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A MyLab Stats Story:

RMIT University

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Key Findings

Preety Pratima Srivastava, a Senior Lecturer at RMIT University, believes implementing MyLab Stats in her Business Statistics unit is very beneficial in many ways including:

- **The ability to edit content to emphasise topics specifically for unit goals**
- **Offering preset questions for study plans, homework and assessments make assigning practice work and constructing assessments easy**
- **Reducing administrative burden, helping to achieve her main unit goal of focusing on interpretation**
- **The algorithmic questions curb student cheating opportunities**
- **It adds value to her unit, increases student engagement, and supports student learning**

Summary

RMIT University is an Australian public research university located in Melbourne, Victoria, with additional campuses worldwide. In 2018, RMIT had a student enrolment of approximately 87,000 students and employed about 6,000 staff members. There are three academic colleges which are the College of Design and Social Context, College of Science, Engineering and Health, and College of Business.

In the College of Business, Preety Pratima Srivastava is an instructor teaching the Business Statistics unit where they currently utilise Pearson's MyLab Stats including the eBook for all students. She has been teaching for a total of 18 semesters, teaching this specific Business Statistics unit for 7 semesters with 4 of them utilising MyLab Stats. Srivastava believes MyLab Stats enables her to offer students an engaging platform to practice targeted concepts, as well as giving her the opportunity to edit assignments and assessments to adhere to unit goals.

Description of Course

Business Statistics at RMIT is a semester-long, first-year unit, that runs for 12 weeks (11 weeks of content and one week for revision). It is a large class running in both Semester 1 and Semester 2 with different students, with an approximate enrollment of 1300 students per semester. The unit uses an in person, face-to-face, delivery model. The unit consists of a two-hour lecture, followed a week later by a one-hour technical tutorial session. The prescribed textbook is *Basic Business Statistics. 5th Edition* by Mark Berenson, *et al.*

The students in the Business Statistics unit are all enrolled as undergraduates. Approximately 80% of the students are pursuing a Bachelor of Business degree, for which this is a core subject, whereas 20% of students enrolled are taking the unit as an elective. The majority of students attend university full-time, but about 5-8% of the overall



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class attend part-time, typically because they are also working or have additional commitments alongside study. Approximately 25% of the class are international students.

Struggling students have several options available for assistance. First, there are tutor consultations where students can review unit material with a tutor. Second, the university has a peer mentoring program called SLAMs, where students who excel in certain disciplines can help other students who need extra assistance. Srivastava believes students really appreciate this option, as she finds students respond extremely well to the peer-to-peer approach. There is also a study learning centre where students can meet with instructors for extra help outside the classroom.

Product Implementation

Starting in 2013, Srivastava began teaching at RMIT where MyLab Stats was already being used. At that time, MyLab was only being employed as a self-study component of the unit, due to the student purchase model in place. This meant MyLab was only used to deliver homework assignments, allowing students to consolidate learning, that were not graded. Currently, they continue to use MyLab for this self-study purpose, but have adopted MyLab for graded assessments as well.

MyLab Stats is used both inside and outside of the classroom. Outside of the class, students are assigned the Study Plan and homework, where Srivastava picks several questions per topic for students to complete at their own pace. These assignments do not contribute to their overall score and they are completed based on each individual students' motivation. To help guide the students, the feedback feature is turned on for these assignments, allowing students the opportunity to see where they excel and where they need improvement. In particular, students find the scaffolded learning support contained in the Learning Aid "Help Me Solve This" especially helpful. Algorithmic questions, which replace the numerical values in the question with alternative values, also provide students endless opportunities to practice and gain understanding. Occasionally, during tutorial class time students work on MyLab Stats and attempt one question. Srivastava believes this is helpful because it allows students the time to learn how to use MyLab Stats and all of its features. It gives students the chance to engage and get comfortable with its use.

