

the aftermath of the three-day grace | jan 2024

A landscape photograph showing a vast area of demolished buildings. The foreground is covered in debris, including twisted metal, wood, and concrete. In the background, several multi-story brick buildings stand, some partially collapsed. The sky is filled with heavy, dark clouds, suggesting an overcast or stormy day.

THREE-
DAY
GRACE

SO LONG, 3-DAY GRACE!

HOW HAS YOUR MENTAL HEALTH CHANGED?

56% MORE STRESSED
37% NO CHANGE
7% MORE FOCUSED

WHY'D YOU USE IT LAST YEAR?

45% STRESSED
24% PERFECTIONIST
15% ACCIDENT
12% LAZY
4% OTHER

WHAT SUBJECT DID YOU USE THE 3-DAY GRACE THE MOST FOR LAST YEAR?

22% MYP SCIENCE
21% MYP ENGLISH
16% HISTORY
15% MYP DESIGN
12% ART
9% CIVICS
5% OTHER

ARE YOU A PRODUCTIVE PERSON?

1 = WORST, 7 = BEST
31% 5/7
24% 4/7
21% 6/7
12% 3/7
5% 2/7
7% OTHER

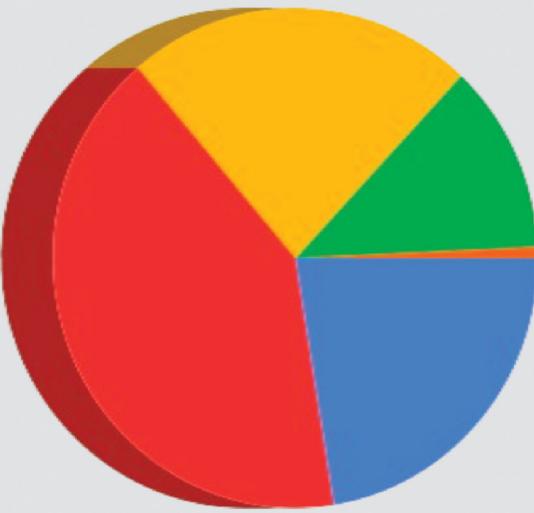
HOW HAS YOUR PRODUCTIVITY CHANGED?

1 = WORST, 7 = BEST
41% 1/7
19% 2/7
14% 5/7
14% 4/7
9% 3/7
4% 6/7

SO LONG, 3-DAY GRACE!

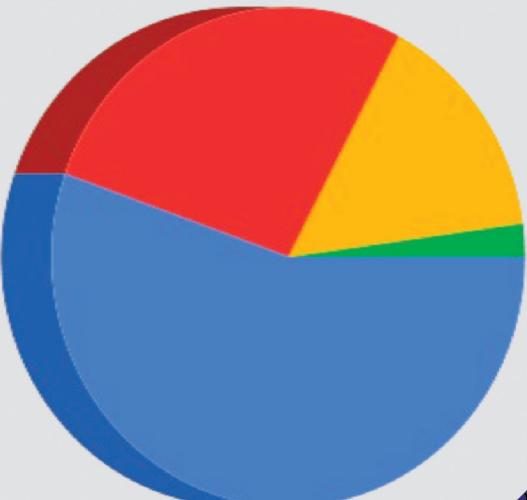
HOW MANY TIMES DID YOU USE THE 3-DAY GRACE LAST YEAR?

42%	2-5
23%	0
23%	1
11%	6-10
1%	11+



HOW MANY LATE INFRACTIONS DO YOU HAVE THIS YEAR?

57%	0
27%	1
14%	2-5
2%	6+



THE AFTERMATH OF THE 3-DAY GRACE

CYRUS SARFATY
OPINION EDITOR

We are in 2024 now, whether you like it or not. Five months into the new school year, and we have all experienced our fair share of summative assessments—lab reports, research essays, and the like. That also means it has been five months without the three-day grace period, the cop-out to end all cop-outs, the ‘get-out-of-jail-free’ card to end all ‘get-out-of-jail-free’ cards.

The 3-Day Grace buried the hatchet to students who missed deadlines—unconditionally forgiving late submissions caused by stress, injury, time mismanagement, or simply laziness. Alas, it has gone the way of Blazer, spat out from the College’s fabric like the brittle shell of a sunflower seed. What used to be an easy way to gain additional time for assessments has been replaced with a new, unflinching system, one that has made itself at home in our school environment.

The Upper School’s Late Summative Assessment Policy, revised in June 2023, states the following:

Students must hand in all summative assessments by the assigned due date.

