Melissa Hills, MACEWAN UNIVERSITY, Melissa.Hills@MacEwan.ca
Kim Peacock, NORQUEST COLLEGE, Kim.Peacock@NorQuest.ca

Replacing Power with Flexible Structure: Implementing Flexible Deadlines to Improve Student Learning Experiences

ABSTRACT

Traditional course deadline policies uphold the myth of the "normal" student, assuming students face few and equal barriers to completing work on time. In contrast, flexible deadline policies acknowledge that students face unequal barriers and seek to mitigate them. Flexible deadline policies maintain structure while transferring some decision-making power from the instructor into the hands of the student. These practices align with current pedagogical movements in higher education that seek to empower all students to meet learning goals. This study explores student perspectives on, and use of, proactive extensions built into a recent university course. We compare extension use in low-stake, high-stake, individual, and team assignments; observe how extension use changed over the term; and examine student self-reported responses about the policy. Students unanimously agreed that the proactive extension policy was valuable to their learning. They reported that the proactive extensions enabled them to improve the quality of their work and to better manage their academic workloads, acting as self-regulated learners. They also frequently described reduced stress as a benefit. Extensions generally appeared to be used as needed rather than encouraging procrastination. Students also identified that the need to request extensions in other courses was a barrier. The instructor of this course also benefitted from implementing this policy. Faculty should consider implementing flexible deadline policies to improve student learning experiences and to contribute to a more equitable and inclusive learning environment.

KEYWORDS

flexible deadlines, proactive extension, assessment, inclusion

INTRODUCTION

The word "deadline" emerged in the early 1860s in US Civil War prison camps to describe the line beyond which prisoners could not pass under penalty of being shot (Kinasevych 2015). It was not until the early 20th century that the word began to be used to describe "a date or time before which something must be done" (Merriam-Webster N.D., par. 2). The word's etymology reflects the full spectrum of how students and faculty in higher education may perceive deadlines: from strict deterrents to useful self-regulation tools. In addition to scheduling and workload considerations, instructors often use firm assignment deadlines out of a belief that they support student self-regulation and combat procrastination, impart the "real-world" skill of meeting a deadline, and ensure equal treatment for all students. However, while the consequences of missing a deadline are not a matter of life or death for students, inflexible deadlines can still create hardships.

In an article for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Boucher (2016) shares the opinion that clinging to our traditional, inflexible assignment deadline policies may be counterproductive to our interests as educators. She argues that "rigid policy…compounds students' stress at a time when they are already overwhelmed. It's tailor-made to produce the sort of behaviour that has frustrated professors for generations: shoddy work (submitted just to get something in), panicked cheating, or disappearing students (from the course, or worse, from the university altogether)" (8). Furthermore, some have questioned the relevance of strict deadlines in the "real world," pointing out that many deadlines can be rescheduled if the need arises (e.g., Warner 2019). Most instructors will grant extensions to students upon request (Hills, Overend, and Hildebrandt 2022); however, this approach assumes that a student feels comfortable in making the request and disclosing why they need it. This approach may also encourage some students to fabricate an excuse (Caron, Whitbourne, and Halgin 1992; Roig and Caso 2005). Educators should consider how the ability to meet rigid deadlines or to self-advocate for flexibility represents a greater barrier for some students than for others— "to be flexible is to begin by interrogating assumptions about who the learner is and what tools and capacities they have at their disposal" (Veletsianos and Houlden 2020, 852). Rather than framing flexible deadlines as accommodations for exceptional students or circumstances, they should be built into course structures as a flexible policy for all students.

We define flexible deadline policies as those that allow all students in a course some degree of freedom over when they submit an assignment, without consequences that could negatively impact the students' learning or grades. These policies should maintain enough structure to support student learning but relinquish enough power to respect students as capable, self-regulated learners. They must consider the limits of academic schedules and faculty workloads but move away from inflexible policies that prioritize control over learning. They should be transparent and equally accessible to all students and avoid requiring that students make requests and disclose personal and private information. Flexible deadline policies replace power with flexible structure, moving some decision-making authority away from the instructor and into the hands of the student. In shifting power from the instructor to the student, these practices allow us to better respect the diverse identities, experiences, and circumstances that students bring to their learning. These policies do not mean there are no deadlines at all or no consequences for poor quality work. In fact, they often mean that if a student receives a poor grade, it reflects their learning rather than their life circumstances. Flexible deadlines respond to pedagogical shifts in higher education that call for educators to re-examine practices and power structures and to create equitable and inclusive learning opportunities for all students.

The authors of this paper are a molecular biologist with more than 15 years of experience teaching at an undergraduate learner-focused institution in Alberta, Canada, and an educational developer with diverse experience working and teaching in the post-secondary environment. As able-bodied white settlers, we are largely insulated from the multiple and intersecting barriers some students face and have a shared interest in interrogating our teaching practices to advance inclusive learning for students. This manuscript reports data on how students used and perceived a flexible deadline policy in a recent university course. We explore the value of flexible deadlines in the context of student diversity and connect these practices to current pedagogical movements in higher education. We discuss how these policies can benefit students and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable learning environment in higher education.

FLEXIBLE DEADLINES: THE TIME HAS COME

Flexible deadlines have been used by some but are not the norm in post-secondary classrooms. The time has come for that to change. While there are few published studies on the use of flexible deadlines in post-secondary settings, the ones that have been published have all shown flexible deadlines to be potentially beneficial in some capacity (Kumar and Wideman 2014; Miller, Asarta, and Schmidt 2019; Nickels and Uddin 2003; Peterson and Digman 2018; Patton 2000; Schoeder, Makarenko, and Warren 2019; Wang 2011; Withington and Schroeder 2017).

Withington and Schroeder (2017) examined the effect of "rolling deadlines"— student chosen deadlines from a defined set of dates— on student pass rates in first-year English courses at an American community college (n=~400). They found that the courses with the increased deadline flexibility had a 12–22% increase in the class pass rate compared to the normal program pass rate.

Nickels and Uddin (2003) allowed their 2nd- to 4th-year engineering students (n=141) to use a two-day (defined as every day on which the class met), non-justified late bank for each course assignment, with a 10% penalty per day afterward. They found "broad acceptance of the policies, some perception of reduced stress due to inflexible deadlines, small if any reduction in the amount of learning in the first iteration of student work, and an increased amount of attention to the homework in total" (1).

Patton (2000) looked at the records of 400 post-secondary students in an open learning program at Curtin University of Technology in Australia. He identified three types of graders: inflexible graders, who only accepted medical certificates or other serious circumstances as grounds for an extension, penalized late submissions, and did not accept late assignments; semi-flexible graders who gave extensions more easily and were less likely to penalize late submissions; and flexible graders who granted extensions for any reason, did not penalize late submissions, and helped students plan their work better for next time. He found that flexible grading resulted in higher course completion rates and that 60–90% of students who had missed coursework completed the work shortly after the end of term when given the opportunity. Similarly, Wang (2011) examined the effects of three deadline conditions (instructor-set, flexible-instructor-set, and self-imposed) on 173 undergraduate students in three different courses. They found no significant differences in perceived learning and course satisfaction among the three groups but observed that students in the flexible-instructor-set deadline group had the best academic performance.

Kumar and Wideman (2014) studied 35 students enrolled in a face-to-face health sciences course at a Canadian university. The course applied several Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, including a flexible deadline where students were allowed to choose their due date for their course presentation. They found that 88% of students felt that the choice of presentation date positively impacted their learning, and the increased flexibility improved both student perceptions of stress and overall student success.

Peterson and Digman (2018) compared students in a section with rigid deadlines against students in a semi self-paced (SSP) course where students could submit assignments any time up until exam dates, which were fixed to promote self-regulation. While students in the SSP section preferred the flexible deadlines, they found that students in the rigid deadline section "did not express a strong preference for having flexible deadlines" (7). There was also no agreement among students whether flexible deadlines led to procrastination, though learning management system data showed that students in the SSP group did not keep pace with course materials as much as their counterparts in the rigid

deadline group. The SSP group also had twice as many missing assignments as the rigid section. Peterson and Digman concluded that their students did not prefer flexible deadlines over rigid ones but instead simply preferred whatever format they were exposed to. Similarly, Miller, Asarta, and Schmidt (2019) compared students who were given rigid deadlines to students who were allowed to submit assignments up until exam dates. Students in the flexible deadline group performed better on assignments and exams, but the authors could not determine if the flexible deadlines were responsible for the performance differences. However, they did find that students in the rigid deadline group had a small but statistically significant decrease in participation.

