

End Report

Program Advisory Examination and Tutoring

End Report
2013-2014 Trimester 2



RSM
**Student
Representation**

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Introduction

The Program Advisory: Examination and Tutoring committee is eager to work together with the BA and IBA program management and students to improve examinations and workshops at RSM. Examinations and workshops are of high concern to the students, as it accounts for a major part of their grades at RSM.

The topics researched this trimester are: exam time and content distribution, Microeconomics & Markets workshop, and Statistische methoden & technieken workshop.

The committee aims to reflect the students' opinions as truthfully as possible. The committee will bring forth, on behalf of the students, recommendations and room for improvement for the topics. We hope that the outcomes of the report are valuable and can be implemented by the Program Management.

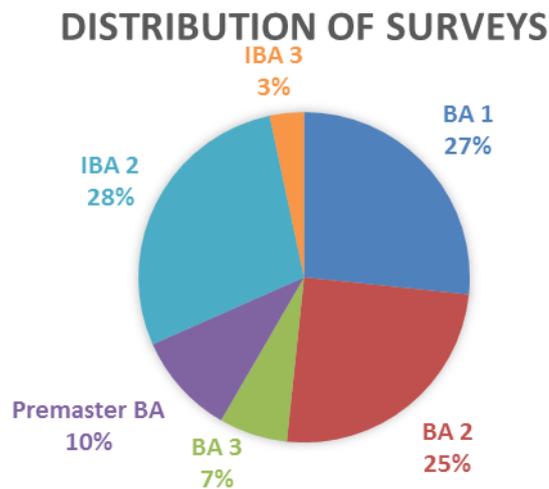
Sincerely,

The Examination and Tutoring Committee
Program Advisory

Methodology

During this trimester, the committee has gathered responses and feedback from students through surveys, which have been distributed to students personally. The committee believes that a direct, more personal approach to students will allow us to acquire better results than distributing them through social media and online survey platforms. Furthermore, the SR Focus Group was again a success, and we gathered feedback on Microeconomics and Markets and Statistische methoden & technieken workshops.

The survey on examination time and content distribution were combined, as they were topics on a similar subject. 60 surveys were given to BA and IBA students and also Premaster students. The distribution is shown in the pie chart beneath.



For the IBA course Microeconomics and Markets, surveys have been spread extensively to cover one workshop of every tutor. As such, 50 first year students were asked to fill in this survey. In addition, 10 re-takers were asked to fill out this survey as well: 8 second year and 2 third year students.

For the BA course Statistische methoden & technieken, we distributed surveys among second year and premaster students. In total, 23 2nd year students and 8 premaster students filled in the survey. Fewer surveys were distributed to the premaster students to reflect the smaller premaster student body as compared to the BA student body.

Subject 1: Content Distribution in Examinations

When the course content covers a wide range of topics, it is difficult for a professor to examine all of the topics. Our research focused on if the course content is evenly distributed in an exam. Furthermore, an important question that we asked was: do professors emphasize on the more critical topics during lectures?

Feedback from Surveys:

Figure 1 shows the results to the question: what do students think about the spread of course content across the exam? On a scale of 1-5, a low score means that it is unevenly distributed, and a high score means that it is evenly distributed. Our findings show that premaster BA and BA first year students are quite positive that the content is evenly distributed, where they gave an average score of 4 and 3.9, respectively. However, both BA and IBA second year students were less positive about the distribution, where they gave a score of 3.7 and 3.4, respectively.

What do students think about the spread of course content across the exam?

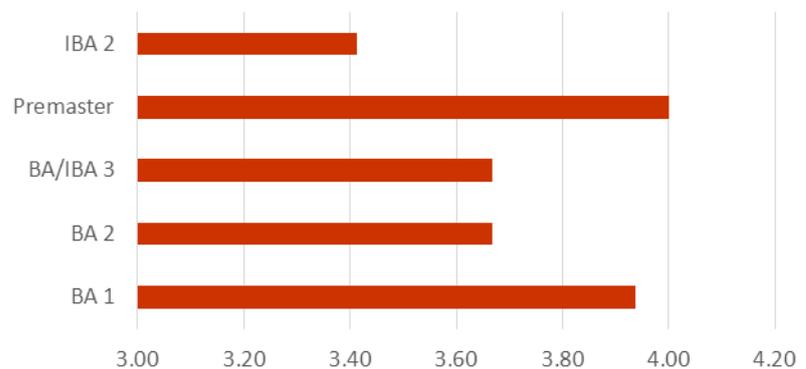


Figure 1: students' opinion of the spread of course content

We asked if the students could name the courses where the exams content were not evenly distributed. This question was answered by 22 BA respondents and 10 IBA respondents. The results are shown in the table below.

