

MPA feedback & submission in response to 22 October 2015 Overview of examination issues and potential solutions

The objects of Monash University¹ include a commitment that students will be treated fairly in an environment which is supportive and fosters learning with a recognition of student diversity.

MPA is pleased to provide feedback on the university's examinations overview and proposals.

MPA survey

The MPA invited postgraduates to respond to a brief survey on the timing of exams. The low response rate of 42 postgraduates is most likely due to the fact that the survey was conducted in the middle of the exam period. However the results while not statistically viable present a sample postgraduate position.

The largest cohort of respondents were coursework postgraduates enrolled in the Faculty of Business and Economics on Caulfield campus. Approximately half the respondents were local and half international. Fourteen percent were in full-time employment. Approximately half the respondents travel to exams by car.

Evening and Saturday exams

When asked about the introduction of evening exams, 33% were in favour, 55% were against, and 12% had no strong opinion either way.

When asked about the introduction of a Saturday exam, 45% were in favour, 43% were against, and 12% had no strong opinion either way.

43% of respondents said that they would find an evening exam timeslot positive because of reasons such as not having to take time off work (17%)

¹ Monash University Charter

and not having to arrange assistance for family responsibilities (12%).

77% of respondents said that they would find an evening exam timeslot negative because of conflicting work commitments (5%), family responsibilities (22%), fatigue (55%), public transport availability (33%), and safety (47%). The concern around fatigue was also reflected in the fact that 75% percent of respondents believed that the maximum number of exams they should have to sit per day was one.

(Note that some respondents recorded both negative and positive aspects of an evening exam timeslot.)

Eliminating Swot vac

An overwhelming 74% were against eliminating the swot vac period.

Decreasing exam period and reducing breaks between exams

Only 24% of respondents thought decreasing the exam period to two weeks would be a good outcome for them. Forty percent said that it would not be a good outcome, and 36% said that it would not make any difference to them.

54% of respondents were against reducing the period of time between exams.

Examinations for postgraduates

Fifty percent of respondents believed that a combination of assignments and in class tests would facilitate better learning outcomes.

Survey Summary

In summary, these preliminary results suggest that if an additional exam timeslot must be introduced, a Saturday exam may be more acceptable to the postgraduate community than evening exams. They also suggest that the two main concerns for postgraduates in introducing additional exam timeslots, is fatigue and personal safety.

The full survey report with comments is attached.

MPA's advocacy concerns

1. Availability of security and counselling staff after each examination.
2. Contingency plan in the event a number of students suspected of

cheating being required to attend invigilator questioning post examination. The usual interview takes in the vicinity of 30-45 minutes, meaning three students interviews may result in advocates and students (as well as invigilator staff) leaving the venue alone at 10pm or 11pm. The racecourse is not particularly well lit at night.

MPA recommendations

The university conducts a global survey to determine the effect of any proposed changes on the student population.

December 2015

.....