

Discipline/Course/Subject Area:

Marketing

Institution:

Glasgow Caledonian University

Start date:

2005-06

Impact:

The practice was introduced:

across a level 2 core module

across levelof a degree programme

across CBS / two or more subject groups

across the institution as a whole

The practice was adopted by:

the department, other departments in the institution and in other institutions

No. of students affected:

c300

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Title of Practice – Enhancing student performance by improving and linking student feedback opportunities (Consumer Buyer Behaviour)

Abstract

Consumer Buyer Behaviour (CBB) is a Level 2 core module designed to develop students' appreciation of consumer buying behaviour concepts and deepen their understanding of the ways in which they influence marketing decisions. The purpose of the module is to equip students with an understanding and broad based knowledge of the characteristics of consumers and their purchasing behaviour. This case study documents the implementation of weekly online multi-choice questions which allows students to gauge their own knowledge, promoting interaction with the core text; and staged 'learning papers' designed to allow students to actively use feedback to improve their performance by using feedback from earlier submissions in subsequent coursework. Electronic submission and marking of CW was used to achieve quicker turnaround. Electronic submission and marking of CW was used to achieve quicker turnaround.

Description of Implementation

In what context did the new assessment practice happen?

This is level two core module in the marketing suite of programmes and is an optional module available to most other degrees in the CBS undergraduate programme framework as well as other degrees at Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) outwith CBS e.g. popular with psychology students . Consumer Buyer Behaviour builds on the teaching within the first year module (Marketing Fundamentals) and develops students' appreciation of consumer behaviour concepts while deepening their understanding of the ways in which consumer behaviour influences marketing decisions.

What was the rationale for introducing the practice?

To reduce staff workload and improve students' progression by implementing weekly online tests with feedback (25% of final grade) and to replace the end of module exam with 3 pieces of inter-related, progressively demanding, group-based, coursework (25% each). In addition, to establish electronic submission and marking of coursework for quicker turnaround as previously the module tutors had found it very tight to meet GCU assessment policy guidelines for a 3 week turnaround of results back to students.

How was the practice implemented?

Before REAP the module was assessed by:

1. Coursework comprising a 3 week individual diary which was used to inform a 2,500 word essay submitted in week 8 (40%):
Feedback in week 10
2. Group paper presentation (20%)
3. Exam based essay – Individual 3 hours in week 15 (40%)

The problems with this design were:

- Although students received their essays with feedback sheets, they were unable to use this feedback to enhance their performance via another assessment within the module.
- Turnaround of marking of c300 individual 2,500 word essays within the timescale was difficult for staff

- Students never asked for feedback from exams unless they failed.
- Overall the marking workload for academic staff in this module was heavy.

To address these issues it was identified that a complete redesign of the assessment regime for CBB was required. In this redesign it was recognised that not only would students greatly benefit from frequent formative feedback but also that this feedback should be designed to feed into a series of linked assignments. As a consequence the final exam was removed and the following assessment instruments were proposed:

1. weekly online MCQ tests, 12 in total students graded on best 10 submissions (25%)
2. 3 written group coursework exercises 'learning papers' (2000 words each) submitted in Week 3, 6 and 9,. Content and feedback from each of these submissions is designed to feed into the next (Each: 25% Total: 75%). Electronic submission and marking was also implemented to improve turnaround times for student grades and feedback.

Key features of this design are the distribution of linked assignments combined with frequent low stakes diagnostic quizzes. The aim in making these changes was to address the problems identified above as well as providing students with a framework which encourages:

- students to self assess and act upon feedback to improve performance;
- increased reading around the module topic via external references and the core textbook; and
- increased motivation via regular active engagement and distribution of effort.

Implementation of weekly online MCQs (25%)

For the purposes of the online MCQ quizzes the module leader selected questions from publisher content which accompanied the module's recommended text. This content was directly imported into the institution's VLE (Blackboard) as a course cartridge. For each of the weekly online test the module leader selected 10 questions from a possible 30. Each test was available for a period of 2 weeks following the relevant lecture. Students were allowed only one attempt at each test. Students were free to take the test anytime in the 2 week period and were encouraged to refer to lecture notes and their core textbook Because of the 'open' nature of the tests and to minimise opportunities for collusion, the order or the questions was randomised and question were revealed one at a time. On the submission of each answer students received immediate feedback relating to their response. Students were able to immediately access their results after completing the test and each student was able to see their final score as tests were completed. The mean mark from the student's 10 'best' scores was used to calculate their final grade.