Study	Subject	Frequency
BA	Marktcontext	7
	Inleiding in de Bedrijfskunde	6
	Oriëntatie op Ondernemen	5
	Financiële Processen	5
	Corporate finance	1
	Wetenschapsleer	1
	Macro-economische en institutionele context	1
	Leadership, Sustainability & Governance	1
IBA	Macroeconomics and Context	4
	Cross Cultural Management	4
	Microeconomics and Markets	4
	Philosophy of science	2
	Applied Business Methods	2
	Quantitative Decision Making	2
	Operations Management	2
	Leadership, Sustainability & Governance	2

Table 1: list of subjects with uneven exam content distribution

Lastly, with a relatively high average score of 3 out of 5, students conveyed that it sometimes happens that the course content is unevenly spread evenly over the exam.

We also asked the respondents what they thought about the amount of time the professor spent on teaching the examinable content. About 66% of the respondents thought that the professor spends sufficient time on teaching the examinable content. Even then, 44% of the students thought that the professor could put a greater emphasis on important, examinable content in their lectures and workshops. As for the specific courses, 33% of BA students mentioned 'Marktcontext', and 20% of IBA students mentioned 'Leadership, Sustainability and Governance'.

About 48% of all respondents mentioned that there is sufficient time between the last lecture and the exam. When we asked which courses had a small time lapse, they mentioned 'Oriëntatie op Ondernemen (19%)'. 33% of the respondents also named Management Accounting. BA1 students also mentioned mathematics 2 times out of the 2 responses as a course with a small time lapse.

Solution According to PA:

Luckily, it does not happen often that the exams do not match the course content. But to prevent this issue to come up more often, PA things that the lecture slides should indicate what is important to study carefully in the book. It is also important that the professor posts a practice exam for the students. This way the students can see how the distribution of content looks on the exam and are able to prepare the final exam properly. Professors could have more office hours towards the exam, so that students can ask questions. And because many students may have similar questions, the professors should utilize the "Discussion" function on BlackBoard, and reply to questions within 2 working days, so that queries could be clarified immediately.

Checklist to Improve the Problem:

We suggest the following:

- Professors should indicate what is important to study for the exam.
- Professors should allocate more time on explaining the important concepts.
- There should always be a practice exam that portrays the distribution of content on the exam, and also the level of the content that will be examined. This way, students can practice and work on the areas that they are weak in.

Subject 2: Time Needed for Examinations

The time needed for an examination for different subjects is investigated this trimester. The biggest concern is to find which subjects needed more or less time than the time that was given. We will discuss our findings in this report.

Feedback from Surveys:

From the pie chart in Figure 2, we can conclude that 85% of the students think the time given for an exam is sufficient. The BA students respondents include 39 positive answers out of the 41 total respondents and the IBA students gave 12 positive answers out of 19 total respondents. This means that it is not often that students need more time than the time given.

How do students feel about the time given for an exam?

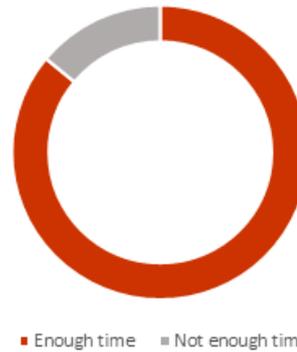


Figure 2: opinion on time given for an exam

Course name	Time given	Time needed
More time		
Wiskunde	2	3
Financiële Processen	3	3.5-4
Primaire Processen	3	3.5-4
ORMO	2	3
Corporate Finance	3	3.5
Strategic Management	3	3.5
Exactly the time given		
Statistics, Philosophy of Science, Mathematics, Operations Management		
Less time		
Management Accounting (Midterm)	2	1
Oriëntatie op Ondernemen	2	1.5
Methodologie	3	1
Inleiding in de Bedrijfskunde	3	1
Leadership, Sustainability & Governance	3	1
Organizational Behavior	3	2
Quantitative Decision Making	3	1.5
Applied Business Methods	3	1.5
Organizational Theory and Dynamics	3	1.5

Table 2: time given and time needed for BA and IBA exams

When we asked the students if they have ever experienced a lack of time during the exam, they named a couple of similar courses. BA courses are indicated in Dutch, and IBA courses are indicated in English. The courses that were frequently mentioned were Primaire Processen, Wiskunde, Financiële Processen, Corporate Finance and ORM0. The commonality is that they all mathematical subjects that require calculation. There are also a lot of courses mentioned when we asked if the students need less time than given. It is noticeable that these are courses with only theory multiple choice questions. And

most students finish these kind of exams quick. A summary of the results are shown below in Table 2.

