Ngee Ann Poly cracks down on tardiness

It ends 15-minute grace period to compel students to attend class on time

BY LEOW SI WAN

LATECOMERS at Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) are getting the zero-tolerance treatment in the school’s new punctuality drive.

Last month, it stopped giving late students a 15-minute grace period. Instead, those who arrive for class after the scheduled start time will risk getting marked absent.

The reason for this change: feedback from lecturers.

A spokesman for NP said: “From time to time, we would receive feedback from lecturers that they could not make good use of the first 15 minutes of a class because of disruptions caused by students joining the class late during the grace period.

“It was determined that a better system would be to remove the grace period, start classes punctually and end them 15 minutes ahead of schedule to allow students time to move to the next class.”

This, according to the polytechnic, will optimise teaching and benefit all students.

While the school did not say how many students arrive late for class, it said most of its students “do make it a point to be punctual”. The lecturers in class monitor the attendance.

The school assured students and parents that lecturers “will exercise some discretion and flexibility”. The spokesman said: “We take into account cases where students are late for class with valid reasons or due to unexpected situations, and all reasonable explanations will be considered.”

Recalcitrant students who are habitually absent without good reasons may be barred from taking examinations, the school warned.

NP is not the only school with a firm stance towards latecoming. Students at Republic Polytechnic are also penalised if they arrive after the scheduled start time. Their daily grades, which they receive for subjects taken, are reduced by 0.5 point if they are late. In the long run, this will affect their final grades.

“We accept only medical excuses with official certificates or if there is really a massive traffic jam due to weather conditions,” said the polytechnic’s spokesman.

At Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) and Singapore Polytechnic (SP), latecomers are still given a grace period. The former gives students 10 minutes before lecturers can mark them as absent, and those who turn up at SP after the 15-minute grace period are marked as absent.

Unlike the polytechnics, universities here are more for students taking responsibility for their own actions.

The National University of Singapore said: “Students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning, show respect for their lecturers and exercise consideration for their fellow classmates by observing punctuality for lessons.”

The Singapore Management University leaves it to the discretion of its faculty members to enforce punctuality.

Meanwhile, most parents and students interviewed said they understand the rationale behind strict rules about punctuality, but they stressed that it was important for the school to be understanding.

Madam Lily Ng, 40, a housewife whose daughter is a first-year NP student, said: “It is good to enforce punctuality but for morning lessons, sometimes traffic conditions can be very unpredictable. So I think if the child is just late for a couple of minutes, they should not be marked as absent.

“But ever since the school started this new rule, I have been reminding my daughter to leave home earlier.”

Mr Joey Tan, a first-year student at NYP, said he has always reminding my daughter to leave home earlier.

“This is what is expected of you in the workplace anyway,” said the 19-year-old.