Currently Srivastava utilises MyLab Stats for two online assessments. Students are given one attempt, and anywhere from one week to 10 days, to take the hour-long test. There is a penalty for late submission: students are allowed to take the test for five additional days, but there is a penalty of 10% per day on their score. If needed, however, students are allowed special consideration extensions, which would allow them a few additional days without penalisation, if granted. The individual student settings in MyLab Stats gives Srivastava the flexibility to manage these situations easily. While the two assessments offered through MyLab Stats account for 20% of the total grade (10% each), the other 80% is made up by a group assignment and final exam, each contributing 40%.

Prior to the two MyLab-based assessments, Srivastava sets practice questions to help students prepare for each test. Previously, she also offered a mock exam providing students practice questions, similar to actual final exam questions, in MyLab Stats. She typically uses the preset questions from MyLab Stats, editing them to only include the content covered in that particular unit, which does not always follow the textbook. Most of the questions she chooses are short answer, graphs and algorithmic questions, where students have to do calculations and give qualitative answers.



Overall, Srivastava used many MyLab Stats features including:

- Assignment Manager (10 times per week)
- Study Plan (once per week)
- eText (once per week)
- Gradebook (once per week)
- Reporting dashboard (once per week)

Instructor Experience and Perception

Srivastava's main goal for the Business Statistics unit is to give students knowledge of statistical techniques to analyse data, which will help them to make informed business decisions. Her focus for the unit is on facilitating students' understanding of interpretations rather than just calculations and theory.

Srivastava believes there are many benefits to utilising MyLab Stats. One is the ability to use and edit content coverage, which she states, *"helped us achieve what we wanted to achieve, which is to emphasise certain aspects of the unit, not everything that is in the textbook."*

The variety of question options through MyLab Stats for the assessments is another useful feature. She particularly liked the preset options, stating, *"I just love MyLab because you've got all the questions there."* Another huge benefit for Srivastava is the ability to edit questions to suit the main unit goal, which focuses on interpretation. In the past, teaching staff spent a significant amount of time organising and creating the assessment questions. Utilising already developed assessment questions has freed up a lot of time, easing the administrative burden.

"We feel that is an immense support towards our teaching. We can use that quality time towards something else, maybe innovating our teaching strategy, rather than spending time creating assessments for students. That's the best part I take out of it."

"It's the assessments we value more than anything."

Further, she appreciates the algorithmic questions on the assessments because she finds they allow for more rigorous testing, which is helpful in preventing cheating.

While the Study Plan and homework are optional for students, Srivastava finds them good indicators of engagement, because she can see the percentage of students that have completed the assignments. In addition, she believes it helps illustrate where students may be struggling, which indicates to her when there is a need to focus on particular topics in class and encourage further practice at home.

Srivastava finds MyLab Stats is especially beneficial for her students. She believes it gives them the flexibility to learn wherever is convenient for them and at their own pace, which is especially helpful for struggling students. *"(MyLab Stats) helps them learn at their own time and at their own pace, which is really good. It caters for the wide range of students we deal with."* In addition, she has received feedback from students in previous semesters saying they appreciated the chance to use MyLab Stats and thought it was very useful for studying.

According to Srivastava, all of the MyLab Stats components she utilises for her unit are very useful. She has also been very pleased with her experience implementing it, strongly agreeing to the following regarding MyLab Stats:



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- It is easy to use
- The process for registering is easy
- It adds value to her unit
- It supports student engagement
- It supports student learning
- She would recommend it to other instructors teaching similar units.

Conclusion

Overall, Srivastava has been very pleased with her experience implementing MyLab Stats in her Business Statistics unit. She believes it adds value to her unit, increases and helps monitor student engagement and supports student learning. She finds the preset assessments to be of great value as they ease staff burden and free up time for them to focus on other teaching and learning goals of the unit, as well as innovative teaching strategies. Overall, Srivastava found MyLab Stats very easy to use and the components to be highly useful.

"I believe (MyLab Stats) works smoothly. We appreciate all the features you have. It's been a really good experience."

Next Steps

Srivastava plans to continue utilising MyLab Stats in the future because of all the benefits she feels it adds to her unit. Moving forward, she hopes to offer exams on MyLab Stats because she believes it will bring even more value to learning and teaching in the unit.