

# Flexible Assignment Deadline Policies

Teaching through the pandemic has made us think about much in terms of our pedagogy, and flexible deadlines for students has certainly been one of the topics of discussion. In this one-pager, we share ideas to think about as you are thinking about implementing the idea of flexible deadlines in your classes.

**What are flexible deadline policies?** Hills and Peacock (2022) defined *flexible deadline policies*: “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” (p. 2).

Flexible grading policies do not mean students have no deadlines at all; in fact, students can still have consequences for not submitting work. These policies help students who may have (un)diagnosed disabilities, students who are neurodivergent, students who have mental health challenges, and students who have additional responsibilities (e.g., work, illness, caregiving tasks, etc.) Some research supports the fact that flexible deadline policies improve the quality of students’ work, students’ attention to assignment features, and course pass rates. Some faculty members report liking being able to space out grading a bit and they appreciated not having to make case-by-case basis decisions on extension requests (Hills & Peacock, 2022). Here are a few different examples of flexible deadline policies as cited in Hills and Peacock (2022):

Scan here to read Hills and Peacock’s (2022) article.



Type	Explanation	Research
<b>Rolling</b>	Students select a deadline from a list of pre-provided dates	Withington and Schroeder (2017)
<b>Late bank</b>	Students can have up to “x number” of days after the deadline to submit work. Sometimes there is a penalty if students submit after this late bank date	Nickels and Uddin (2003)
<b>Student-selected dates</b>	Students select their due dates	Kumar & Wideman, 2014; Peterson & Digman, 2018
<b>Extension by request</b>	Student may request an extension	

## Tips for Faculty

- Think about your context (e.g., class size, number of assignments, your semester load, etc.) before enacting a new deadline policy. The policy has to work with your students and you.
- Start small. Perhaps engage in a pilot one semester. Track when students are using the extensions, and use this information to consider scaffolds that can be put into place in future semesters.
- Reach out to the Studio. We provide coaching on this topic (and many others) and can connect you with colleagues around campus who have been implementing flexible deadline policies in their classes.

Reference: Hills, M., & Peacock, K. (2022). Replacing power with flexible structure: Implementing flexible deadlines to improve student learning experiences. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.10.26>