Finally, Schroeder, Makarenko, and Warren (2019) examined students in an online Canadian graduate program. They looked at 78 graduate students across five different courses who could use a late bank of up to five days on one out of two assignments without self-disclosure or penalty. They analysed several variables and found that students felt the late bank was very useful (4.59/5, SD=0.25), that 45% of students felt the extra time improved their assignment quality, and that 62% of the students viewed the instructor more positively because of it. They also found that despite no significant difference (p=.03) between late bank users and non-users on the Perceptions of Academic Stress scale, both groups self-reported reduced stress because of the late bank (97% and 89%, respectively).

Taken together, this research suggests that flexible deadlines may increase student pass rates (Patton 2000; Withington and Schroeder 2017), improve participation (Miller, Asarta, and Schmidt 2019) improve student achievement (Kumar and Wideman 2014; Miller, Asarta, and Schmidt 2019; Wang 2011) reduce student perceptions of stress (Kumar and Wideman 2014; Nickels and Uddin 2003; Schroeder, Makarenko, and Warren 2019), increase student attention to work (Nickels and Uddin 2003), and improve assignment quality and student perception of the instructor (Schroeder, Makarenko, and Warren 2019). It is important to point out that flexible deadlines in these studies did not mean "no deadlines," or a lack of consequences for not handing work in. In addition to these studies, several recent opinion pieces have been published on the need for faculty to re-think their deadline policies (Boucher 2016; Buckman 2021; Schisler 2019; Thomas 2019; Weimer 2018; Wyre 2019), especially in light of the challenges that post-secondary students have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic (Flaherty 2020).

FLEXIBLE DEADLINE PRACTICES SUPPORT DIVERSE STUDENTS

Many instructors establish classroom policies based on what they perceive appropriate for a "normal" student. As described by Gaudry and Lorenz (2019), "The university has normalized the experience of students who are white, cismale, heterosexual, middle-to-upper class, lacking dis/abilities, and without children. If a student deviates from these categories, they are more likely to experience oppressive obstructions in the completion of their degree" (167). As Gorham and Roberts (2014) assert, "[T]he homogenous class made up of students of similar abilities, backgrounds, ethnicities, interests, learning styles, languages, and expectations is long gone—if it ever existed" (¶ 10). For example, while a "normal" student may experience few barriers to getting coursework done on time, it is important to design courses with the understanding that many students in higher education do not share this reality. In describing some examples of students below, we acknowledge the intersectional nature of these identities and the limitations of representing diversity in this way (Gillborn 2015). Despite these limitations, it is important to highlight some specific examples to challenge the "myth of the normal student" in considering the potential benefits of flexible deadline policies and flexible learning

environments more broadly. As stated by Ramohai (2019), "Transformation and diversity cannot be divorced from each other when considering change processes and practices in institutions of higher learning" (2). Although the statistics provided below focus primarily on the Canadian context, the disproportionate barriers faced by some students in higher education are well known to be international in scope (e.g., Dolmage 2017; EUA 2021).

Disability

Flexible due dates or extensions are identified as an appropriate accommodation for various different disabilities in "Principles and Practice of College Health" (Vaughn and Viera, 2021, Ch. 24). The most recent first-year student survey from the Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC) (2019) found that 24% of first-year university students in Canada self-identify as having a disability. However, it is difficult to gauge the accuracy of that number, as not all post-secondary students with disabilities are diagnosed, and students who are diagnosed do not always self-disclose their disabilities or access the accommodations they are entitled to. For example, in a national longitudinal study in the United States (n=3,190), Newman and Madaus found that only 35% of post-secondary students who received special education services in secondary school disclosed their disability to their college (2015), citing concerns about stigma and discrimination as their main reasons for not disclosing (2015). At our own university, only 6–7% of students use disability accommodation services (A. Parrish Craig, email to author, April 3, 2020), which, if the CUSC survey is accurate, may mean that 15–20% of our students with disabilities are progressing through their post-secondary education with no accommodations. The social model of disability contends that barriers to education come "not from the student with the disability but from a learning environment that is exclusive in its design and delivery" (Kumar and Wideman 2014, 129). Flexible deadlines remove a potential learning barrier for at least some disabled students and building this flexibility into course structure is essential when we consider that many disabilities are undiagnosed, that disabled students do not always access the accommodations they are entitled to, and that mixed attitudes towards deadline flexibility as an appropriate accommodation remain in higher education.

Neurodiversity

Neurodiverse students may also benefit from some flexibility in deadlines. For example, individuals with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can experience executive function and self-regulation challenges, making it more challenging to organize and plan (Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada 2017). This creates difficulty in completing tasks and managing deadlines (Jansen et al. 2017; Fleming and McMahon 2012). Many individuals with ADHD benefit from deadlines to combat procrastination and support time management (Jansen et al. 2017). However, allowing some flexibility can help avoid missing deadlines (Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada N.D.). This flexibility may also alleviate the stress that some individuals with ADHD experience when they fear missing a deadline (Jansen et al. 2017). It is difficult to determine the exact number of post-secondary students impacted by ADHD. A recent survey of Canadian first-year university students (n=18,092) found that 3% of all first-year students self-reported having been diagnosed with ADHD (CUSC 2019). According to the Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada (2017), 5% of all Canadian students (K to post-secondary) have been diagnosed with ADHD. The most recent national college health assessment (American College Health Association, 2019) indicated that 7.9% of Canadian students reported being diagnosed

or treated for ADHD in the past year. While relying on self-reported diagnosis numbers is problematic, so is relying on diagnosed levels for ADHD (Green and Rabiner 2012; Nugent and Smart 2014). For example, ADHD is particularly underdiagnosed and undertreated in women and girls (Quinn and Madhoo 2014). Furthermore, while self-reported levels of a clinically diagnosed ADHD range from 2% to 8% among post-secondary students in North America (Nugent and Smart 2014), one study of US college students (n=1,080) that measured clinical ADHD symptoms found that 12% of their sample had clinically significant ADHD symptoms, but that only 2% had received a formal clinical diagnosis (Garnier-Dykstra et al. 2010). This study implies that many post-secondary students likely suffer from clinically significant ADHD symptoms and may benefit from flexible deadlines.

Mental health

Post-secondary students are also increasingly experiencing mental health challenges that may contribute to struggles with meeting deadlines. Condra et al. (2015) provide a detailed discussion of the challenges students with mental health disabilities experience in accessing accommodations, including obtaining a diagnosis, and describe adhering to deadlines as a common challenge for these students. Furthermore, mental health struggles that do not meet the criteria of a diagnosable disability can also impact student learning. The most recent national college health assessment (American College Health Association 2019) found that Canadian college students (n=55,284) reported that the top health factors that directly impacted their academic performance were stress (41.9%), anxiety (34.6%), sleep difficulties (29.0%), and depression (24.2%). That same study found that at least once in the prior 12 months, 88.2% of students felt overwhelmed by all that they had to do, 87.6% felt exhausted (not from physical activity), 68.9% felt overwhelming anxiety, 63.6% felt that things were hopeless, and 51.6% felt so depressed that it was difficult to function (American College Health Association 2019). The self-regulation and mental health issues that emerged for students throughout the COVID-19 pandemic have only exacerbated these issues (Canadian Alliance of Student Associations 2020; Rashid and Di Genova 2020). Even if we were to accept the myth of the "normal" student, these findings indicate that it is highly likely that even most "normal" students are currently struggling with mental health and self-regulation issues. Therefore, some flexibility around deadlines may increase the likelihood that these students experience reduced stress, complete classwork, and are supported in meeting course learning goals.

Additional and overlapping barriers

Many students face additional and sometimes unpredictable barriers to their academic success, such as illness, trauma, poverty, caregiving responsibilities, and more. Every experienced post-secondary educator is likely to have supported students in navigating these types of challenges, including through the provision of assignment extensions. Students who have competing responsibilities such as work, children, and family responsibilities often struggle with academic expectations (Brownson et al. 2016; Moore and Greenland 2017; Xuereb 2014). These barriers may escalate as tuition costs increase and students experience increasing financial hardships and face more significant pressure to work while they attend school (see Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, and Hernandez 2017). Flexible deadline policies provide equitable opportunities to complete work when "life happens" without the potential discomfort or shame of having to request an extension.

