

MyLab Business Communication educator study examines student performance at Morehead State University

Key Findings

- Data show that students who earned higher MyLab assignment scores also earned higher final course letter grades.
- Students completing all MyLab assignments earned average exam scores five percentage points higher than students who skipped at least one assignment.
- 87% of respondents on a voluntary, end-of-semester survey agreed that their understanding of the course material increased as a result of using MyLab.

Study Specifics

School name: Morehead State University, Morehead, KY

Course name: Business Communications

Course format: Face to face

Course materials: MyLab Business Communication for *Business Communication Today* by Bovee and Thill

Timeframe: Spring 2018

Educator: Dr. Donna Kizzier, Associate Professor

Results reported by: Candace Cooney, Pearson Results Manager

Setting

- Locale: mid-size, rural, four-year, public university located in northeastern Kentucky
- Enrollment: approximately 10,000 students
- Freshman retention rate: 66%
- Six-year graduation rate: 43%
- Ethnicity: 90% Caucasian, 3% African American, 1% Hispanic, 6% Other

About the Course

Donna Kizzier has been teaching for more than 43 years and has been at Morehead State University since 1999. Business Communications is a three-credit course enrolling approximately 400 students per year. The course introduces students to current foundations, processes, and practices in business communications that stress teamwork, human relations, ethics, demographic diversity, hands-on applications, social media, and global and cross-cultural communications. The focus is on written and oral communications and their application in organizations.

Challenges and Goals

Kizzier had been using a competitor's digital course companion for several years to encourage her students to take control of their own learning, but she found the interface and content was often challenging and overly complex. Looking for new course materials, she invited a group of students to sit in on presentations from three publishing companies to incorporate the student perspective in the decision. Students were provided with a rubric to ensure they were comparing the same assets from the presentations, and overwhelmingly chose MyLab™ for its breadth of assignments, personalized feedback, and intuitive design. In Spring 2017, Kizzier adopted MyLab Business Communication for her classes.

Implementation

Conscious of the fact that course materials can be expensive, Kizzier offers her students options when purchasing MyLab and the textbook. On an end-of-semester survey of her students, (66% response rate):

- 49% of respondents purchased the MyLab code/eText only, the least expensive option.
- 41% of respondents purchased a new print text with the MyLab code, the most expensive option.
- 10% of respondents purchased a used, print text with the MyLab code.

Generally, students prefer having options when purchasing their course materials, and are more satisfied when those materials have both relevance and impact, a statement supported by this same survey where 87% of respondents agreed that MyLab was a good value for the course.

Students use MyLab for understanding content, homework assignments, and quizzing. Kizzier views the MyLab assignments as formative, an opportunity for students to experiment and learn. Because the goal in assigning homework is mastery, students are given unlimited attempts at assignment completion. As one student on the survey said, *“Having numerous attempts on the questions, and receiving feedback on why something is wrong, was helpful for the future questions.”* The variety of MyLab assignments allow students to take ownership of their learning.

MyLab assignments

Kizzier requires four MyLab assignments: writing assignments, simulations, video exercises, and chapter quizzes. The MyLab chapter warm ups, Dynamic Study Modules, and grammar improvement exercises are optional, yet 68% of students on the survey indicated that they used these other resources for additional practice.

Decision-making Mini Sims: Simulations put Kizzier’s students in the role of manager as they make a series of decisions based on a realistic business challenge. The simulations change and branch based on their decisions, creating various scenario paths and strengthening critical thinking skills. Each simulation takes about 15–20 minutes to complete and students have unlimited attempts. Simulation results are reviewed as an in-class activity. On the student survey, respondents shared the following:

- 76% agreed that the Mini Sims helped them practice decision-making skills and apply the chapter content to a real-world business challenge.
- 80% agreed that the detailed report of their choices at the end of each simulation allowed them to see the consequences of the decisions they made.
- *“The simulations and videos are a useful supplement and assist greatly in better visualizing the text.”*
—Student

Video assignments: “Watch It” and “Think Like a Manager” videos explore a variety of business topics related to the theories students are learning and assess students’ comprehension of the concepts covered in each video. Videos are less than ten minutes in length, and students have multiple attempts at completing the five-question, multiple-choice quiz that follows. On the student survey:

- 80% of respondents agreed that the video assignments helped them visualize the chapter contents in action.

