



MyLab Finance experience with Ali Termos

School: American University in Bulgaria

Platform: MyLab Finance

Book: [Berk-DeMarzo: Fundamentals of Corporate Finance](#)



Pearson

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Course overview

I teach Finance at the University of Bulgaria. There are two well-known textbooks when you teach finance to undergraduate students. One is published by Pearson ([Berk-DeMarzo: Fundamentals of Corporate Finance](#)) and the other by one of Pearson's competitors in the market, both providing similar platforms. In the previous institution I was teaching at, I was actually used to teaching using the other one.

When I came here five years ago, however, the department was using the Pearson textbook, which, frankly, I found much better than the other one.

As an instructor, because you have so much teaching and research to do, you don't really have time to look at details; you already know the material and what it's about, so you prepare with what you know and must cover. Then, you walk into the classroom and use it. But then I started to read because students would come and ask me questions about the text.

I'm really attracted to the textbook. It is usually a complex topic for an undergraduate, but **it is written in a very seamless way.** I also use it for the executive programme.

I try to use the platform mainly to **assign homework.** **We don't have time to grade** - we teach 60 students in two cohorts. We try to give weekly homework, we have exams, and we also have other things to do daily. So, **we want the homework to be graded automatically,** at least. We are used to using these platforms for assigning homework now, so when Covid-19 hit in the spring of 2020, and we wanted to carry out our exams online, we found the platform to be the most natural way to do the exams and the safest to prevent cheating.

There were a lot of features I learned about the platform because, previously, we were only assigning homework for automatic grading. But **now we also tell students how to practice and how to make use of the resources available.**

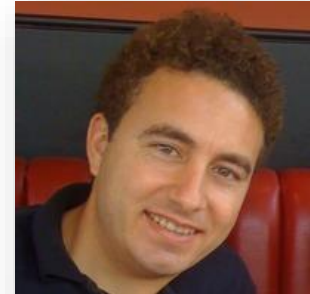
Usually, we don't really get any negative feedback from students because there is not much at stake. **It's just homework, and they learn from their mistakes.** But when they have to take tests and exams, we occasionally get complaints and resentment. During Covid, however, we had no option. So, we allowed students to answer the exams on the platform, but at the same time, we allowed them to use an Excel spreadsheet and upload the spreadsheet along with their feedback regarding the platform. So, we looked at the platform, saw if they had a wrong answer, and then looked at their answers in the Excel sheet to see if they had problems answering the question. It was cumbersome to do this kind of work, but we didn't have any option.

I had to deal with student resentment in many ways. Sometimes it is reflected when they evaluate their instructors at the end of the semester, and you see some resentment against using MyLab. But there are mainly happy experiences.

We're a small business school. We only have 400 students. In any given semester, we have three or four cohorts. On average, we have **20 to 30 students per class.** So, we have around 120 students taking this course per semester.

I asked our local Pearson representative Marina to give my students half an hour of **orientation** over the past two semesters at the beginning of each semester. She showed them how to register, how to use the platform, and how they can make good use of it and maximize the benefit.

“The main benefit is the time I saved teaching several sections of this course... Essentially, you want to optimise your time by using the platform, but you don't want to compromise the learning process.” - Ali Termos



Do you assign any credits for using MyLab Finance?

Around **20%** of the grade is on homework.

How did you integrate it into the curriculum?

We are thinking about **integrating MyLab Finance into Canvas** because it makes students use the platform more naturally.

How did you communicate the use of MyLab Finance to the students?

In the beginning, there was a need for more communication. Our local Pearson rep came and demonstrated MyLab Finance to the students on the **first day of class**. Marina and Aleksandra from Pearson were really accommodating. They provided their emails to students should they have any technical issues.

Throughout the semester, **I kept reminding them to use MyLab Finance**. I assigned **weekly homework**, and every time I assigned it, I would also send them an **email** with an announcement that I had just published their homework on MyLab Finance, along with the deadline.

I can also observe the usage time on MyLab Finance. I can see when students are using it. There is almost weekly use of it, and I can also see that some students use it more often to practice and so on - especially those who like Finance.

Specifically, what did you find to be the main benefits of using MyLab Finance?

The main benefit is the time I saved teaching several sections of this course. As I said, you need to grade homework, and MyLab Finance is a very helpful tool to do this.

At the same time, students are not getting **feedback** by just some AI or platform - it's **by you**. You can enhance it in the classroom. I take examples from the platform and review the problems in the classroom. I show them in class how to solve exactly the same problem they see in the platform, to familiarise them with the exercises.

This is to **bridge the gap** because sometimes they feel there is a gap between the text and the platform.

Essentially, you want to **optimise your time** by using the platform, but you **don't want to compromise the learning process**.



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Have you found changes to your students' engagement?

Those passionate about the subject are somehow partially influenced by the instructor and want to do everything. For those at the bottom of the class, or those taking the course only because it's required, any kind of bug in the system will make them anxious. So, there is one group who are adopters and another one who are followers. How can you win these people? By informing them, showing, and communicating to them that this is a useful tool and it's not there to threaten their learning or jeopardise their grades.

If you think back to the Covid-19 times and now - do you see any changes in your students' attitude?

We might need more research to answer this more accurately, but we have observed a decline in performance and interest.

The other day, I was talking to some of the successful students at our gala dinner. I asked them why this generation doesn't read. They said if something takes more than five minutes, they simply drop it. They are in the senior finance class, where they really need to read about what I ask them to.

One of the students said, "We Google it and see what people can say. And if any training lasts more than 15 minutes, I don't watch it." **They have a short focus and reading span.** I assume they just want to know what the subject is about, what problem it solves and how to solve it. That's all they are interested in. They don't read books or go to the library.

So, I think **the whole education industry must adapt.** Something has to be done. Other students are more engaged, more interested, and more hard-working. They are willing to put more time and effort into their studies. If they have a clear goal, they come to you. They are more interested.

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What do students say about MyLab Finance?

Generally, they like the platform.

What advice would you give to those who are considering using MyLab Finance?

You must communicate with your students at every step from registration.

Also, before assigning homework or exams, **test the settings**. For example, you can set the number of attempts students can take an exam. If you give them the possibility for more attempts, do consider that, for the second attempt, they will need to restart the whole exam. Calculate how much time you want to give them, and so on.

Basically, you really need to take everything into consideration, from the beginning to the end.

If you'd like to learn more about MyLab Finance, please visit

<https://www.pearson.com/en-gb/higher-education/products-services/mylab.html>