It is also important to consider that racialized and Indigenous students may disproportionately experience these barriers, potentially contributing to known educational gaps (National Disability Institute 2019; Ottman 2017). If we consider Indigenous students in Canada as one example, nearly 30% of non-Indigenous Canadians aged 25–64 have university degrees compared to 11% of Indigenous people (Statistics Canada 2016). Indigenous students also experience more barriers to their success in post-secondary systems (Chichekian and Bragoli-Barzan 2021). Challenges Indigenous students identify with the transition to post-secondary have included expectations about assignments, adequate preparation time, completing tasks within given time constraints, and balancing academic expectations with life responsibilities (Chichekian and Bragoli-Barzan 2021). There is a specific responsibility to improve access to education for Indigenous students in Canada— one of the many calls to action from the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* (2015). Equitable and inclusive deadline practices connect to the need for more flexibility for those most impacted by systemic learning barriers in post-secondary.

Flexible deadlines and student success

Students in higher education vary in their identities and circumstances and can benefit from structured flexibility. This need for flexibility goes beyond deadlines. Instructors must create flexible learning environments that include, empower, and encourage all students. Higher education is enriched by different experiences, skills, and ways of knowing. The "myth of the normal student" undermines the fundamental mission of academia and is a disservice to a society that needs diversity and creativity to explore and address increasingly complex challenges. Flexible deadlines are one approach to creating more accessible and equitable learning opportunities for diverse students. As stated by Boucher (2016), "Strict deadlines only serve to reproduce the inequalities of access and inclusion that universities are trying so hard to correct" (par. 6). Assessment is a considerable source of stress for students, particularly towards the middle and end of term when multiple assessments may be due (Pitt et al. 2018). Flexible learning environments can improve student learning experiences and pass rates (Patton 2000). When Hall (2010) asked full-time students engaged in part-time work what could be done to address work-study balance problems, the most common response was more flexibility around assignment deadlines. When courses include flexible deadlines, students increase their sense of control, which leads to reduced stress (Whitman, Spendlove, and Clark 1986).

FLEXIBLE DEADLINE PRACTICES RESPOND TO PEDAGOGICAL SHIFTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

While we have discussed student diversity, it is also essential to discuss flexible deadlines from a relational perspective. Simply put, traditional approaches to deadlines center power in the hands of the instructor. The instructor sets the deadline, and students must conform or face the consequences. Exceptions, if any, must be requested and often justified by the student while the instructor decides whether and how to enact leniency. In a discussion of how well-intentioned course policies might look to students, Weimer (2018) reflects, "I wonder, though, if students see the need for and value of our policies, or if from their perspective policies look more like power moves teachers make to control (or try to control) students" (4). In recent years, the rise of critical pedagogy and many of its associated movements, practices, and philosophies have led educators to more critically evaluate the pedagogies and policies within their courses in the name of problematizing existing structures and beliefs (Freire

1970), employing restorative justice techniques, and interrogating, identifying, and deconstructing colonial structures in their courses.

Restorative justice

Restorative justice education focuses on what educators can do to "create educational cultures that emphasize social engagement rather than social control…relationships rather than rules, people rather than policies" (Morrison 2010, as cited in Evans and Vaandering 2016, 24). Evans and Vaandering go on to clarify that "[t]his does not imply that rules, policies, evaluation, telling, and success are irrelevant; it simply means that these serve the needs of people living within the community, not the other way around" (24). In the same way, we are not "anti-deadline" but rather assert that assignment deadlines should serve the needs of both students and instructors and be enacted in a way that supports student engagement with their assignments rather than instructor control. Flexibility around deadlines serves the needs of students by allowing them more flexibility to both complete an assignment and improve their work— both essential for learning engagement. Conversely, unnecessarily rigid deadlines prioritize instructor power and control over student learning. In speaking to the need to question the efficacy of traditional classroom management, Withington and Schroeder (2017) attest to the positive impact of "rethinking the student not as an object to be managed but as a person to be encouraged and guided" (3).

Anti-colonialism

Another important movement emerging in post-secondary classrooms are efforts to interrogate, identify, and deconstruct colonial structures in the classroom. According to Styres (2019), this involves "challenging taken-for-granted assumptions embedded in the hidden curriculum within classroom practices…[and] colonial relations of power and privilege that are systematically embedded in academia" (32). With traditional deadline practices, power resides with the instructor, and students must comply. The practice of setting hard deadlines and granting extensions upon request generally forces students to disclose private and sometimes sensitive information to determine if they have an "acceptable reason," as judged by the instructor. This is another form of "hidden curriculum" that privileges students with the knowledge, ability, and confidence to make such requests. There are many things that post-secondary instructors can do to explore eliminating colonial structures in their courses. Franklin-Phipps (2020) encourages instructors to begin by "critically considering several of the choices that constitute your course. You might consider the syllabus, course policies, your approach to students, your planned activities, how you grade, and how you diverge and/or align with your discipline" (par. 7). Reconsidering how long-standing course policies, such as those around deadlines, perpetuate colonial relations of power and privilege in educators' relationships with students is relevant to eliminating colonial structures in our courses.

Universal Design for Learning

Finally, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a movement that began in K–12 and is gaining momentum in higher education (CAST 2018; Rose et al. 2006; Rose and Meyer 2002). The goal of UDL is to proactively design learning experiences so all learners can be successful in meeting learning goals (CAST 2018). This approach recognizes that students have a wide variety of experiences, exist in different contexts, and differ in how they best learn and best demonstrate their learning. The authors of

this paper have long been implementing and advocating for flexible deadlines as part of an equitable and inclusive course design strategy within the UDL framework. Even though deadlines are not explicitly mentioned within the UDL framework (https://udlguidelines.cast.org/), they are important when considering several areas of the framework, including self-regulation and motivation (9.1), executive function and goal setting (6.1), and planning and strategy development (6.2). Flexible deadlines were also identified by Kumar and Wideman (2014) as a UDL practice in connection to "multiple means of expression" where choice was built into all course assessments, including the ability for students to choose due dates. Instructors and instructional designers should consider adding flexible deadlines to their UDL toolkit.

Between the broad acceptance that there is no such thing as a "normal" student, particularly amid a global pandemic, and shifts in thinking related to critical pedagogy, restorative justice, anti-colonialism, and UDL, it is time for instructors to take a critical look at their assignment deadline policies and procedures. With the previous findings and calls to action in mind, we gathered data to examine the use of proactive extensions by students and their perceptions of the usefulness and impact of a flexible deadline policy.

METHODS

Course description

Course data was collected from a third-year undergraduate biology course from January to April 2021 (~12 weeks) at a mid-sized undergraduate university in Western Canada. The course was offered in an online, primarily asynchronous modality during this term due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 43 students completed the course, all of whom were enrolled in the bachelor of science program. Course assessment included three low-stake individual assignments (written assignments based on assigned readings, graded as complete/incomplete, worth 3.33% each), four low-stake team assignments (written reflections on a guided team discussion, graded with feedback on content and writing, worth 5% each), and one high-stake individual assignment (an essay worth 20%). Students developed their understanding of course material and writing skills through low-stake assessments (30%). The knowledge and skills were then applied to the high-stake essay (20%). Additional course assessments made up the other 50% of the course grade and included three tests, a learning reflection, and a team contract. Teams were established at the start of the term and remained the same throughout the term. All assignments were submitted via the online learning management system.

Proactive extension description

Extensions are described as "proactive" because they were built into the course assessment structure in advance and were available to all students. Every assignment in the course had a specified deadline (date and time) and an extension (generally one week). Students could use extensions for as many assignments as they wished, and there was no penalty for using them. Students were not required to make a request, self-disclose the reasons for the extension, or notify the instructor that they were using an extension. The deadlines and extensions were clearly described in the course syllabus and in a separate document on the online learning platform called "Assessment Guide" (see Appendix A). Additionally, an explanation was given in writing and in a captioned lecture video as part of the course introduction. The length of the extensions was selected to ensure students would still receive formative

feedback before completing their following assessment, and so the final grade deadline set by the university could be met.