Chapter quizzes: Kizzier views chapter quizzes as a summative assignment, so students have just one attempt at completion. The quiz is a capstone assessment of understanding chapter content and includes three types of questions: recall, apply, and analyze.

Writing Space assignments

Kizzier agrees that writing assignments help students develop analytical and critical-thinking skills they need for business success. [Writing Space](#) assignments offer Kizzier's students the practice they need to hone their writing skills without sacrificing her time or the quality of the assessment. Using a customizable rubric, the auto-grading feature of Writing Space immediately scores student essays using artificial intelligence to go beyond recognizing key words and phrases and actually understands language and the nuances of meaning. Writing assignments are challenging, so students have five attempts at submission per assignment. Each assignment is 1–3 pages in length and includes one business research report or proposal.

Kizzier employs additional strategies to improve student writing which her students have reported as meaningful and successful.

- Students access Pearson Writer for research and basic writing mechanics, as well as [Grammarly](#) (a free online grammar check tool), before submitting their first draft in MyLab.
- MyLab incorporates English grammar and mechanics practice, helping students improve language and sentence structure.
- Students can receive personal tutoring from Kizzier throughout the writing process, in addition to assistance from the campus tutoring center — a critical resource for many ESL students taking the course.
- Prior to the final paper transmission, Kizzier works with select students on their writing assignments, personally coaching them through revisions while the rest of the class observes.

Other course assignments

Students work in teams on a communication analysis project involving a real-world organization, which includes both a written and oral component. The project is an analysis of the organization's communication goals including: positive and negative letters and messages, persuasive and marketing messages, internal oral communications, as well as external global communication. Two written, multiple-choice exams are also assigned.

Assessments

- 29% Corporate team analysis project
- 22% MyLab Writing Space assignments (6)
- 14% Oral performance
- 12% MyLab chapter quizzes (17)
- 11% MyLab video (17) and simulation (16) assignments
- 7% Exams (2)
- 5% Other team assignments

Results and Data

Figure 1 analyzes final course letter grades and average MyLab assignment scores, identifying that students earning higher average MyLab scores also earned higher final course grades.

- Students earning an A as their final course grade had average MyLab assignment scores 17 percentage points higher than students who earned a C as their final course grade, and 30 percentage points higher than students who earned an E as their final course grade. Please note: final course grading scale is A–E.

Data indicates that MyLab homework performance may be an indicator of successful course completion. As a

best practice, MyLab scores may help Kizzier identify students early on who might be at risk of poor overall course performance.