Implementation of group coursework (75%)

Three inter-related group coursework assignments (25% each) were designed for submission in weeks 3, 6 and 9. The first coursework required the group to reflect upon and analyse their own experiences as consumers buying a chosen product or service and submit a written report. The second coursework required the group to generate consumer research data on the buying behaviour of this product or service by another consumer segment and make comparisons with their own experiences as identified in the first coursework. The final coursework required each of the groups to use both their first and second coursework exercises to underpin and inform a marketing strategy which they were to create for this product or service targeted at one consumer segment. Blackboard was used to provide detailed feedback for each group on all coursework exercises.

Evaluation

Interim evaluation was carried out informally and formally. Informally, in terms of opportunities for feedback and discussion from students and among the teaching team as the semester progressed. Formally, a discussion was facilitated with 3 members of the teaching team based around the FAST project 'Assessment Review Checklist'. Students were asked to respond to an online questionnaire at the end of May 2006 in Blackboard developed around the FAST project 'Assessment Experience Questionnaire' (67 students responded).

Future Plans

The weekly tests proved very successful both from a progression rate and from a student popularity perspective. Also it should be stated that the lack of first and second diet marking for staff was greatly appreciated. The only difference in planning for the on-line testing for next session is to make available a non- assessed test in week 1 for students to become familiar with the process.

The three staged learning papers required more consideration. It was too ambitious to mark and return these papers on-line in the time allocated especially given the knock on effect of the problems with the testing package and staff illness. At present the revised plan reduces the breadth and word count of the first paper and will be an individual submission, retains the second paper as a group paper as before, and marks the group third paper using model answers taken from this year's submissions. It is anticipated that this should reduce the staff workload a little more.

What resources were needed?

For the purposes of the weekly tests the availability of existing electronic content from the publisher, including MCQs, was essential. Linked to this was the availability of Blackboard which allowed the automated delivery and administration of tests to students. The input of staff should also not be overlooked. The pilot has also resulted in additional workload for members of staff to administrate and evaluate pilot activities. This workload is projected to improve with subsequent implementations.

Perceived Benefits

For students...

- Continuous assessment, particularly via MCQs, allow competition between students and are generally motivational
- Students encouraged to engage with core text earlier and throughout module
- Feedback mechanisms allow students to monitor their own performance and self-correct

For teaching/support staff...

- Removal of first and second diet marking and a move towards a distributed marking workload
- Reduction in marking workload [Staff workload: 993 hours (2005); 794 hours (2006)]
- Evidence of students being better prepared for seminar discussions

Issues/Challenges

For students...

- Students caught out by only one submission attempt for each weekly online MCQ
- Quality of the MCQs - Some students didn't find MCQs sufficiently challenging.
- Assessment design and criteria not clear to students
- Non engagement by individuals in group work (3rd year students taking module as an elective concerned that group performance will effect their honours classification)
- All three courseworks have the same weighting but require different levels of effort

For teaching/support staff...

- Technical difficulties 'tainted' the experiences of some of the students and required re-scheduling of submission dates as well as additional administration time to rectify
- Staff illness delayed return of feedback to some students so there was less time for students to use this to inform their next submission
- Group work makes it hard to identify if individuals are struggling

Enablers that Help/helped the Practice to Work

- Compatibility of publishers material with Blackboard
- Visiting other educators

Points of Advice

- Clarify with your students all assessment instructions at the very beginning so that they are clear as to what is expected from them
- If you experience technical difficulties keep your students regularly informed
- Make staff aware that removal of assessment end loading requires more marking during term time

Possible Improvements/Enhancements (suggested by the case study provider)

The weekly tests proved very successful both from a progression rate and from a student popularity perspective. Also it should be stated that the lack of first and second diet marking for staff was greatly appreciated. For the on-line testing in next session it is planned to make available a non-assessed test available in week 1 for students to become familiar with the process. There are also plans to develop the feedback in the MCQs to make them more informative for the students.

The three staged learning papers required more consideration. It was too ambitious to mark and return these papers on-line in the time allocated especially given the knock on effect of the problems with the testing package and staff illness. At present the revised plan reduces the breadth and word count of the first paper and will be an individual submission, retains the second paper as a group paper as before, and marks the group third paper using model answers taken from this year's submissions. It is anticipated that this should reduce the staff workload a little more.

Further Reading

Relevant publications by those doing case-study:

Relevant/influential/related publications in the research literature suggested by the case study provider:

Twigg Carol A. (2003) Improving Learning and Reducing Costs: New Models for Online Learning. *EDUCAUSE Review* September/October