Student survey and extension use data

All students that completed the course (n=43) were emailed with consent information and a link to the survey in May of 2021, with two weeks to complete the survey. The survey was deployed using Google Forms and included 12 questions (see Appendix B). There were six multiple choice style questions, five open answer questions, and one Likert question with six prompts. Demographic data were not collected. A total of 18 (42%) students responded to the survey. Responses to open-ended questions were coded and analysed in MAXQDA. In addition to this survey data, we gathered data on student use of extensions from the learning management system for all 43 students.

Research ethics approval

Both authors have TCPS2 certification as required in Canada for researchers using human participants. Research Ethics Board Certification was obtained from the institution where this research took place.

RESULTS

Extension use for low-stake vs. high-stake assessments

In total, there was one high-stake assessment and seven low-stake assessments. A total of 41 students (95%) used an extension for their high-stake assessment. When examining the low-stake assessments together, 15 students (35%) never used an extension, and 17 students (40%) used an extension only once (Figure 1). Of the remaining students, 7 (14%) used two or three extensions, and 5 (12%) used extensions for four or five assessments. No student used an extension for more than five of the seven low-stake assessments.

Figure 1. Repeated extension use by students for low-stake assessments (team and individual)
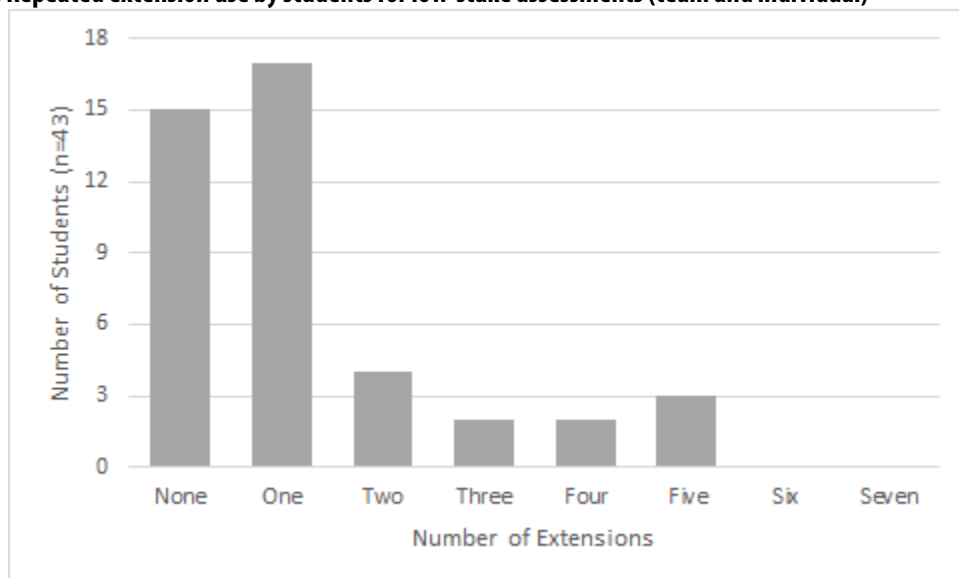
Extension use for individual vs. team low-stake assessments

There were four team-based low-stake assessments and three individual ones. Despite the availability of proactive extensions, the large majority of students handed in each assessment on time (Table 1). Overall, extensions were more commonly used for team assessments, with 26 students (60%, or 7 of the 12 teams) using at least one extension for a team assignment during the term, compared to 13 students (30%) using at least one extension for an individual low-stake assignment.

Table 1. Frequency of extension use by students for different assessment types

Assessment	Number of students using extension
Low-stake Individual	First assessment–3 (16%) Second assessment–7 (16%) Third assessment–12 (28%)
Low-stake Team	First assessment– 0 Second assessment–10 (23%, 3/12 teams) Third assessment–7 (16%, 2/12 teams) Fourth assessment–15 (35%, 4/12 teams)
High-stake Individual	41 (95%)

Extension use for low-stake assessments based on time in the term

Students did not use extensions in the first quarter of the term (Figure 2), and extension use increased during the term, peaking in the fourth quarter.

Figure 2. Frequency of extension use for low-stake assessments over the term
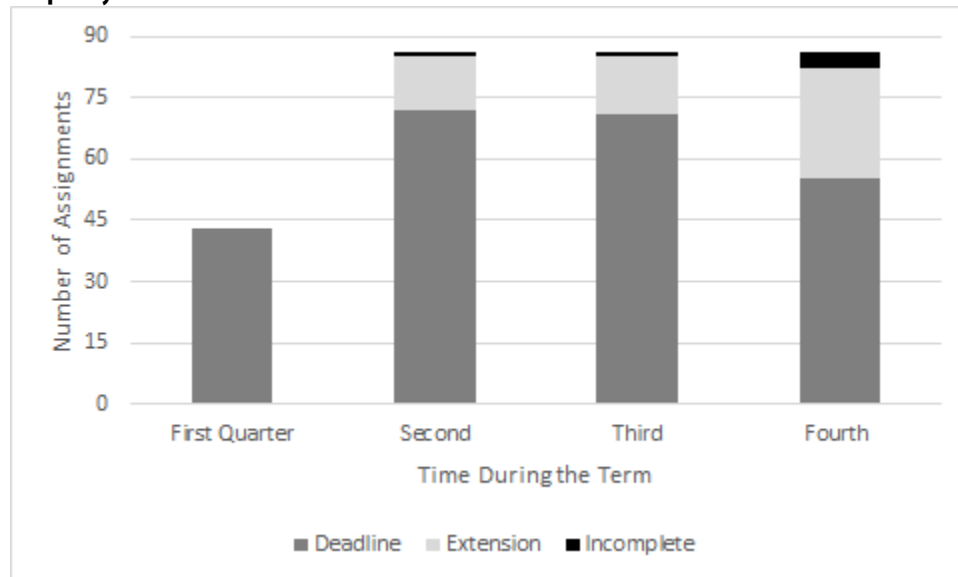
Student survey

Survey respondents (n=18) unanimously (100%) agreed that proactive extensions were useful in this course and that they would like to have access to them in their other courses. The majority of

student feedback focused on three key benefits; (1) their ability to hand in better quality work (83% of respondents), (2) their ability to better manage their time in connection to other academic responsibilities (78%), and (3) benefits related to reduced stress and mental health (72%). For example, Student 1 said, "I would have finished it by the initial due date but I don't think I would have done as well on it," while Student 14 responded, "With the workload I had from other classes, having some lenience on the due date of this large assignment definitely helped me organise and structure my course load." Student 18 described how "assignment and exam workloads are very stressful and knowing about the automatic no question asked extensions at the beginning of the semester allows the student to plan their work schedule more efficiently and less stressful [sic]."

While less frequent, students also discussed the benefits of being able to balance course work with personal/non-academic responsibilities (33%). For example, Student 5 commented: "Set-in-stone due dates can become overwhelming if unexpected events occur. Balancing multiple courses, part time work, personal life, and mental health, can be uncertain and difficult." While many (see above) students spoke about improved work quality, few (17%) spoke directly about improved learning. For example, Student 6 stated: "I absorbed more information from the assignments." For the team assignments specifically, students (46%) also described how the availability of an extension facilitated meeting planning with the group: "It allows team members to arrange a time that works for everyone to contribute to complete the work" (Student 18). Every student responded positively about the ability to access an extension for their team assessments. Interestingly, no student reported using the flexible deadlines in this course specifically to deal with an unexpected event such as an illness or personal issues, except one person who mentioned a team-mate having a family emergency.

Finally, we asked students: "Was there a time in your university experience where you needed an extension but were not comfortable asking for one? If yes, please explain." The large majority of students who responded said yes (88%). Of these students, most (57%) directly identified the professor as a barrier, sometimes connected to previous negative experiences. Connected to professors as a barrier, some students (29%) explained that they believed their reason for needing an extension was not good enough to ask. For example, Student 5 said, "I've had more than one professor that was unapproachable, and if asking for an extension on an assignment would cross my mind, I would rather struggle." Student 3 stated, "I feel uncomfortable asking for extensions because I feel like it's an unspoken taboo in higher education." Student 6 explained, "I was struggling with my mental health and dealing with my personal life on top of school and work, but I always felt it wasn't a good enough reason to ask for an extension, so I just never did."

