Late Online Assignment Submissions and Appeals Procedure

The following message was emailed to Departmental Staff Supporting Anonymous Assignment Submission and Chairs of Boards of Examiners on 11 December 2014.

The E-Learning Development Team has received a few queries recently asking us to investigate the circumstances behind students making late online submissions of assessed work. In each case we were able to demonstrate that the student had provided misleading information as to when the assignment in question was submitted online. We would like to remind colleagues that University Regulation 5.7 d) vii identifies this behaviour as academic misconduct and you may wish to highlight this to your students before they consider making claims about technical issues when appealing against penalties imposed for late submissions.

Late online assignment submissions and appeals procedure

Electronic assignment submission systems can be set up to support precise deadlines for the submission of student work, and consequently there is less space for flexibility over submission deadlines, because the system has access to timing information relating to when a student has submitted an assignment. The rules that Departments use over late submission for paper-based formats should also apply to electronic submission; for example slow internet connectivity is analogous to routine traffic on the journey to handing in work. We are conscious that the number of investigative requests could escalate if students believe that they can use unproven technical issues to support appeals in relation to late submissions and we would value your support in ensuring that students are aware of academic misconduct issues when making false claims about technical issues.

The University's Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback 2014-15 (updated this year), outlines in section 23.3 Section C the circumstances that are never accepted for electronic submissions as part of a mitigating circumstances claim. These include "a claim of technical issues on behalf of the University with no proof of an error message/ system failure on either the VLE or the University network." As such, our approach to answering queries of this nature is as follows:

- The E-Learning Development Team will only respond to queries sent by a Department to mailto:vle-support@york.ac.uk. Please state the submission deadline when raising a query with us.

- The only information we will provide will be to clarify whether the VLE was available or not around the submission deadline.

- Further investigation, for example analysis of access logs and submitted files, will only be undertaken in response to requests made by the Department Examinations Officer or Department Mitigating Circumstances Committee in order to produce evidence for a formal Mitigating Circumstances claim by a student. In these cases we will need to know the student’s exam number, the VLE site name and ID (starting Y2014-) and name of the submission point.

Contingency plans

We encourage Departments to think about establishing a contingency arrangement that enables students who are having genuine difficulties to be able to submit their work and still meet the appointed deadline. Contingency arrangements might involve students submitting work electronically on campus, or might include an option for paper submission or email submission to a specific email address/administrator (not the academic marker as this would jeopardise anonymity). Please note the guidance around receipting of submissions as indicated in 4.10.3 of the University's Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback 2014-15.
Finally, we would like to remind Departments of the benefit of setting deadlines within office hours (9am - 5pm, Monday - Friday). During these times we can then provide immediate support to you if required and we will be able to reassure students if there are any network issues.

If you have any questions on the above, please feel free to contact us.

E-Learning Development Team - December 2014
Endorsed by Dr Steve King, Chair of the Standing Committee on Assessment