks in order to achieve learning outcomes, the assessment for the unit in question should include the assessment of a task which involves an actual or implicit test of participation. If a student does not achieve a pass in this part of the assessment then they will not be able to pass the unit as a whole.

### 2. Non-Participation or Less than Full Participation in Group Work

Students involved in group work for assessment should individually provide evidence of their participation via a reflective self-assessment of the work of the group and their contribution to it. This self-assessment should be completed individually and independently, but submitted together with the group work. The form which it might take could be varied according to the nature of the group work (e.g. diary, brief discursive report etc). The contribution of this self-assessment to the mark of an individual for group work will be governed by use of one of the following two alternatives.

- a) In cases where group work directly facilitates a specific learning outcome of a unit, the self-assessment could be allocated a proportion of the marks and each individual group member would be individually assessed for this portion.
- b) In cases where the experience of group work does not directly facilitate a specific learning outcome of a unit, the self-assessment would only contribute to the total mark if it indicated that an individual's score should be adjusted. Any adjustment would be at the discretion of the Examiner.

### 3. Late Submission

Late submission will result in a deduction of 5% of the total mark awarded for each working day<sup>1</sup> after the submission date.

Day late	Mark reduced by 5%	Mark Awarded When Reduced by 5%*	
		Original 60	Original 50
	Multiply by		
1	0.95	57	47.5
2	0.90	54	45
3	0.85	51	42.5
4	0.80	48	40
5	0.75	45	37.5

\* standard mathematical rounding rules should be applied and marks should be rounded up.

- (a) The 5 working day deadline for late submission is absolute and any work submitted after the 5 working day period without a special dispensation should receive zero.
- (b) This penalty system applies to all assignments submitted for assessment on all undergraduate units and all postgraduate programmes including the dissertation component. It also applies to non-modular course units where these still operate.
- (c) The only exceptions allowed under the late submission penalties regime, subject to Faculty approval, is a policy of zero tolerance (any late submission receiving a mark of zero) which may be applied to coursework and assessed work for which marks and feed-back are habitually provided either immediately or to a very short timescale and the schedule of work may be disrupted by the possibility of late submission. In addition, cases where the requirements of Professional and Statutory Bodies also necessitate a policy of zero tolerance would also be viewed as an exception to the above penalty system.
- (d) Departments are encouraged to manage their submission dates to prevent undue advantage from the imminence of non-working days (e.g. setting a submission date just before a weekend or Bank Holiday). Time management, workload scheduling and meeting deadlines are viewed as key transferable skills. Deadlines for assessment tasks should be communicated to students well ahead of the submission deadline, in order to enable students to exercise these skills and manage their workloads.
- (e) If late submission results in a fail then, wherever possible, the resit task should be different to the original assessment task to avoid resubmission of an unchanged assignment which had previously failed

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<sup>1</sup> Working days includes working days within standard vacation times. For example, if a submission date falls on the last day before the start of the Easter vacation, penalties would start to be applied from the following working day and not from the first day following the vacation.

through lateness. However, it is recognised that there will be cases where re-sitting a different task would not be possible or appropriate eg, placement or fieldwork assessment.

#### 4. Special Dispensations

- a) that special dispensations should cover medical problems, personal or medical problems arising from disability or specific learning difficulties, extreme personal and family problems, a force majeure and in the case of part-time students only, work-related problems;
- b) that an application for late submission should be made in advance of the normal submission date;
- c) that an application for a special dispensation for late submission should be made in writing;
- d) that an application for a special dispensation for late submission should be accompanied by medical evidence or other documentation where appropriate;
- e) that an application for a special dispensation for late submission should be made to a named academic member of staff at the level of module leader or above (a named alternate should be provided). It should not be made to a personal tutor or dissertation supervisor. Where a part-time student, attending in the evening for example, only has access to unit leaders, the application for a special dispensation should be made to the unit leader but subsequently countersigned by the Programme Director;
- f) that the named person to whom applications for dispensations are made should ensure that the Chair of the relevant Exam Board is fully aware of the decisions he or she has made and file the relevant documentation with the secretary of the Board;
- g) that the discretion allowed to the named person for the granting of special dispensations be limited to 10 working days, after which the sanction of the Department's Director of Teaching or Head of Department must be called upon;
- h) that due to extenuating circumstances which the student was unable to place, or for valid reasons did not place, before the Examinations or assignment submission date, the application should be lodged in advance of the relevant Exam Board.