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# Project: Providing Student Feedback via Blackboard eLearning Tools

**School:** Manchester Business School

**Course:** BMAN70162 Advanced Empirical Finance **No. of students:** 110 approx

**Level:** PGT **Themes:** Student Engagement, Feedback and Marking

## TESS 2011

### 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?

Similar to many courses in the University, in the student course questionnaire, this course typically scores less well on the feedback question than on other questions. Combined with the University's new policy on feedback, this prompted a review of how we could best provide feedback to student's on their progress on a course that has relatively large numbers (111 MSc students in 2010/11). We were also concerned to establish whether students would use the opportunity to get feedback on whether they had gained a knowledge and understanding of the course material. Students often respond negatively to the question of whether they found the feedback they received to be useful, but at the same time, don't always use the opportunities that exist for getting feedback.

## What did the students think?

The immediate way of measuring the success of our approach was to monitor students' attempts at the MCQs. This produced disappointing results. We rated a serious attempt at the MCQs as a submitted attempt on which the student spent at least five minutes (many of the MCQ exercises required at least an hour for a complete attempt). Based on this, between 4 and 19 students out of 111, made serious attempts at different topics. Other students looked at the MCQs either without making submissions or spending less than five minutes on the task (and typically attempting no questions). Even adding these students, however, gave a participation rate of less than 20%. A further means of measuring success would be through the student questionnaire, but the current web-based form of this exercise takes away any reliability it might have had.

## How was the problem solved?

We decided to use the facility for setting multiple choice questions (MCQs) in Bb9 to provide feedback on each of the eight topics on the course. We designed the MCQs carefully to cover different aspects of the topics, both quantitative and qualitative. All the alternatives given were potential answers to the questions. We gave feedback on each answer, explaining why an answer was wrong (including likely mistakes in quantitative questions) as well as the rationale behind the correct answer. We told students that they could learn from understanding why some answers were wrong as well as from understanding the correct answer.

## How successful was the solution?

The original intention of the exercise, had it been successful, was to encourage colleagues on other MSc courses to follow this initiative. While we will offer the MCQ exercises to students on the course next year, we don't feel that we can promote this to colleagues as a solution to the feedback issue at the present time.

