

Pearson Custom Solution

EDUCATOR TESTIMONIAL HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY



COURSE:	Competitive Strategy (Postgraduate) Strategic Management (3rd Year)
TEXT IN USE:	Personalised printed textbook based on <i>Exploring Strategy</i> by Johnson, Whittington & Scholes
USED SINCE:	2012
SUMMARY:	With a real desire for his strategy students to have access to a good textbook for their studies, this Heriot-Watt University lecturer created a bespoke textbook that contained the module content and structure he required. Students now feel they get better value for money and the lecturer is pleased that students have a textbook they will now fully utilise both in their current studies and future careers.
SUBMITTED BY:	John Sanders , School of Management and Languages

The challenge

Price became prohibitive for students to purchase the standard text, which led to declining sales. As a consequence of declining book sales most students were not reading the necessary course material in detail. In addition, compared to previous years, students were less engaged in the subject area and this was reflected in declining lecture attendance.

For strategy in particular, a textbook is important for post-university employment – it will be a key reference throughout a student's career. If a student regularly uses the textbook, he or she will become familiar with it and then it's easier to know where to look in the future when dealing with real-life work situations.

The solution

After my Pearson Account Manager explained the option of creating a bespoke textbook for my students, it was a simple decision to go for it. There weren't any departmental barriers, as the resourcing choice for my course is entirely mine. My bespoke textbook includes 9 chapters from the standard textbook, arranged in the order I teach my course. In my lecture slides I provide links to chapters in the bespoke textbook. My lecture material usually focuses on a particular subject area

Course description

There are ~200 students on the postgraduate course who really keep you on your toes as they are highly motivated and engaged. They come to their studies with business experience and are eager to learn the theories that explain and underpin what they have seen and been involved in; as a result, they ask lots of questions in class and most purchase the course textbook.

The undergraduate students are much harder to engage as their attitudes towards this course have changed in recent years – they are less enthusiastic than they were. There is less interaction in lectures and they seem to see it as a passive experience rather than an opportunity to discuss and explore the subject.

I used the Johnson, Whittington & Scholes textbook myself as a student and have been a long-term adopter since teaching this subject. I follow a similar structure although I tend to take bits out of the book and build on them, going into more depth. This means I can't cover the whole textbook in the course.

It's an added benefit that my name and the Heriot-Watt University logo are on the cover, as students now perceive that they are receiving content that is entirely geared to their needs.

in detail, while the textbook provides a nice overview of the theory and key concepts involved. On "Vision", our Blackboard VLE, I share the lecture slides, my own case studies and articles, all linked to the relevant chapter in the bespoke textbook. I also link to additional learning in the form of YouTube videos from experts, TV programmes and company strategies on their websites.

Pearson Custom Solution

EDUCATOR TESTIMONIAL
HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY

The results

The vast majority of postgraduate students now purchase the bespoke textbook since its introduction – it's nice to see students no longer relying on library copies. Whilst course results have not dramatically improved for the postgraduate students (small increase), knowing more students are reading the text is pleasing. Certainly in the past, many students were not even bothering to read the course textbook at all. As far as the undergraduate course, just a modest increase in student purchases of the bespoke textbook has occurred.

Moreover, I no longer receive negative feedback about the course textbook. In previous years students complained about price and the fact they didn't use all of the book's content for the course. This was what motivated me to create the bespoke textbook. Students now seem to follow the book/course more easily.

The Pearson service

I already had a good historical relationship with Pearson as a long-term adopter of the textbook; they visit regularly and keep me updated with all my options including personalised resources. It helped that Pearson had the content I needed so I didn't have to change textbook. My Pearson Account Manager was very encouraging and always available to help. In fact it was a very simple process to create a bespoke textbook – I could easily choose the content and arrange it to match my course structure. It was straightforward to review it before it was printed and my Account Manager supported my First Day of Class with presentations explaining the bespoke textbook availability to my students.

“It was a very simple process to create a bespoke textbook – I could easily choose the content and arrange it to match my course structure.

We're now looking at expanding personalised resources to our overseas campuses, and across more courses, to improve the consistency of teaching and student experience. ”

Conclusions

- Creating a personalised resource was a constructive and positive course development for me, as everything is now integrated, aligned and consistent.
- It's an added benefit that my name and the Heriot-Watt University logo are on the cover, as students now perceive that they are receiving content that is entirely geared to their needs.
- Students like the lower price but they are still getting all the learning content they need.
- We're now looking at expanding personalised resources to our overseas campuses, and across more courses, to improve the consistency of teaching and student experience.