MyLab homework score and final course grades

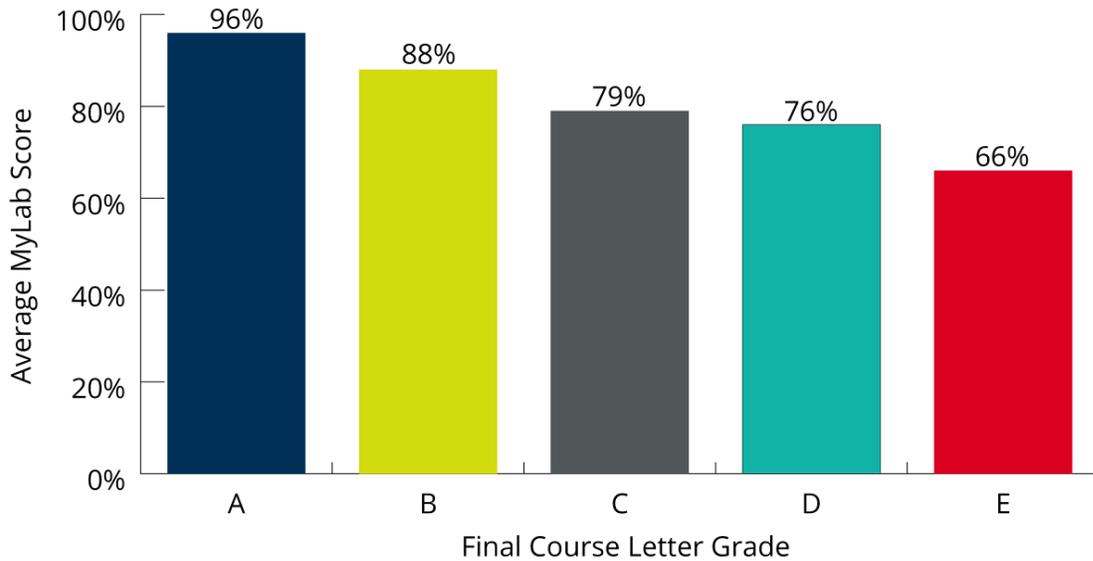


Figure 1. Relationship between Average MyLab Homework Scores and Final Course Grades, Spring 2018 (n=96)

Grouping students based on completion of MyLab homework assignments identifies that students completing all MyLab assignments earned average exam scores five percentage points higher than students who skipped at least one assignment (figure 2). For students, completion of the formative MyLab assignments is intended to help them identify where they are in terms of successfully completing the course exams.

MyLab homework completion and average exam score

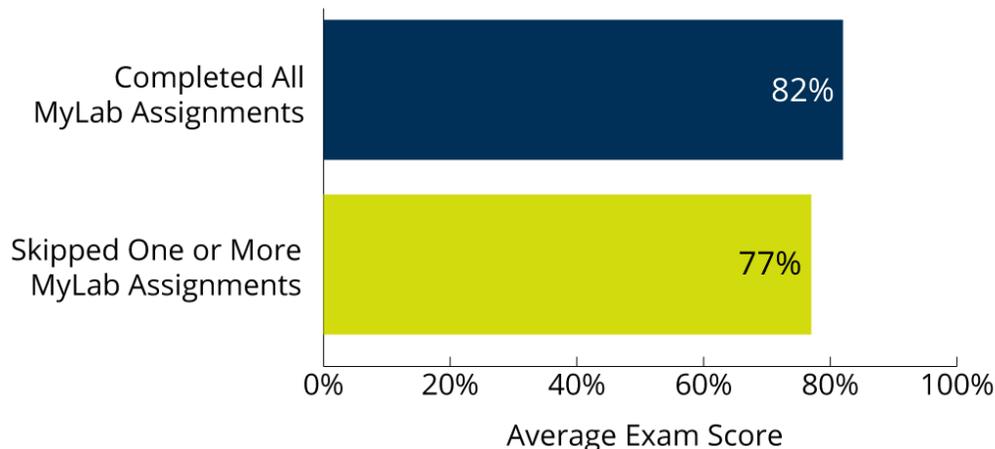


Figure 2. Relationship between MyLab Assignment Completion and Average Exam Score, Spring 2018 (n=96)

The Student Experience

Responses from the voluntary, Spring 2018, end-of-semester survey of Kizzier's students indicate that the majority of responding students recognize the value of MyLab Business Communication.

- 87% of respondents agreed that their understanding of the course material increased as a result of using MyLab.
- 87% of respondents agreed that the study resources in MyLab made the program a good value for the course.
- 84% of respondents agreed that they would recommend MyLab to another student.

Student responses to the question, “What were the benefits of MyLab?” include:

- *“MyLab enabled me in many ways to have the freedom of WHEN to do my assignments, which as a college student is a very big deal.”*
- *“MyLab helped me improve my writing skills and learn how to phrase sentences better.”*
- *“MyLab showed me how my writing changed throughout the semester.”*
- *“The quizzes were very helpful in reviewing and solidifying my understanding of the course material.”*
- *“Being able to get immediate feedback was the biggest benefit of MyLab.”*

Conclusion

MyLab offers Kizzier’s students many options for practice and revision, on their own schedule. Homework is formative and students have the opportunity to try, review, and try again, learning from mistakes and practicing concepts until they are confident. Writing assignments are auto-graded, and students are able to hone their writing and critical thinking skills while receiving personalized feedback to help them focus and produce more refined work. Students commented about these MyLab benefits on the survey: “MyLab let me work at my own pace and keep track of assignments,” and, “MyLab was easy to use and helped me see where I was struggling.” Kizzier’s students took advantage of the MyLab options, and those successfully completing MyLab assignments earned higher exam scores, showing mastery of course content.