DISCUSSION
Use of extensions
We observed differences in extension use for different assessment types and at different times during the term. With seven low-stake assignments and 43 students, there were 301 opportunities for students to use an extension on a low-stake assignment. The fact that only 54 out of 301 extension opportunities (18%) were used suggests that students were more often than not using them as needed, rather than handing things in later because they could. In other words, increasing deadline flexibility does not necessarily encourage procrastination or result in the deadline "free-for-all" that some of our colleagues have expressed concern about. In addition, colleagues have expressed concern about students treating available extensions as the "new deadline" and making further requests. Our data show this was

not a problem in this course for low-stakes assessments, and no additional requests for extensions were made. We did carefully communicate deadline reminders and encouraged students to meet deadlines where possible. In contrast to what we observed with low-stake assessments, almost all students (41, 95%) used the extension for their high-stake essay. This result may suggest that this assessment needs to be better scaffolded to support students with more timely completion of this essay. Given that students reported the primary benefit of flexible deadlines as being able to hand in better quality work, it is unsurprising that we would observe greater use of the extension for an assignment that required more time and effort and was, individually, worth more of their grade. Extensions were used more often for team assessments than for individual ones. As completing team assignments was dependent on the availability of 3–4 group members, it makes sense that extensions might be used more often for team-based assignments. Post-secondary students also express complex attitudes towards group work, and it would have been interesting to ask our participants if flexible deadlines impacted their attitudes towards completing team-based assignments. This question may warrant examination in future research. Students used extensions more frequently as the term progressed, which likely reflects a response to the increased academic workload over time. Pitt et al. (2018) found that students more frequently reported stress related to multiple assessment deadlines towards the middle and end of the semester. The high-stake essay was also due in the fourth quarter, which may have compounded student workload stress. As many courses use a combination of low- and high-stake assessments, the differences in student behaviour observed for different assessment types are worth considering in designing a course with flexible deadlines.

Student feedback

Student feedback about the value of the flexible deadline policy in this class was similarly positive to previously published work. Students who responded to our survey unanimously agreed that the flexibility around deadlines was useful and that they would like to see this approach in other courses. Similarly, Schroeder, Makarenko, and Warren (2019) found that providing access to a one-time extension of up to five days increased positive attitudes toward their instructor. As described by these authors, this metric is connected to student satisfaction, learning, and behaviour and is a relevant consideration in a system where student evaluations of instructors remain a common tool for evaluating teaching. Students in this course most frequently identified their ability to hand in better quality work as the most important benefit of the available extensions. Likewise, when Nickels and Uddin (2003) allowed students to have two extra days on assignments as needed, students reported that they spent more time on their work and learned more. Boucher (2016) also anecdotally reported higher quality work from students in response to providing a two-day grace period for assessments. These observations suggest that flexible deadlines do not lower educational standards; rather they may enable students to complete assessments to a higher quality and learn more.

The second most frequently mentioned benefit of extensions by students in this class was the ability to better manage their time in connection to other academic responsibilities. This was also observed in other studies (Nickels and Uddin 2003; Pitt et al. 2018; Schroeder, Makarenko, and Warren 2019). The ability to better manage multiple assessments may also support more students in completing assigned work. For example, Walsh (2019) found that a short grace period of one day led to an increase in the amount of work turned in by high school students. In our course, completion rates for assignments were high, with only 2% (7/344) of assignments not handed in. Furthermore, the reduction

in stress that students commonly described in this class in connection to the flexible deadlines has also been observed by others (e.g., Pitt et al. 2018; Schroeder, Makarenko, and Warren 2019).

Finally, it is interesting to note that Schroder, Makarenko, and Warren (2019) found that unexpected situations were the second most often cited reason for using a late bank among their graduate student participants, while none of our participants mentioned that reason for using an extension. This may have been because undergraduate students experience different life pressures than graduate students or because our research occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic when all our students were attending classes from home and could more easily manage unexpected situations like illness or lack of child-care.

In addition to positive student feedback, as the course instructor, I (author 1) also realised benefits from using this proactive extension approach. First, I appreciated that this spread out my grading somewhat while maintaining sufficient predictability about when assignments would be handed in. The bulk of the assignments would come in on the deadline (and I would grade them promptly), then a small set would come in the following week. The extensions I implemented still allowed me to return work to students in time for all students to receive formative feedback ahead of completing their following assessment. Additionally, I did not have any students contact me for extensions, which is not typical of my experience teaching with more rigid deadline practices. The respite from negotiating student requests for extensions was beneficial in terms of my time, the emotional labour of responding to student self-disclosures, and the arrangement of appropriate accommodations. This was of particular value at the height of the pandemic, where I, like my colleagues and students, was navigating the stress of increased academic workload alongside personal challenges.

Extensions are often seen as exceptional accommodations for students experiencing unexpected challenges. Importantly, student feedback in this study confirmed that having to request an extension from an instructor was a barrier, emphasizing the importance of building flexible deadline policies into the course structure. In this course, student feedback suggested that the built-in flexibility empowered them to make decisions about how to prioritize their academic work, balance deadlines, and manage their time, ultimately reducing their stress. This reflects the self-regulation and metacognitive skills known to be hallmarks of successful learning (Dent and Koenka 2016). As described by Wolters and Brady (2021), "Time management is a significant self-regulatory process through which students actively manage when and for how long they engage in the activities deemed necessary for reaching their academic goals." Placing more decision-making power into the hands of students in this course gave them more opportunities to develop these self-regulation tools while maintaining enough structure to avoid procrastination and sequencing their learning experiences and assessments appropriately to meet course learning outcomes.

IMPLEMENTING FLEXIBLE DEADLINES

The best flexible deadline policy or approach for you and your students will depend on factors including the course assessment structure, class size, maturity of students, and other considerations. This flexibility must respect your own workload—in trying to do better for our students we cannot neglect our well-being. In this third-year course, a one-week proactive extension was effective. A different instructor in a different course might be able to accommodate even more flexibility with assessments, for example, by allowing assignments to be submitted at any time up until the last day of class. Some courses or specific assessments may be better served by shorter 24- or 48-hour proactive extensions. Shorter

proactive extensions may also work better for larger scaffolded assignments or assignments where there are academic integrity concerns related to returning work to some students while waiting for work from others to be turned in. This may also be helpful where consistency in grading is a concern. If having a proactive extension for every assessment is not feasible, you may wish to grant all students one or two automatic, no-questions-asked extensions that they can use as needed. In some courses, dropping the lowest grade, including a 0 from a missed assessment, from a set of similar formative assessments may provide the flexibility students need. If an "extension-by-request" approach is used, communicating a transparent policy in advance that explicitly states that a "reason" is not required may mitigate issues with this approach. The goal of implementing flexible deadline policies is to find a policy that works for you and your students, that is transparent and accessible to all students, and that allows all students some flexibility without negative consequences. As is the case with implementing any new practice, some trial and error may be needed. While there may be challenges to finding a policy that works well for your course context, the benefits of flexible deadlines to students are likely worth the effort.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There were clear limitations to our study. The sample size was small, consisting of a single third-year biology course with 43 students. While course data on extension use came from all 43 students, only 18 responded to the survey. Furthermore, students self-selected to participate in the survey and self-reported their perceptions. Future investigations should expand the number and types of classes included and consider factors such as discipline, year of study, class size, and assessment type. Comparisons of different approaches to flexible deadlines across classes would also be valuable. Additionally, student demographic data should be collected, as well as information on their extra-academic responsibilities (work, children, etc.) to determine whether flexible deadlines are more valuable or used more often based on student identity and circumstances. Faculty perspectives should also be explored alongside student perspectives. Interviews and focus groups would provide a more in-depth exploration of faculty and student experiences.

CONCLUSION

We challenge instructors to interrogate how their current course management practices may prioritize instructor power over student learning and exacerbate existing inequities. The need for flexible deadline policies that maintain enough structure to support students with self-regulated learning and relinquish enough power to be equitable and inclusive is past due. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of flexibility in higher education. The data we present shows that students used flexible deadlines primarily to more successfully manage their time, balance their academic responsibilities, and complete their work to a better quality. The flexible deadline policy did not result in an assignment "free-for-all," the instructor's grading workflow was not disrupted, and students received formative feedback to improve on subsequent assignments. Students who needed more structure were provided with the structure of the initial deadlines, and students who needed more flexibility were given the opportunity to take it as needed. Students communicated that they perceived the need to request extensions from instructors in other courses as a barrier and agreed that broader implementation of flexible deadline policies built into the structure of courses would be valuable. Beyond flexible deadlines, flexible classroom management policies, flexible assessment design, and flexible curriculum, is a need to consider "radical flexibility as a way to create life-sustaining education, not just for some, but for all, and

not just for now, but far into the future" (Veletsianos and Houlden 2020, 849). As instructors, we should consider practices to replace the traditional power structures in our courses with structured flexibility to create equitable and inclusive learning experiences for all students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY
Melissa Hills is an associate professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at MacEwan University (CAN). She uses the scholarship of teaching and learning as a means to interrogate her teaching practices and advocate for inclusive learning in higher education.

