University of Leicester

Case Study – Electronic Module Evaluation

Context

The Department of Economics migrated to Blackboard for the start of the 2012/2013 academic year. Prior to this they had used flat HTML websites for course information and learning resources, including paper versions of the both the Module and Tutorial Evaluation Surveys. These surveys were given to the students in a scheduled seminar session and collected as they left the room.

An electronic evaluation survey enables the department to collect valuable student experiences and feedback in response to key questions and themes. By encouraging students to participate and to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the module (learning materials, VLE, tutor, support, etc.) the students are engaged and able to make recommendations on making the module more engaging and stimulating.

Blackboard

Using the 'Survey' tool within Blackboard has offered the added benefit of increasing both student and staff use (and perception) of the Blackboard and the variety of tools available for teaching & learning.

The 'survey' tool was used to capture the student feedback for the following reasons:

- Varied question types including multiple choice, likert scale, yes/no, either/or, free-text box, etc.
- Survey results are anonymous
- On screen results analysis
- Quick aggregate of result in Grade Centre
- Downloadable results

The survey was released to 4 modules to investigate the effectiveness and efficiency of digital module evaluation. Each survey was released to the student cohort in week 11 (the last week before Christmas) on Blackboard and an Announcement posted to the module with an accompanying email sent to the students' University email account.

A Tutorial Evaluation Survey was released alongside the Module Evaluation Survey where the students were also asked to provide feedback on their individual tutorial staff member. Students were encouraged to complete both at the same time in an effort to gain maximum responses. In order to ensure that students completed the right survey for their personal tutor, groups were created in Blackboard from class registers. This ensured that students could only view the Tutorial Evaluation Survey that was relevant to them.

Results

Results from each survey were accessed through the Blackboard course Grade Centre in a clear readable format using the 'attempt statistics' option. The results were then copied into Excel so calculations of overall averages for each of the module/tutorial surveys could be made: this made it clearer to see how each module/tutorial was being evaluated by students in terms of a likert scale of 'very good' to 'very poor'.

	EC1000 Microeconomics	EC2000 Intermediate Microeconomics 1	EC3000 Advanced Microeconomics	EC7095 Financial Statement Analysis
Cohort Size	354	350	226	184
Completed Surveys	166	109	50	93
Incomplete Surveys *	8	5	2	4
Successful Response Rate	46.9%	31.1%	22.1%	50.5%

* indicates surveys that were started but were not submitted. These responses are not counted in the final survey statistics.

Conclusion

Response rates for both module and tutorial evaluations were less than those received in previous years using the paper version, but higher than expected – with students able to complete the online survey in their own time it was expected that most would choose to ignore the request. Additional comments types in to the free-text box were more than had been received in previous years on the paper-based surveys.

Results, once analysed and presented with average scores calculated for each question, were compared to previous results from paper-based surveys and will be presented to the School of Economics Teaching and Learning Committee in 2013, with recommendation for further investigation into Blackboard surveys and suitable alternatives.

Limitations

The pilot study did uncover some limitations in the Blackboard survey reporting mechanism: the results were hard to analyse in the presented format through the 'attempts statistics', and importing the downloaded results into Excel was not possible due to known Blackboard formatting problems of the download file. These limitations meant that there was no way of easily analysing and calculating averages so data needed to be manipulated manually in Excel which was a very time consuming role.

Further investigation into online survey systems is needed to see if a system is available that can offer the level of analysis the School requires, or the presentation of results in such a way that they can be manipulated more easily than the methods needed above.

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