



Alison Sharrock

Project: “Test yourself”: Extensive Online Latin Testing using Blackboard 9

School: Arts, Histories and Cultures

Course: CLAH 20171 and 30182 Intensive Latin 1 No. of students: 60 Level: UG/PG

Themes: Assessment, Feedback and Marking

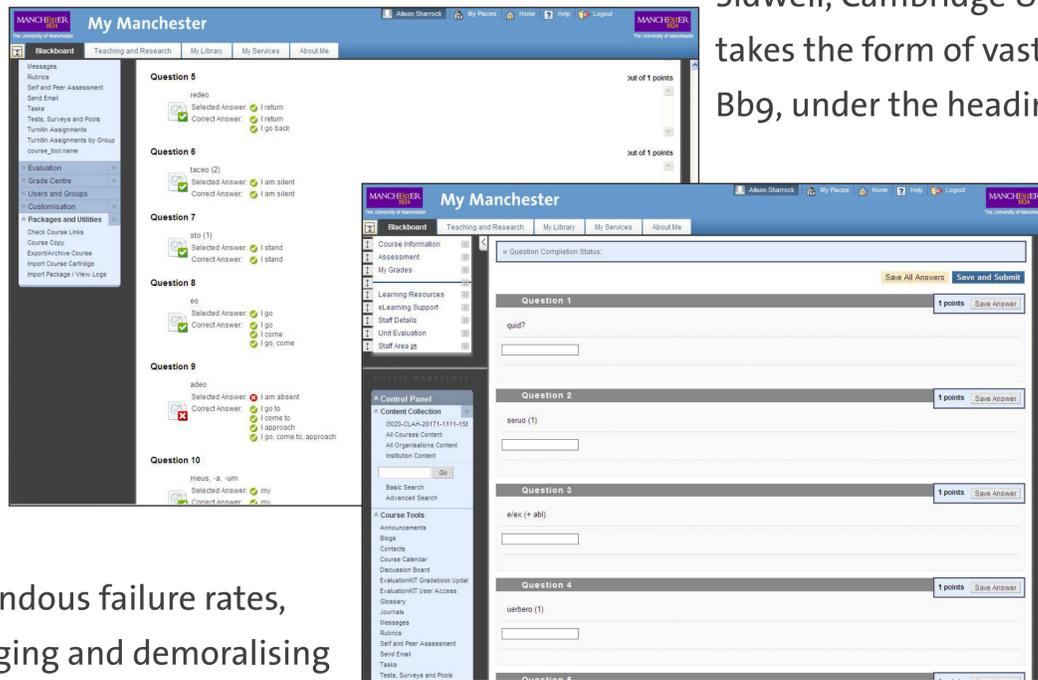
TESS 2012

Teaching Enhancement and Student Success

TESS is a University-wide initiative, funded by the Faculty of Humanities. Working with the Faculty eLearning Teams, academics set up projects aimed at developing course content specific to their needs, through elearning tools and skills development.

What was the problem?

“Over the last 30 years, provision of Latin teaching in schools has suffered a massive decline. The discipline nationally responded by turning wholeheartedly to the teaching of Latin from the very beginnings to university students. Good paper-based resources have been developed in this area, but they were developed on the unspoken assumption that students had all the necessary learning tools available to them, lacking only the specifics of the Latin language. This, of course, was not true: students today have by and large not learned to learn by heart, nor do they respond well to pages of tables and piles of inert data. Our Intensive Latin course units were suffering horrendous failure rates, which was not only damaging and demoralising to individual students but also undermined progression to Advanced units.”



How was the problem solved?

“*Train Yourself* was developed as part of a package of measures undertaken to address the problems of failure and lack of progression. After looking around the available electronic resources to support Latin learning, we decided that the only option was to write one ourselves, tied closely to the coursebook we use, which is also widely used elsewhere (*Reading Latin*, by Peter Jones and Keith Sidwell, Cambridge University Press). The project takes the form of vast numbers of quiz questions in Bb9, under the headings: Vocabulary, Morphology, and Syntax. The quizzes encourage students to retake the same Test many times, offering different questions each time, in order to reinforce knowledge and enhance learning, with immediate feedback.”

How successful was the solution?

“This year, there were no uncompensatable fails, and very few even compensatable fails. This represents a massive improvement. Progression to Advanced 1 has approximately doubled.”

What did the students think?

“Feedback has been universally positive, while the project was singled out for special mention as “one of the great positives of the Department” in the School. The Student engagement with the vocabulary sections has been very strong, with results that I could see clearly in the final, traditional, examination. My goal for next year is to encourage students to engage as effectively with the more challenging morphology and syntax sections.”