A late submission triggers a late summative infraction filed by the teacher. Late summative infractions include the details of the missing work and are automatically sent to the student, adviser, senior house adviser, WWCfL, and parents. The student will then be required to attend mandatory department Flex Time support until either the assignment or process work has been submitted for evaluation: determined case-by-case. Infractions across a student’s courses will be centrally tracked with a sequence of respons-

es as outlined below. Repeated patterns of behaviour typically signal challenges such as organizational and time management skills, motivation, perfectionism, etc. Such patterns may result in a conduct status and formal school support (e.g., regular meetings with their adviser, WWCfL engagement and/or suggested Health Centre connection).

Inspired by the policy’s penultimate clause stating that “repeated patterns of behaviour typically signal challenges”, I set out to determine the student body’s opinion on the new policy and the ways students’ habits have changed since last spring. I constructed a survey with seven questions, including two opportunities for respondents to submit their personal comments and opinions.

Over the span of a week, I received 140 responses, representative of 17.3% of the Upper School’s 808 students. It is worth noting that 37.1% of respondents are currently in Year 10, a significantly higher proportion than the 20.7% in Years 9 and 12 and the 21.4% in Year 11. All submissions from students in Year 8 were omitted from the data, as they were not exposed to the 3-Day Grace last year.

By and large, students, the majority of whom self-identify as fairly productive (a five out of seven in response to the question “Would you consider yourself a productive person?”), report an increase in stress, a decrease in the number of late submissions, and surprisingly, a decline or stagnation in productivity. They primarily attribute last year’s use to stress and perfectionism in courses like MYP Science and MYP English, as well as “subjective courses” like Art and MYP Design.

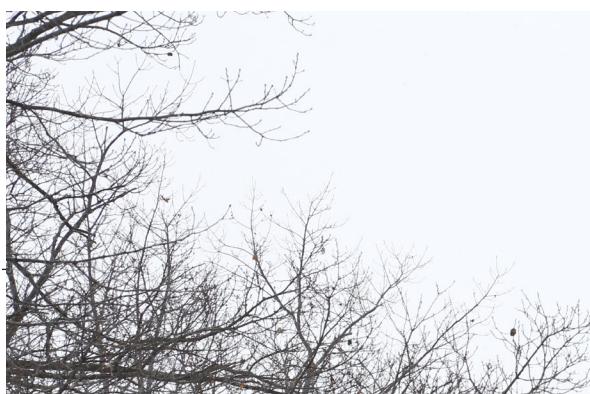
It can be concluded from the data that the

College’s new policy has set out what it accomplished to do: prevent students from handing in assignments late while ‘soaking the three-day’, as graduates of years past have described it. Whereas 42% of respondents report using the 3-Day Grace between two to five times last year, only 14% have received late summative infractions this many times in 2023-2024.

Nonetheless, it can be surmised that the lack of a ‘cushion’ for students overwhelmed with assessments is the reason for the drastic 56% increase in stress reported by respondents since the previous academic year. As one anonymous student described in the final section of the survey, “I understand the idea of removing the 3-day policy, however, the school is so pro-active on spreading mental health awareness, offering supports and whatnot, yet they removed one of the most helpful, peace giving aspects of our school.”

The biggest caveat to the results’ validity is the fact that my questions compared students’ performance in half of an academic year to a full academic year. So far in 2023-2024, many students have not yet experienced enough ‘hell-weeks’ or extenuating circumstances for the new policy’s effectiveness to be properly gauged. Indeed, 57% of respondents report never having used the new policy compared to 23% last year; this statistic is likely to change as the academic year continues. Additionally, as students study in new year levels, they are virtually guaranteed to face more challenging coursework, a factor made all the more drastic following the three-month Summer Break.

On the next page, I have compiled some of the most pertinent student comments and suggestions to the policy.



SELECTED SUGGESTIONS

"I believe the reason why the 3-day grace period went so out of hand was that the enforcement and tracking of them for each individual student who decides to take it was not very organized and quite uncoordinated, and besides a conversation with parents and teachers, many students were able to take beyond three 3-day grace periods per term without too much consequence. I am aware that penalties that affect the grade of assignments are not allowed because teachers are not allowed to grade behavioural issues, but I feel that the policy would be much more effective if there was consequences that students would not just forget about."

"I would at least create a 2 day grace period (still with infraction). Because I feel at higher grades (10, 11, 12) when things matter and you constantly get slammed with summatives, a policy that punishes overwhelmed students without giving them the chance to finish their best work, really encourages us to rush our work (especially at the end). Which is why I would add a

smaller grace period to at least give time to finish work and destress ourselves."

"If you bring it back maybe have it only for certain more DIFFICULT subjects like Science or have it activated during "hell weeks" like at the end of terms before breaks."

"The new policy is too open ended. Teachers aren't always strict with the deadline and if anything its more relaxed than the 3-day grace was. I think we should go back to the 3-day grace with harsher punishments if a student abuses it. Additionally, teachers should still be made to have a meeting with the student during the grace. Finally, if a student takes more than one grace in a particular discipline, they should be penalized marks (displaying a pattern of taking it)."

