

Case Study

**UiT,
The Arctic
University
of Norway**

Faculty of Bioscience,
Fisheries and Economics



About the University



Professor Øystein Myrland

UiT, the Arctic University of Norway, is the northernmost university in the world and home to 12,000 students and 2,700 staff. Teaching is research-based, with its seven faculties offering a broad range of study programmes.

All courses offered at its Business School require students to study a methodological course such as Statistics as part of their bachelor programme.

The Challenge

The university has been through big changes in the past six years which have combined to increase the work of the Economics team, led by Professor Øystein Myrland. In 2009, The University of Tromsø merged with Tromsø University College and then again with Finnmark University College in 2013. This meant that, having originally operated as just a small department, the Economics team found itself part of an enlarged business school within one large faculty of Bioscience, Fisheries and Economics. Once within the business school, the subject became more visible and popular, so that now 16% of students study Economics, equalling 1,300 students in total. In turn, this meant that the number of students on Professor Myrland's introductory Business Economics and Statistics course increased tenfold from an average of 20 and a maximum of 30 students to 300-350 students.

The Solution

Realising the implications this would have on his course, Professor Myrland sought a solution and came across Connect® from McGraw-Hill Education.

“The department was not set up to deal with such numbers,” said Professor Myrland. “With limited resources we knew that we would find it challenging to run the course with this number of students. With Statistics in particular, students must practise over and over again to improve their skills, so they are continually submitting work for us to grade. We simply did not have the time to devote to marking work, never mind the rest of the tasks we have to do.”

“As soon as I discovered Connect I could see how it would help us. I particularly liked the fact it is very user-friendly, both from the student and instructor perspective. The interface is great and allows me to manage material easily. The digital textbook was very appealing too because it includes plenty of practice exercises.”

The Results

Professor Myrland has had wholly positive feedback from students about the benefits of using the Connect system. They are impressed with the instant feedback they receive which is particularly helpful as they prepare for their final examinations.

“Having run this course for some 15 years now I feel it is definitely better with Connect. It is difficult to mark and interact with 300+ students otherwise.

“Connect is allowing me to save a huge amount of time previously spent on preparing and grading material. I used to set two large homework assignments each semester, which took a lot of time. But now after we finish each of the 17 chapters in the eBook I set a small home assignment of just three to four questions each. That’s 17 assignments, rather than two. Having spent a great deal of time researching teaching techniques, especially in courses like mine where students need lots of practice, I know that frequency is key to success.

“Another vital factor in improving student engagement and attainment is the ability for me to track student behaviour. I have tried many different strategies for this in the past, but generally they all involved me having to micro-manage the students which could take a whole day of my time every few weeks.

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“But the neat thing about Connect is that it allows me to track student behaviour easily because the system logs when they are on it. So I can see work patterns which show that those students who engage with the system most regularly are getting the better grades. I pass this on to my students in the hope it will encourage them to engage with their studies at an earlier stage. The mobility options that Connect offers means that engagement shouldn’t be a problem because it allows the students to do their work anywhere, any time. This option is also useful for me – it is very convenient.

“While we await detailed figures, I can gauge our success by comparing the university’s performance against the national average for Norway.”

