



Adam Smith Business School

Subject: Accounting & Finance

Class/ course: Management Accounting: A Business Decision Emphasis

Student numbers: 132

Technology: None

Learning Benefits:

- Students practice to critically evaluate work
- Students are able to observe alternative approaches to the question
- Research has found that the group answers tend to be better than the individual answers

Academic staff: Kirsten W. Kininmonth

The issue

- To build evaluative judgement
- To improve the ability to work in groups
- To reduce stress and anxiety

The method

During classes students had been asked to answer a series of 15 multiple choice questions (a mix of numerical and theoretical) alone and then in groups. A two-stage process entails that students first answer the questions individually, then discuss the question in groups and submit a single group answer. Groups were asked to indicate if all members of the group agreed with the final answer or if there was dissent. The exercise took approximately 1 hour with some breaks between activities. This was replicated twice during the semester, once prior to the in-class test and once towards the end of the teaching period. During the second run the exercise was interjected with questionnaires for research purposes.

The results

Students enjoyed the exercise. The two-stage approach also allowed students to reflect on their own preparation and their approach to questions. There appear to have been real learning benefits for students from such self-reflection. For example, when asked what they had learned students said that they realised that they should have read outside the core reading, included more examples, or structured their answer differently. Students also

reported that the exercise highlighted to them where they should be undertaking additional reading and study prior to the in-class test and final examination.

While theory predicts that student grades in the two-stage question should be higher, it is unclear whether the two-stage answers of students were significantly better than the individual answers.

What worked well?

- Students were eager to engage with the process: during classes students organised themselves into groups without being prompted and were comfortable discussing answers with those in their group.
- When the lecturer observed groups it was encouraging to see so much discussion of topics and the confidence students had to argue with their group that they were correct in their answers/assumptions.
- Students reported they found it helpful, not only for study and revision, but to demonstrate to them quite how much they already knew and understood, and students reported that this gave them a boost of confidence before undertaking assessments.

What could have worked better?

- Some groups were reluctant to admit there was dissent amongst group members when filling in the group worksheets, although this dissent could be observed by the lecturer as they interacted with students during the exercise. It would have been useful to record the session so that those disagreements could have been captured and discussed.



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