Kim Peacock is currently an instructional designer at NorQuest College (CAN) with extensive experience as an instructor and educational developer. She is passionate about working with instructors to create the best possible learning experiences for all students.

REFERENCES
American College Health Association. 2019. *National College Health Assessment, Canadian Reference Group: Executive Summary.* Spring. https://www.cacuss.ca/files/Research/NCHA-II%20SPRING%202019%20CANADIAN%20REFERENCE%20GROUP%20EXECUTIVE%20SUMMARY.pdf.

Boucher, Ellen. 2016. "It's Time to Ditch our Deadlines." *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* August 22, 2016. https://www.chronicle.com/article/its-time-to-ditch-our-deadlines/.

Brownson, Chris, David J. Drum, Martin A. Swanbrow-Becker, Andrea Saathoff, and Elizabeth Hentschel. 2016. "Distress and Suicidality in Higher Education: Implications for Population-Oriented Prevention Paradigms." *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy (*30): 98–113. https://doi.org/10.1080/87568225.2016.1140978.

Buckman, Siobhan. 2021. "Due Dates and the Value of Student Ownership." *Edutopia*, April 15, 2021. https://www.edutopia.org/article/due-dates-and-value-student-ownership.

Caron, Mark D., Susan Krauss Whitbourne, and Richard P. Halgin. 1992. "Fraudulent Excuse Making Among College Students." *Teaching of Psychology* 19 (2): 90–93. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15328023top1902_6.

CAST. 2018. *Universal Design for Learning Guidelines – Frequently Asked Questions.* Accessed November 4, 2021. https://udlguidelines.cast.org/more/frequently-asked-questions.

Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. 2020. *Students Are Still Worried: COVID-19 and Postsecondary Education*, June 15, 2020. https://www.casa-acae.com/students_are_still_worried_covid19.

Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC). 2019. *CUSC-CCREU 2019 Survey of First Year Students Master Report*, June 2019. https://cusc-ccreu.ca/wordpress/?page_id=32&lang=en.

Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada (CADDAC). N.D. *ADHD Symptoms, Impairments and Accommodations in the Post-Secondary Environment.* https://caddac.ca/wp-content/uploads/Post-secondary-accommodation-Chart.with-check-boxes-1.pdf.

Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada (CADDAC). 2017. *Inequitable Access to Education for Canadian Students with ADHD.* https://caddac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Education-Policy-Paper-FINAL.pdf.

Chichekian, Tanya, and Lea Bragoli-Barzan. 2021. "Challenges Encountered by Indigenous Youth in Postsecondary Education." *McGill Journal of Education* 55 (2): 463–85. https://doi.org/10.7202/1077977ar.

Condra, Mike, Mira Dineen, Sarah Gauthier, Helen Gills, Anita Jack-Davies, and Eleanor Condra. 2015. "Academic Accommodations for Postsecondary Students with Mental Health Disabilities in Ontario, Canada: A Review of the Literature and Reflections on Emerging Issues". *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* 28 (3): 277–91. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1083849.pdf.

Dent, Amy L., and Alison C. Koenka. 2016. "The Relation Between Self-Regulated Learning and Academic Achievement Across Childhood and Adolescence: A Meta-Analysis." *Educational Psychology Review* 28: 425–74. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-015-9320-8.

Dolmage, Jay. 2017. "Academic Ableism: Disability and Higher Education." University of Michigan Press. https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9708722.

European University Association (EUA). 2021. *Learning and Teaching Paper #12: Approaches in Learning and Teaching to Promoting Equity and Inclusion.* https://www.eua.eu/resources/publications/959:approaches-in-learning-and-teaching-to-promoting-equity-and-inclusion.html.

Evans, Katherine, and Dorothy Vaandering. 2016. *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering Responsibility, Healing, and Hope in Schools.* New York, NY: Good Books.

Flaherty, Colleen. 2020. "Grading for a Pandemic: How Lenient, or Not, Should Professors be With Students Right Now?" *Inside Higher Ed*, April 23, 2020. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/23/how-lenient-or-not-should-professors-be-students-right-now.

Fleming, Andrew P., and Robert J. McMahon 2012. "Developmental Context and Treatment Principles for ADHD Among College Students." *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* 15: 303–29. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-012-0121-z.

Franklin-Phipps, Asilia. 2020. "Decolonizing Pedagogy." *Teach @ CUNY Summer Institute.* https://tcuny2020.commons.gc.cuny.edu/decolonizing-pedagogy/.

Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group. https://www.academia.edu/download/55681555/FreirePedagogyoftheOppressed.pdf.

Garnier-Dykstra, Laura M., Gillian M. Pinchevsky, Kimberly M. Caldeira, Kathryn B. Vincent, and Amelia M. Arria. 2010. "Self-Reported Adult Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Symptoms Among College Students." *Journal of American College Health* 59 (2): 133–36. https://dx.doi.org/10.1080%2F07448481.2010.483718.

Gaudry, Adam, and Danielle E. Lorenz. 2019. "Decolonization for the Masses?" In *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education,* eds. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, 157–74. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429505010.

Gillborn, David. 2015. "Intersectionality, Critical Race Theory, and the Primacy of Racism: Race, Class, Gender, and Disability in Education." *Qualitative Inquiry* 21(3): 277–87. https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1077800414557827.

Goldrick-Rab, Sarah, Jed Richardson, and Anthony Hernandez. 2017. "Hungry and Homeless in College: Results from a National Study of Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education." *Wisconsin HOPE Lab,* March 2017. http://hdl.handle.net/10919/83028.

Gorham, Jody, and Barbara Roberts. 2014. "You Need to Know About Universal Design for Learning." *University Affairs: In My Opinion*, August 6, 2014. https://www.universityaffairs.ca/opinion/in-my-opinion/you-need-to-know-about-universal-design-for-learning/.

Green, Andrea L., and David L. Rabiner. 2012. "What Do We Really Know About ADHD in College Students?" *Neurotherapeutics* 9 (3): 559–68. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3441934/.

Hall, Ralph. 2010. "The Work-Study Relationship: Experiences of Full-Time University Students Undertaking Part-Time Employment." *Journal of Education and Work* 23: 439–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2010.515969.

Hills, Melissa, Alissa Overend, and Shawn Hildebrandt. 2022. "Faculty Perspectives on UDL: Exploring Bridges and Barriers for Broader Adoption in Higher Education." *Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 13 (1). https://doi.org/10.5206/cjsotlrcacea.2022.1.13588.

Jansen, Dorien, Katja Petry, Eva Ceulemans, Saskia van der Ooord, Ilse Noens, and Dieter Baeyens. 2017. "Functioning and Participation Problems of Students with ADHD in Higher Education: Which Reasonable Accommodations are Effective?" *European Journal of Special Needs Education,* 32 (1): 35–53. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2016.1254965.

Kinasevych, Orest. 2015. "The Origin of 'Dead-Lines'." January 3, 2015. *Orest's Cogitarium.* https://kinasevych.ca/2015/01/03/origin-of-dead-lines/.

Kumar, Kari L., and Maureen Wideman. 2014. "Accessible by Design: Applying UDL Principles in a First Year Undergraduate Course." *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 44 (1): 125–47. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1028772.pdf.

Merriam-Webster. N.D. *Word History: Your Deadline Won't Kill You. Or Will It?* Accessed November 3, 2021. https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/your-deadline-wont-kill-you.

Miller, Laurie A., Carlos J. Asarta, and James R. Schmidt. "Completion Deadlines, Adaptive Learning Assignments, and Student Performance." *Journal of Education for Business* 94 (3): 185–94. https://doi.org/10.1080/08832323.2018.1507988.

Moore, Catherine, and Steven Greenland. 2017. "Employment-Driven Online Student Attrition and the Assessment Policy Divide: An Australian Open-Access Higher Education Perspective." *Journal of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning* 21: 52–62. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1148193.pdf.

