

National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland

Submitted by: Ray Ryan, School of Mathematics, Statistics and Applied Mathematics

LEARNING OUTCOME

This lecturer uses MyMathLab as an **easily manageable way of providing continuous assessment** for campus students, and to provide distance learning students with a **rich learning environment**. Students particularly like the **instant feedback** they receive in MyMathLab.

Course

Mathematics and Statistics for Business (1st year Business students) and Mathematics (Diploma/Degree in Management/Commerce by blended learning)

Textbook in use

College Mathematics, 11th edition, 2008
Barnett, Ziegler and Byleen

Type of data collected

Student feedback

Data collection period

2009–10

Course design

We have 440 and 46 students respectively on these courses. The first year course is a full-time course comprising 60 lectures (3 per week) and a weekly tutorial. The course for the diploma is delivered via blended (distance) learning, comprising online course materials (in Blackboard), online discussion forums, and monthly 2-hour face-to-face workshops.

We are aiming to provide the full-time students with effective continuous assessment (we previously used written homework assignments which were difficult to manage) and supplementary online learning resources. For the distance learning students we want to provide a rich variety of online learning resources and the ability to test their understanding through well-designed online practice assignments.

Assessment

Full-time: online assignments make up 30% of the final mark for the course with 70% for a written final exam.

Distance learning: online assignments are worth 36%, written homeworks 24%, final exam 40%.

Implementation

Purchase of the book plus access code is compulsory. Students do continuous assessment online through MyMathLab using tests set by me. They also make extensive use of the Study Plan, Practice Tests and the Multimedia Library, where they can view short video lectures on various topics in the course.

For the distance learning students we want to provide a rich variety of online learning resources and the ability to test their understanding through well-designed online practice assignments.

Course results

Student surveys indicate that students enjoy working with a well-designed online teaching and learning resource and are satisfied that it represents good value for money for them. They particularly like the instant feedback when they complete a test.

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Conclusions

MyMathLab certainly works well for Business students who seem to be well-motivated and are willing to pay for a good textbook with good online content accompanying it. Other groups might not be so amenable. The technology itself is outstanding and the test questions are excellent – far better than traditional multiple choice.

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In brief (tips for new users)

- It should be explained to the students that MyMathLab is far more than an online assessment system – make it clear that they are also getting access to a rich and varied learning environment.
- It takes longer than expected to get the online tests up and running. Students are slow to buy the package, slow to register, and slow to get started. Allow a few weeks for this.
 - There is a lot of administrative work to be done, especially in the early stages: helping students set up their accounts, setting up tests, etc. In addition, there is substantially more email traffic than with a traditional course delivery.