

Pearson eBooks solution

EDUCATOR TESTIMONIAL QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

COURSE:	MSc Economics and Finance
EBOOK PLATFORM:	Kortext
USED SINCE:	2012
SUMMARY:	By making eBooks available on the MSc Economics and Finance course, Queen Mary University increased the efficiency of their textbook distribution process. They were able to make core materials more accessible to students and educators whenever and wherever they needed them.
SUBMITTED BY:	Dr Daniela Tavasci , Department of Business and Finance

in the past. However charts and tables are easier to access from an eBook during a lecture. This is because with the print versions we would have to scan the image, and put it on PowerPoint which is a bit more complicated. The eBooks are also available to download on various devices, and around 70% of the students in my classes use iPads and download the eBooks onto their tablets. Students carry the eBooks on their tablets with them wherever they go, and if the eBooks are also downloaded onto their computers, they do exercises from them on their laptops.

Motivations

SAVING ADMINISTRATIVE TIME

Previously our administrative staff distributed books to students, and before we managed to obtain the printed version it would have taken four weeks. This meant we had to order the books in advance before we knew the confirmed number of students on the course. Therefore we used to order extra

Course context

The MSc Economics and Finance course is made up of four core modules in the first semester and one core module in the second semester which also includes three elective modules. We provide eBooks for all compulsory modules and they are available to 488 Economics and Finance MSc students including 50 students who are on a joint programme from business, law, and mathematics courses.

eBook solution

The relevant course textbooks from Pearson and other publishers are made available as eBooks on the eBook platform Kortext. They are exclusively available to the postgraduate students doing programmes from the Economics and Finance course for one year. They are available to these students for free.

Implementation

Students are given access to their eBooks through an email from Kortext. This takes them to their Kortext bookshelf which shows the eBooks they are entitled to. Prior to this, they are informed about the eBooks and how they will gain access to them during induction.

In terms of teaching, the way in which we use and refer to eBooks is largely the same as we referred to the print books we used



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books and as a result had left over copies which were not needed. This was a time consuming task for administrative staff before the beginning of term. Therefore, the main motivations for taking the eBooks on board were to find ways to reduce the cost and time of distribution. During meetings to re-organise this process we thought eBooks would be an option, and a month before these meetings we had discussions with Pearson and McGraw Hill who explained that their eBooks would be available via Kortext. With this in mind we decided to use eBooks on the course.

BEING GREEN

Environmental issues were also greatly important for us within the department. Very often students would only read a small percentage of the whole book, and this was an incredible waste of paper. In fact we did promote the eBooks to our students in this light, so we said to them that "as part of becoming greener, we have decided to buy eBooks".



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ELIMINATING EXCESS WEIGHT

We also took into account that 50% of our students are international students, and previously when they collected their books from our administrative office we could see the incredible weight of all the books together. So taking on the eBooks was very important to us for practical reasons. We recognised that these students would often like to take their books with them when travelling home during holidays and reading week, and it would have been impossible for them to do that with all the print books. However with the eBook versions all downloaded on a portable device like an iPad, it was fine for these students to do this.

This advantage was not only applicable for students, it was for the teaching staff as well. We also have iPads, and if you're preparing a lecture, having everything on the iPad just makes life easier. Even though we haven't used all the interactive features of the eBooks, and we use them pretty much as we use the traditional books, being able to look for exercises and prepare wherever I am, without carrying 5 kilos of weight, is an advantage.

Challenges

STUDENT RESISTANCE

The new full time students from the year when the eBooks were introduced saw that the students from the part-time path way had print books from the year before. Therefore the new students tried to push the academic staff to buy print versions for them as well. They claimed that they were more comfortable using the print versions and they wanted to have the books forever. However we carried out a survey and found that the students who made these complaints were only a minority. The vast majority of students were much more concerned with weight and they were more comfortable with the e-versions so we decided to continue with the eBooks.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

One other minor challenge was that the Apple users experienced some problems with accessing the eBooks however this was quickly resolved by Kortext within a day. Currently if any technical issues arise when using the eBooks, for example if student log in details don't work or if students are denied access to their bookshelves, they can email Kortext directly and the issue is fixed within hours. So Kortext have been extremely good; these issues completely bypass the academic staff and from our point of view this is very helpful.



We reduced our textbook budget by at least 20%.



Results

CUTTING COST AND TIME FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

I would say that saving the time that the administrative staff would use to distribute books was the most important benefit, and the second was cost. We reduced our textbook budget by at least 20%.

We also cut the cost of left over books, we currently only order as many books as we need. Additionally, we cut the time it takes for students to get hold of their books. Now as soon as students enrol, they wait just a few days before they can access the eBooks rather than the weeks they had to wait for print versions.

LECTURERS ARE HAPPY

The other lecturers were happy with switching to eBooks because of the relief it would give to students in terms of weight and some of the lecturers were very happy with the eBooks because it was a green choice.

EASE OF USE

Furthermore, eBooks are lighter than print versions and that is a benefit for both students and academics. It's easier to carry around in case you want access wherever you are.