National Disability Institute. 2019. *Financial Inequality: Disability, Race and Poverty in America.* https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/disability-race-poverty-in-america.pdf.

Newman, Lynn A., and Joseph W. Madaus. 2015. "An Analysis of Factors Related to Receipt of Accommodations and Services by Postsecondary Students with Disabilities." *Remedial and Special Education* 36: 208–19. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0741932515572912.

Nickels, Kevin, and Mahbub Uddin. 2003. "The Impact on Student Learning of Resubmission of Work and Flexible Deadlines." *Proceedings of the 2003 ASEE Gulf-Southwest Annual Conference, Arlington, Texas.* http://www.cs.trinity.edu/~knickels/pubs/NicUdd-aseegsw03.pdf.

Nugent, Kevin, and Wallace Smart. 2014. "Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in Postsecondary Students." *Neuropsychiatric Diseases and Treatment* 10: 1781–91. https://doi.org/10.2147/NDT.S64136.

Ottman, Jacqueline. 2017. "Canada's Indigenous Peoples' Access to Post-Secondary Education: The Spirit of the 'New Buffalo'." in *Indigenous Pathways, Transitions and Participation in Higher Education,* eds. Jack Frawley, Steve Larkin, and James Smith, 95–117. Singapore: Springer. https://dx.doi.org./10.1007/978-981-10-4062-7_7.

Peterson, Joel, and Matthew Francis Digman. 2018. "A Comparison of Learning Outcomes and Learner Satisfaction in a CADD Course with Flexible and Rigid Deadlines." *Proceedings of the 2018 ASEE Annual Conference and Exposition, Salt Lake City, Utah.* http://dx.doi.org/10.18260/1-2--29664.

Patton, Mark A. 2000. "The Importance of Being Flexible with Assignment Deadlines." *Higher Education in Europe* 25 (3): 417–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/713669270.

Pitt, Adele, Florin Oprescu, Geraldine Tapia, and Marlon Gray. 2018. "An Exploratory Study of Students' Weekly Stress Levels and Sources of Stress During the Semester." *Active Learning in Higher Education* 19 (1): 61–75. https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1469787417731194.

Quinn, Patricia, and Manisha Madhoo. 2014. "A Review of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in Women and Girls: Uncovering This Hidden Diagnosis." *The Primary Care Companion for CNS Disorders* 16 (3). https://dx.doi.org/10.4088/PCC.13r01596.

Ramohai, Juliet. 2019. "A Black Woman's Perspective on Understanding Transformation and Diversity in South African Higher Education." *Transformation in Higher Education* 54 (4). https://doi.org/10.4102/the.v4i0.58.

Rashid, Tayyab, and Lina Di Genova. 2020. "Campus Mental Health in Times of COVID-19 Pandemic: Data-Informed Challenges and Opportunities." *Canadian Association of College and University Student Services.* https://campusmentalhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Campus-MH-in-Times-of-COVID-19_Rashid_Di-Genova_Final.pdf.

Roig, Miguel, and Marissa Caso. 2005. "Lying and Cheating: Fraudulent Excuse Making, Cheating, and Plagiarism." *The Journal of Psychology* 139 (6): 485–94. https://doi.org/10.3200/JRLP.139.6.485-494.

Rose, David H., Wendy S. Harbour, Catherine Johnston, Samantha G. Daley, and Linda Abarbanell. 2006. "Universal Design for Learning in Postsecondary Education: Reflections on Principles and their Application." *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* 19: 135–51. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ844630.pdf.

Rose, David H., and Anne Meyer. 2002. "Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age: Universal Design for Learning." *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.* https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED466086.

Schisler, Laura. 2019. "A Headache-Free Late Work Policy." *Faculty Focus*, September 23, 2019. https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/late-work-policy/.

Schroeder, Meadow, Erica Makarenko, and Karly Warren. 2019. "Introducing a Late Bank in Online Graduate Courses: The Response of Students." *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 10 (2). https://doi.org/10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2019.2.8200.

Statistics Canada. 2016. Tables 98-400-X2016262. Accessed November 3, 2021. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/98-400-X2016262.

Styres, Sandra. 2019. "Literacies of Land: Decolonizing Narratives, Storying, and Literature." In *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education,* eds. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Ying, 24–37. New York: Rutledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429505010.

Thomas, Brenda. 2019. "Rethinking Deadline and Late Penalty Policies… Again." *Faculty Focus,* https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/rethinking-deadline-and-late-penalty-policies-again/.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action." https://nctr.ca/records/reports/.

Vaughn, John A., and Anthony J. Viera (Eds.). 2021. *Principles and Practice of College Health*. Switzerland: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-56309-7.

Veletsianos, George, and Shandell Houlden. 2020. "Radical Flexibility and Relationality as Responses to Education in Times of Crisis." *Postdigital Science and Education* 2: 849–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787417731194.

Walsh, Melony L. 2019. "Flexible Deadlines and Their Effect on the Turn in Rate of Assignments in a High School Chemistry Class." [Master's Thesis, Montana State University]. https://scholarworks.montana.edu/xmlui/handle/1/15706.

Wang, Pin. 2011. "Effects of Deadline Conditions on Learners of Different Procrastination Tendencies in an Online Course." [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Central Florida]. https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd/6640/.

Warner, John. 2019. "Deadlines in the 'Real World'." *Inside Higher Ed,* October 7, 2019. https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/just-visiting/deadlines-real-world.

Weimer, Maryellen. 2018. "Examining Our Course Policies." *Faculty Focus,* January 24, 2018. https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/educational-assessment/examining-course-policies/.

Whitman, Neil A., David C. Spendlove, and Claire H. Clark. 1986. "Increasing Students' Learning: A Faculty Guide to Reducing Stress Among Students." *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Research Report No. 4*. Washington, DC: Association for the Study of Higher Education. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED274264.

Withington, Keri, and Heather L. Schroeder. 2017. "Rolling with the Semester: An Assignment Deadline System for Improving Student Outcomes and Regaining Control of the Workflow." *Journal of Student Success and Retention* 4 (1): 1–31. http://www.jossr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Rolling-with-the-semester-Final.pdf.

Wolters, Charlotte A., and Anna C. Brady. 2021. "College Students' Time Management: A Self-Regulated Learning Perspective." *Educational Psychology Review* 33: 1319–51. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-020-09519-z.

Wyre, Steve. 2019. "An Argument for Accepting Late Work." *Faculty Focus,* August 21, 2019. https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/late-work-penalty/.

Xuereb, Sharon. 2014. "Why Students Consider Terminating Their Studies and What Convinces Them to Stay." *Active Learning in Higher Education* 15 (2): 145–56. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787414527395.

APPENDIX A: ASSESSMENT GUIDE

Posted prior to the start of term on the online learning platform. These policies are also captured in the Course Syllabus and were discussed in the introduction to the course.

The policies on deferrals/incompletes/extensions described for each assessment below were designed to be transparent and equitable. In other words, all students know what the policies are in advance, and these policies apply equally to all students. The flexibility I have built into this course acknowledges that students may encounter unexpected challenges during the term such as an illness, loss of a family member, an accident, a mistake that led them to miss an assessment, and so forth. Because this is built into the course structure students do not need to make a request, or disclose personal information, to use an extension. You do not need to inform me that you are using an extension.

The assessment structure is a combination of "you do the work you get the marks" type assessments that provide you with practice and feedback for the higher stake and more challenging assessments. Be aware that Topic Tests and the Written Critique, in particular, have been designed to fall under the latter category.

Assessment	Value	Deferred/Incomplete/Extension policies All extensions are no questions asked and no penalty. No further extensions will be granted.
Team Contract Professionalism and Integrity Activity	%	Teams may have a one-week extension.
Learning reflection	%	Students may have a one-week extension.
Reading guides (3)	0%	Students may have an extension up to the last scheduled day of class. However, it is recommended these are completed ahead of the corresponding topic test.
Topic Tests (3)	5%	Tests will not be rescheduled. A missed test will result in a 0. However, all students will have the lowest of their three grades dropped and their grade will be an average of the remaining two. Therefore, if a student receives a 0 this grade will be dropped. A second 0 will stand.
Team discussions and reflections (4)	0%	Teams may have a one-week extension.
News Article Critique Thesis statement and article choice (1%) ---------------- News Article Critique including ALL resources (20%)	1%	If the thesis statement and article choice is not handed in on time the 1% will be allocated to the Critique. ---------------------------- Students may have a one-week extension for the News Article Critique.