"We should have the three day grace but students should have to provide a valid reason. I don't think that reason has to be illness or family matter, but it also

shouldn't be straight laziness. I know it's hard to tell but if there was a way of knowing a student did just want more time to get a better mark or had 6 other summatives that week I think they are obligated to a few days of extended time."

"Maybe a limit to how many 3 day grace periods you can take. This will restrict people from always relying on the 3 days to get their stuff done, but for people who actually need it (like people who are going through a period of grief or are actually buried in tons of tough, difficult work), they can use it as a breather occasionally. My recommendation would be a limit of maybe 3, 3 day grace periods a year."

"Make it even more strict. If students need extensions they should be willing to respectfully communicate with their teachers and come to a solution with them instead of hiding behind the schools legislation."

"Add it back, please. It's like insurance."

SELECTED COMMENTS

"The 3-day grace was made for people who didn't abuse it. The policy failed because of poor enforcement and people using it for every assignment as opposed to when overwhelmed by deadlines. The new policy encourages malpractice for those who previously benefited from the grace period and didn't take advantage as there are more assessments in less time."

"3 day grace has been very beneficial to my mental health, and I think bringing it back would be great for the student body."

"I think even without the 3-day grace peri-

od, there is still a culture of "last-minute" assignments and studying among students that is present at this school. I think there are many reasons for that, such as from the students learning to balance school and life, a more strict nature that comes with the IB, and how teachers simply say "this is out of my control" when students are actually placed in quite harsh scenarios. Although we might be relatively strict for a secondary school, in post-secondary studies, students fail to realize that deadlines are true deadlines and anything submitted even a minute afterwards will result in a mark deduction penalty. We're quite a

ways away, but if students embraced the strict nature of our assessment structure, they may be able to adapt well, or at least better than their future peers, when they go on to future post-secondary studies in demanding programs."

"I think it was a good choice to remove it. It was too lenient, and a lot of people took advantage of it to just procrastinate instead of what it was supposed to be for."

"My productivity has slightly increased but not because of the fall of the 3 Day (now dis-)Grace."



SO LONG, 3-DAY GRACE: ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

COLLEEN FERGUSON
DP COORDINATOR

The three day grace emerged as part of a policy aimed at reining in late submissions. The idea was that instead of letting undone work drag along like an anchor around a student's neck, there needed to be an absolute cut off time when students had to get the work in.

Here's what the original policy said when it was drafted in September of 2019:

Upper School students are expected to hand in all summative assessments by the due date. Students who fail to do so will be tracked and will have three days grace to complete and submit the work. Whatever is produced at this time will serve as the final product no matter its state. Transgressions will activate an escalating series of consequences which will include communication to parents and advisors and may result in a change in conduct status.

That year, the MYP Coordinator and I did a weekly round up of late summative infractions. Students who had a third infraction received a formal letter home. A fourth triggered conduct advisory, a fifth, conduct concern, and so on. Typically parents would become involved and would ensure the student got the work in, or if

there were bigger issues the student was connected to appropriate support such as the CfL or the Health Centre. As a result there were fewer late submissions and early identification of students who were struggling.

However, to my mind the key to that first version of the Late Policy was not the conduct consequence. It was this line that stated after three days, "whatever is produced at this time will serve as the final product no matter its state." This meant that the draft or the student's partially completed work would get marked as the final product three days after the due date (including weekends), and further you could only do that three times before you ended up on conduct. It all seemed to work pretty well. Students had a little flexibility in managing their deadlines and there were guardrails in place to ensure that the privilege wasn't abused.

Then the pandemic hit.

For a variety of valid reasons, not the least of which was a concern for students' mental health, we stopped sending letters home for multiple late summative infractions and teachers stopped marking student work after three days "no matter its state."

Once things started to return to normal the culture around handing work in on time had shifted dramatically. Many students saw deadlines as hypothetical. The three day grace became the three day extension and there was no way the MYP or DP coordinators could keep up with the number of students handing in their work late.

That's why last year we drafted a new Late Policy. We got rid of "three day grace" because the name had baggage even if the original iteration worked pretty well. With the nine day timetable there is built in time for extra help so the new policy capitalizes on that. And students still have the option, in heavy times of assessment, to hand in work late; however they must attend extra help to complete the assignment under supervision. The teacher can also still collect partially completed work or mark a draft, if the student continues to avoid submission.

There is actually very little difference between the old Late Policy and the new one. The idea in both is that students must learn how to manage their deadlines so that they hand work in on time or they anticipate challenges and reach out in advance to ask for help. I know that it's stressful juggling multiple assessments in one week but your teachers are there to help with, or without, the three day grace.

