

MyWritingLab® Global

EDUCATOR TESTIMONIAL UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH

COURSE:	Personal and Professional Development
USED SINCE:	2011
SUMMARY:	Through using MyWritingLab the University of Greenwich was able to increase students' motivation and provide them with regular individual feedback.
SUBMITTED BY:	Pearson and Agnieszka Herdan, Accounting and Finance Department

Implementation

Agnieszka required that students complete 16 exercises over the course of the first term. 8 exercises were given a due date in November and the final 8 exercises were due at the beginning of December. In January, another 8 exercises were set which had to be completed by the beginning of March. She required that both Recall and Apply exercises were completed and all sets of exercises were assigned so that students got as much practice as possible. She also set Mastery at 70%. The Recall exercises did not count towards the final grade but the highest score for their Apply exercises counted towards 20% of their final mark.

Course design (background)

STUDENT PROFILE

There are 200 students on this course, the majority being international students which means that English is a second language for these students.

COURSE STRUCTURE

This course runs from September to April with the final assessment in March and the portfolio due in April. Students attend 1 weekly lecture and a 2 hour tutorial. There are 8 tutorial groups and 8 different tutors. Previously there was no required homework on this course because there was no way to mark it. In the tutorials they completed exercises with their tutors but also needed the time to work on their group work and portfolios.

CHALLENGES

Student motivation is a huge problem but also English language skills are very poor. There was no way to test students' English reading or writing skills and have a structure to help them improve or to give them feedback on general English problems. With eight different tutors, there was inconsistency in the quality and volume of help that students were given. Tracking students' progress was not possible.

Agnieszka and her tutors found that the students were very motivated to get good results.

Course results

The students' progress within MyWritingLab was not formally monitored however 98% of students completed all of the required exercises before the due dates. Some students initially reported that they found it difficult to complete the exercises because the animations were not yet loaded into MyWritingLab and there were some registration problems at first, however the student feedback was overall very positive. Agnieszka and her tutors found that the students were very motivated to get good results. The student group achieved an average of 82% for all required Recall exercises and 80% for all required Apply exercises.

ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE

Students fed back to Agnieszka by email and to their tutors about MyWritingLab and there was often much discussion in tutorials about topics that they were covering in MyWritingLab (e.g. referencing). Many students who did not speak English as their first language told Agnieszka that it was a very useful tool and that it helped them immensely.

Approximately 15% of students completed an online questionnaire about MyWritingLab. 67% of those students reported that MyWritingLab had a 'somewhat positive impact'

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on their performance within their module and 22% reported that it had a 'very positive impact' on their performance. All students who filled in the questionnaire agreed that they would use the program again and would recommend it to their friends. When asked what they felt that the main benefits of using MyWritingLab were, students left comments such as:

"MyWritingLab is a great product to help improve your literacy skills especially if English is not your first language."

"It is easy to use and very helpful to improve your writing skills."

"It is key to fundamental writing and literacy knowledge."

Conclusions

Agnieszka enjoyed using MyWritingLab and found that it contained topics that her students urgently required assistance with. Her students submit their main essay at the end of the year, so she is looking forward to seeing the marks to evaluate whether MyWritingLab made a real difference to their grade. Agnieszka would ideally like to use MyWritingLab over the course of two years

"Constant and immediate feedback helps them to reflect on their performance and improve their academic writing and critical thinking skills."

and intertwine the required exercises in MyWritingLab with written submitted assignments, so that students are able to put their knowledge from completing the exercises into practise and so that she can more accurately track their improvement.

She is hoping that the University find the budget to buy it on behalf of students next year and is looking forward to using it again. In her own words...

"MyWritingLab has improved my first year undergraduate Accounting and Finance students' understanding of academic approach, referencing techniques and how to structure their work; constant and immediate feedback helps them to reflect on their performance and improve their academic writing and critical thinking skills."