Solution According to PA:

Even though some subjects needed less time than the time given, we think the professors should not change the time given to the exams, because the results in the table indicate the **average** time needed. Hence, different students would need a different amount of time. Furthermore, the time given for an exam is sufficient, but the exam length is more of a problem. Professors should check the time needed for every question. Furthermore, professors should indicate the score that can be received for each question, so that students can decide if it is worth it for them to spend more time on each question. Lastly, professors should also always place a practice exam, so that students know which areas that they are weakest in, and can spend more time to work on that area.

Checklist to Improve the Problem:

We suggest the following:

- Professors should indicate the score that can be obtained for each question
- There should always be a practice exam that portraits the distribution of content on the exam, and also the level of the content that will be examined. This way, students can practice and work on the areas that they are weak in.

Subject 3: Microeconomics & Markets Workshops

This trimester, an extensive survey regarding the IBA course Microeconomics and Markets was conducted. Perceived as one of the most difficult IBA1 courses, with many people re-taking the course every year, it is understandable that students would need extra help. This assistance exists in the form of workshops. During these workshops, important exercises are solved, course materials are discussed, and any questions regarding the course are answered. Additionally, bonus points can be earned through participating in experiments. However, some students complained that substantial differences between tutors exist. This is, of course, worthy of a proper research. In this report, tutor and teaching assistant are used interchangeably.

To get a proper understanding, 10 surveys were distributed to one workshop from each of the 6 tutors. As we regarded that the feedback from re-takers are very important, we also included surveys from the tutor who teaches the re-takers group. With the belief that the quality of tutors should be consistent, the focus here is on the quality of the tutors in general, and not to pinpoint certain tutors. To keep the tutors' identity anonymous, we will refer each tutor as a randomized number (e.g. tutor 1, tutor ..., tutor 6 for the rest of the report).

Feedback from Surveys:

First of all, students ranked on a scale of one to five the tutor's grasp of English, overall knowledge of the subject, quality of workshop slides, engagement with students, preparation of workshops, and ability to explain the content. The survey results show that the differences in responses were substantial. For example, for the quality of slides, tutors 1 and 6 both had a high score of 4 out of 5, whereas tutor 5 had a low score of 2 with the remark that there were mistakes in the slides. A similar situation was encountered for the preparation for the workshops, where some tutors scored a low score of 2 out of 5, while others scored a high score of above 4. All tutors scored a relative equal score on engagement and grasp of language. All in all, it is clear that differences between the tutors exist.

Average satisfaction score of tutors

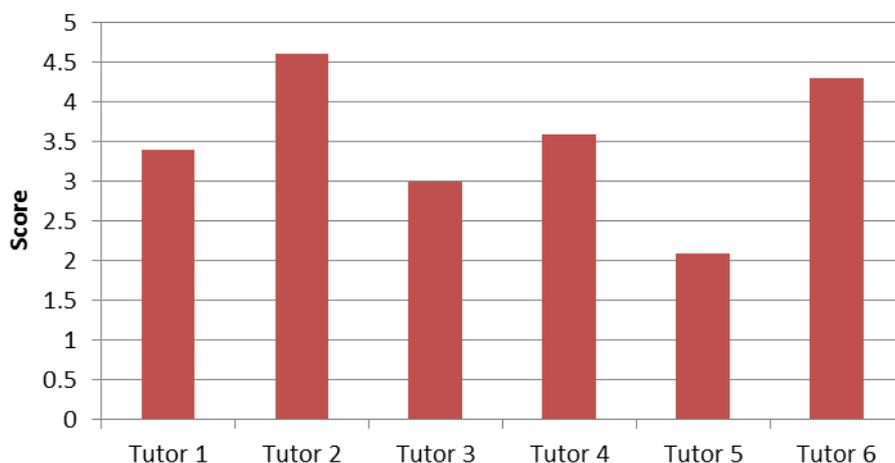


Figure 3: satisfaction scores on average for tutors

Students were then asked if they are satisfied with their tutor. Results are shown below. Averages of each score were taken to represent the data better, because some scores had equal frequencies.

Relative differences might be small, but the difference of 2.5 points between the best and worst score is not to be taken lightly. In addition, it appeared that students who gave a lower satisfaction rating about their tutor also gave a lower rating in the question whether they felt prepared for the upcoming exam or not. Result is shown below. This time, the highest frequency could be used as there were no ties.

