



Catch-up Mondays: Changing Timetables to Support Learners

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Students can use Catch-up Monday to work at their own pace on assignments. Catch-up Mondays also provides an opportunity for learners to catch up on any work missed so they remain up to date with their assignments. Tutors also found this day helpful as it provided extra time for marking, lesson plans, administrative duties and professional-development.



Summary

In 2006 the Samala Robinson Academy implemented a new timetable where one day a week was allocated to self-directed study/catch-up work. We will continue to call this day Catch-up Monday. Students could use Catch-up Monday to work on their paper-based assignments at home or they could come in and catch up on their outstanding work/practical assignments. Whenever a student missed a class during the week, they could ensure they caught up with the rest of the class before the new week by using Catch-up Monday.

Tutors could also make use of this day to devote to their administration. For the tutors, Catch-up Monday provides an uninterrupted period of time to organise marking, lesson plans, and other administrative duties. It can be used for any necessary out-of-office activity, such as a doctor's appointment, so that management does not have to find replacement staff to cover for these short-term disruptions. Catch-up Monday can also be used to organise meetings and any professional-development activities.



Sarah and Olivia using dolly heads

Tutor Feedback... Fallon Edwin:

"My students tend to come in to do their workbooks (written assignments) here, I guess so they won't get distracted. They also take advantage of the free internet access we offer. I get all my marking done on the Monday and prepare my lessons for the week ahead. Recently, I have developed a new method to do a brow block. I have been using the Catch-up Mondays to design and practise the method and have been able to teach the other tutors the new method during a tutor meeting/training session."

Student Feedback... Sarah Vermeulen:

"Today is the first time I am using Catch-up Monday. Last week we had a summative assessment for Sultry Makeup, which I failed. I practised on the weekend on my friends and now I am ready to do the summative again. It is great to be able to come in on the Monday. It is easier to concentrate on your work as there are fewer people here. Especially when you are re-sitting an assessment, you need that concentration. I also find it a bonus that there is more one-on-one time available with the tutor."

How were things before?

Samala Robinson Academy's fulltime classes ran from Monday to Friday from 9am to 3.30pm. Tutors work days were from 8.30am to 5pm. If students had any outstanding work or had missed classes at any stage, they were able to stay until the Academy closed at 5pm. Meetings were scheduled at the end of the day and professional development was undertaken either as a group after classes were finished or as an individual activity. Tutor marking tasks and other administration was scheduled at the end of the day, somewhere between 3.30pm and 5pm.

Tutor Feedback... Heather Vette:

"The Catch-up Monday works really well for me. Depending on the requirements of your students, you can choose to have them catch up for half a day or a full day. I use the Monday to get up to date with marking. We usually need to alternate the times we spend on the computer, as we share one computer between four tutors at a time. The rest of the time I can spend on preparing my classes for the week ahead. Lately we have been having a tutor meeting almost weekly and I find that great. It is necessary to meet on a regular basis to keep up to date with academy developments, student progress and changes in teaching material. The last few weeks I have also put time and effort in updating the look of the Academy and updated classroom pin boards with relevant fashion materials that will inspire the students. I cannot imagine how I would have done this without the use of our Catch-up Monday."

Why did we want to make this change?

In practise it was difficult for the students to commit to catching up missed work or lessons. Often childcare responsibilities got in the way of staying longer at the end of class. It was also clear that

staying behind felt like being “in detention” for some of our younger students. The amount of concentration needed to make the catch-up time useful was usually not there. Students would get restless and had difficulties staying focused on their study material.

Similar difficulties were visible with tutors and their administrative responsibilities. Theoretically, tutors had 1½ hours at the end of each day to do their marking and class preparation for the next day. In practise, the time available would be less, as this time was usually spent cleaning the class room and talking to students at the end of the lesson. Tutors found it difficult to get stuck into the work and the time available felt fragmented and chaotic.

The same was the case for planning training meetings and professional development – it is hard to keep concentration levels up at the end of a day’s worth of teaching. This made organising group professional development difficult.

In talking to colleagues from other tertiary training institutes we realised that a possible solution to the challenges we were facing was to implement a different weekly timetable. By allocating one day a week for administration and student catch-up we could create a win-win situation for tutors and students.

Student Feedback... Olivia Mackay:

“I am here to re-sit the summative assessment for Sultry Makeup. Sarah and I both needed to redo this summative, so that worked out great. Otherwise we would have needed to bring in a model – now we can do the assessment on each other. It is nice to have a quiet environment to do the summative. This way I can’t overhear feedback given to other students, which can be distracting and can make me slightly anxious. I prefer having a set day for catch up, as opposed to a few hours at the end of the day – by then I would be tired and a bit grumpy, not really in the mood to stay behind and catch up on my work.”

How did we go about making this change?