Team Contract and Team Professionalism and Integrity Activity (3%)
Objective: To ensure all students have a clear plan of how to organize team-work and have agreed on the expectations they have of each other and the consequences for a team member failing to meet these agreed upon expectations. In addition, the Professionalism and Integrity Activity is designed to ensure that all students understand the importance of integrity and professionalism in this course context.

Description Both of these activities can be found on Blackboard. They will be graded as complete/incomplete.
The due date for these two activities is DATE

Assigned Reading Guides - Individual Assessment (Three in total; 10%)
Objective: Topics B-D have assigned readings selected to add depth to course topics to enrich student learning. Test questions will be based on the reading guide.

Description: The assigned reading guides are posted on blackboard. They consist of a small number of short answer questions about the assigned reading. They are not intended to be difficult and there is no minimum or maximum length for responses. These will be graded as complete/incomplete. Feedback will not be given so it is your responsibility to read carefully and respond to the questions thoroughly.

Academic integrity: These are individual assessments. There is to be no collaboration under any circumstances. As should always be the case, students should paraphrase material from the reading. If you are unable to adequately paraphrase you should use direct quotes. You do not need to cite as it is already clear where the information is coming from.
The due dates for reading guides are as follows:
- Assigned Reading Guide B   DATE
- Assigned Reading Guide C   DATE
- Assigned Reading Guide D   DATE

Team Discussions and Reflections (Four in total; 20%)
Objective: To engage in meaningful and respectful discussions about course material with peers. It is an opportunity to consider different perspectives and reflect on how issues involving 'real people' and 'real scenarios' connect to the theoretical material learned in class. In addition, these assignments allow you to practice writing and receive feedback that should be applied to subsequent reflections and to your News Article Critique.

Description: A reading package and discussion guide will be provided for each assignment. Teams will engage in a guided discussion and the written reflection will summarize that discussion succinctly, clearly, effectively, and using correct paragraph structure. Student teams should schedule one hour for their discussion, as well as plan time to collaboratively write the reflection. Refer to the work-plan you laid out in your team contract.

Academic integrity: Collaboration is permitted within the group only. Course learning materials may be used. Resources beyond course materials are not required, but if used must be cited. Course material

does not need to be cited but if you are using exact quotes from a source ensure you use quotation marks.

There will be four team reflections due during the term. The dates are as follows:
- Reflection A   DATE
- Reflection B   DATE
- Reflection C   DATE
- Reflection D   DATE

Tests - Individual Assessment (Three in total; 45%)
Objective: The objective of tests is to demonstrate your comprehension of course material. This includes the course notes/videos, assigned reading guides, and the material covered in the team reflections. Essentially all course material may be assessed. The goal of these tests is to determine if you have a strong understanding of the topics we have covered and could speak with authority using specific detail and examples.

Description: Tests are 15 multiple choice (select one correct answer) and multiple answer (select all correct answers) questions and 2-3 short answer questions. Multiple answer questions may have one correct response, two, three, or all the responses may be correct. There are no part marks on multiple answer questions meaning you must get it completely correct to get a mark. They are released at the start of scheduled class time. You must start the test within the first half-hour of scheduled course time. Once you start you will have 60 minutes to complete the quiz. You get only one attempt. (*Note that when this course is run face to face tests are exclusively short answer and essay style questions, this format was used during the pandemic when the course moved online temporarily*)

Academic Integrity: Collaboration is not permitted under any circumstances. There is no rule against accessing course materials, however, students who rely on looking answers up in the course material will run out of time. You should prepare as you do for a closed book face-to-face exam. Resources other than course materials are not permitted.

Tests dates are as follows:
- Test 1 (Topics A+B)   DATE
- Test 2 (Topics C+D)   DATE
- Test 3 (Topics A, B, C, D)   DATE

News Article Critique - Individual Assessment (22%)
Description: This critique is an evidence-based detailed analysis and assessment of a newspaper article that communicates a biotechnology/genetics related topic to the general public. You will critique a news article (provided to you) for accuracy, thoroughness, and objectivity. This critique will take into consideration the target audience for the article (the general public). A strong selection of appropriate resources, primarily peer-reviewed journal articles, will be used to effectively support your critique. This critique will be presented in a basic 5 paragraph essay format (Introduction, Accuracy, Thoroughness,

Objectivity, Conclusion) and be communicated in a scientific writing style that is formal, direct, factual, clear, and concise.

Academic Integrity: This is an independent assignment and absolutely no collaboration is permitted. This assignment is heavily dependent upon meticulous citing and referencing of appropriate resources. I strongly advise against providing peer feedback on a class-mates critique where they are assessing the same news article as it may lead you to reproduce their ideas in your own critique which is an academic integrity violation. Instead, consider getting feedback from a student completing their critique on a different article.

Due dates:
- Students should email me stating their choice of news article and their thesis statement by DATE
- The written critique including a zipped folder with PDFs of all references titled as explained in the guidelines is due by DATE

Learning Reflection - Individual Assessment (2%)
Objective: Reflecting on your thinking and learning (metacognition) has been shown to be beneficial to student learning. This reflection will be completed part way through the term to encourage students to think about their learning, and to flag any concerns they have with their professor.

Description: The reflection should be 350-500 words in total. Students should specifically discuss the following five things in order to receive a grade of "complete"
1. Their test performance, how they prepared, what is working for them and/or what they will do differently for the remainder of the term, if anything
2. Their progress towards completing their critique
3. Their assignment performance, how their teamwork is going, what is working for them and/or what they will do differently for the remainder of the term, if anything
4. Whether they have participated in office hours, why or why not, and if yes whether they found it helpful (if not why and what could be done to address this)
5. Strategies they will be using for the remainder of the term to meet their academic goals in this class

Academic Integrity: This is an independent assignment and collaboration is not permitted.
The deadline for the assessment is as follows
      Learning Reflection   DATE

Final Grade Negotiations
While I am willing to correct grading errors, I do not negotiate grade changes with students and will not respond to requests to do so.

APPENDIX B: STUDENT SURVEY

All assignments in your recent course COURSE TITLE AND DATE had no-questions-asked extensions available that were described in advance in the Course Outline and Assessment Guide. This included the Assigned Reading Guides, Team Reflections, and the News Article Critique.

1. Did you ever use an extension for an Assigned Reading Guide?
A. Yes (go to question 2)
B. No (go to question 4)

2. If you had not had an automatic no-questions-asked extension for the assigned reading guide would you have:
A. Asked your professor if you could hand it in late
B. Hand it in late without requesting an extension
C. Handed it in on time according to the initial deadline
D. Not handed it in at all

3. Was having the automatic no-questions-asked extension available to you for the Assigned Reading Guide useful? Please provide a brief explanation for why or why not.

4. Did you ever use an extension for a Team Reflection?
A. Yes (go to question 5)
B. No (go to question 7)

5. If you had not had an automatic no-questions asked extension for the Team Reflection would you have:
A. Asked your professor if you could hand it in late
B. Hand it in late without requesting an extension
C. Handed it in on time according to the initial deadline
D. Not handed it in at all

6. Was having the automatic no-questions asked extension available to you for the Team Reflection useful? Please provide a brief explanation for why or why not.

7. Did you use an extension for your News Article Critique?
A. Yes (go to question 8)
B. No (go to question 10)

8. If you had not had an automatic no-questions-asked extension for the News Article Critique would you have:
A. Asked your professor if you could hand it in late
B. Hand it in late without requesting an extension
C. Handed it in on time according to the initial deadline

D. Not handed it in at all

9. Was having the automatic no-questions asked extension available to you for the News Article Critique useful? Please provide a brief explanation for why or why not.

10. For each of the following questions indicate whether you Strongly disagree, disagree, are neutral, agree, or strongly agree.

The ability to use automatic no-questions-asked extensions for assignments when I needed them

i. Allowed me to better manage my stress/mental health

ii. Allowed me to spend more time on assignments

iii. Allowed me to learn more when completing assignments

iv. Allowed me to hand in better quality work

v. Allowed me to better manage my academic workload

vi. Allowed me to better manage personal responsibilities

11. Would having these types of automatic no-questions asked extensions provided in advance for assignment be beneficial to your learning in other university courses? Why or why not?

Was there a time in your university experience where you needed an extension but were not comfortable asking for one? If yes,