In April 2006 the idea of implementing the Catch-up Monday was first brought up and discussed in the SRA management meeting. The idea was immediately received very positively. The next step in the change process was to gather feedback from tutors and students. An analysis document was set up outlining the advantages and disadvantages of the change and was tabled at the Trainings Meeting in early July 2006. All agreed that the benefits were far greater than the drawbacks. A few meetings were held in an informal setting with students to gather their feedback. Again, because there were more advantages than disadvantages, the change was perceived as positive. In the final stage,



Sarah working on Olivia

before accepting the Catch-up Monday, the proposal was tabled at the Industry Advisory Board Meeting. All parties unanimously agreed and the proposal was formally approved.

TEC was advised of the changes. Originally the programme contained 30 teaching hours and 5 self-directed study hours. Teaching times were extended for 1 extra hour each day. The teaching week now ran from 9am to 4.30pm, Tuesday to Friday. This meant the adjusted programme contained 28 hours of teaching time and 7 hours of self-directed study time. Because the change in hours was not deemed a significant change, formal approval from NZQA was not needed.

It was decided these changes should not affect existing classes. A new class timetable was created to fit the new 4-day teaching format. In mid-July the first class started with the Catch-up Monday format. The teacher was closely monitored and students were asked to provide feedback. The changes were received positively and all subsequent new classes have used the new Catch-up Monday format.

Did we anticipate any disadvantages?

We prepared an analysis document beforehand to summarize all the advantages and disadvantages of creating Catch-up Monday. The only possible disadvantage could have been that the late finish time of classes would clash with other after-class responsibilities students might have, such as work, picking up children, and getting home in time. Although we were genuinely concerned about this drawback, it was clear very early on that this was not going to be a problem. Students who enrolled with the new format were aware of the class times and made arrangements accordingly. To this day the later finishing time has never been an issue.



Makeup tutors Fallon Edwin, Bridget Bremner and Heather Vette at the staff Christmas Party

The other concern we had was organising the change with NZQA and TEC and whether this would be possible and/or difficult. This organisation turned out to be quick and straightforward; the changeover process was easy to manage.

A positive change to the timetable

During the process of changing the timetables it became apparent that extending the day by only 1 hour had more impact than we realised. Because there was now more time in the afternoon, this time could be used differently. Students used to be able to do one assignment in the morning and one in the afternoon. Now, with a bit of rescheduling, they could do two assignments in the afternoon. As a result, class times were able to be used more efficiently.

Student Feedback... Rebecca Shannon:

“My main reason for being here today is catching up on attendance. I have missed 1½ days and I am using this Catch-up day to get my attendance back up to 100%. I have used this opportunity once before and it is especially good for doing my written assignments. I can bring in my laptop and use the wireless internet, which is much faster than at home. If the course ran from Monday to Friday it would be harder for me to catch up on attendance, as a ‘day’ would be spread out over a whole week.”

Conclusion

The implementation of the Catch-up Monday has been a success in SRA. We can thoroughly recommend the implementation of a similar structure for any other tertiary training institute. A question that people might ask is “What is the impact of Catch-up Monday on course completion and retention rates?” For us, course completion rates and retention rates did not change after implementation of Catch-up Monday. For several years SRA has had a retention rate of 91% and a completion rate of 98%. These numbers have not increased since implementation.



Rebecca working on her paper assignments using wireless internet

Of course it is still possible that implementation of the Catch-up Monday with other tertiary providers will have a measurable positive impact on important aspects like course completion and retention rates. Further research could be done in order to investigate its impact in the wider world of tertiary education.

However, for SRA the benefits have been more subjective as it feels easier for tutors and management to keep up with student progress and monitor their catch-up times and create catch-up schedules – less stress obviously means a better place to work.

Catch-up classes for part time students

We believe the implementation of Catch-up Monday has been very successful and was easily implemented. We are now considering plans to extend the “Catch-up Monday” for our part-time students. Part-time classes run 2 evenings a week from 6pm to 9pm and on every third Saturday for a full day from 9am to 4.30pm. Part-time students are made aware they are able to catch-up missed classes on Monday, or they are on occasion able to sit in with an existing full-time class during the week. However, most part-time students have work commitments, which makes it difficult to take days off during the week. From the beginning of 2009 we have taken on more part-time classes. These two elements have led to an increasing number of students asking for a Catch-up Saturday for part timers. We are considering this option.

About the Samala Robinson Academy

Samala Robinson Academy is a Private Training Provider that specialises in Fashion Makeup Training. They are NZQA registered, receive TEC Student Component Funding, and are accredited to teach the Certificate in Fashion Makeup, Level 3. Currently the Academy runs 4 full-time classes and 5 part-time classes, with around 12–14 students per class. The majority of the students are young females between 16 and 24 years of age. In the part-time classes the median age is slightly older – between 22 and 32 years of age. The certificate programme is a hands-on learning experience with a mixture of NZQA unit standards and locally developed modules.



In 2008 the Samala Robinson Academy won the Provider of the Year Award from the [New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers](#).



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