Confidence in upcoming exam after the workshops

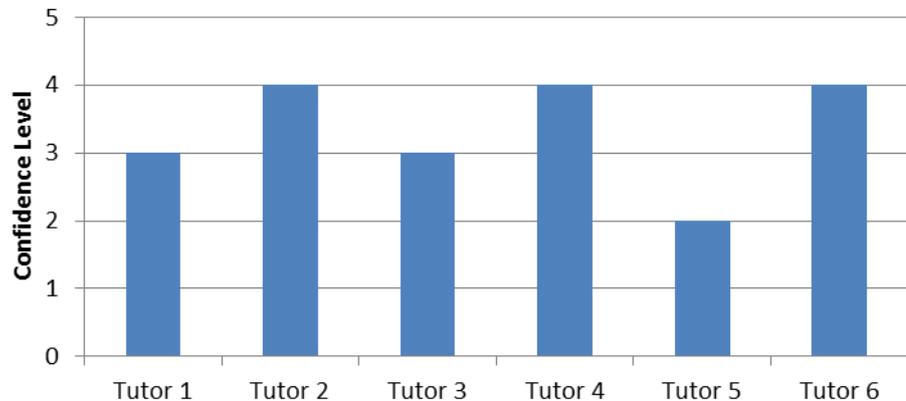


Figure 4: confidence scores for the upcoming exam

On a highly positive note, re-takers were the most positive about their tutor. For all the criteria that the tutor was judged on, this tutor most frequently received a score of either 4 or 5 out of 5. This is indeed very positive and definitely a good sign. Furthermore, the re-takers also felt the most positive about the upcoming exam relatively speaking, which is a good thing as well.

Most students were either indifferent or neutral about the fact that each tutor is responsible for his own PowerPoint slides. However, meanwhile, a significant proportion (27%) of the students stated that it would be better if the slides were all the same. One student wrote that "you don't know whether you are missing out", and another student noted that "you might be at a disadvantage in case another tutor their slides are better". However, another student also noted that "all PowerPoint slides from all workshops can easily be accessed on blackboard". Regardless, it is arguably a tedious job to search for the 'best' slides.

Students were also asked what their opinions were that some teaching assistants are also private tutors. 80% of the students were indifferent, suggesting they do not really care about their tutor's activities outside the classroom.

Finally, the students are not fully in consensus regarding the fairness of the way bonus points are earned or is the bonus points enhanced your learning experience. Some of them really like it, while some don't. Perhaps as this requires some sort of luck, some were more fortunate than others. Furthermore, many of the students did not clearly understand how the bonus points are earned, suggesting that clearer information should be provided to the students.

Feedback from Focus Group:

Similar to the survey results, students expressed a desire in having uniform slides for all workshops to enhance the learning experience. However, one student called it a "scam" that "workshops are being taught by second years with no deep knowledge of the

subject”, because this is a phenomenon that is not encountered in other universities. Students confirmed that, last year, the quality of tutors differed as well. Furthermore, students cannot choose which workshop to attend, and some students may have to go to a workshop with a poor tutor, despite that there are other workshops with better tutors.

On the plus side, students brainstormed the idea that the opportunity to become a TA should be advertised properly. That way, there is a higher chance of receiving good applicants, and there is also a broader pool of applicants to choose from. Currently, a small SIN-online message is the only form of promotion. Students also thought that a whole selection process could be integrated for every course that needs a teaching assistant. Finally, students thought that teaching assistants should attend a workshop on how to effectively bring the content across to students. That way, the TA will be more effective which in turn will improve both the student satisfaction and accomplishments. This year, microeconomics TAs were more or less selected on the first come basis.

Solution According to PA:

Without a doubt, microeconomics tutors and workshops are needed to help students. What the course coordinator could do is to base his/her tutor selection decisions on a wide range of criteria such as level of English, grade for the subject, assertiveness and knowledge of the course, including having to interview the applicants before they are selected, or test their knowledge before hiring them. Furthermore, TA positions need to be properly advertised to have a larger pool of good applicants. Moreover, TAs should have a deep knowledge of the subject, and be able to explain the concepts clearly. Meaning, only students with a deep knowledge should be tutors. Also, the tutors should through training to enhance their teaching skills. Lastly, as for the slides issue, perhaps the tutors could all work together to create a high-quality set of slides, or the course coordinator could release a uniform workshop slides that are applicable to all workshops. This way, possible mistakes in the slides are prevented as well.

Checklist to Improve the Problem:

It is in the interest of the students and course coordinators to solve this issue with the best of their ability, so that students can obtain a proper-understanding of the subject. We suggest the following:

- Discuss the feedback with tutors. We assume this already occurs on a regular basis, but perhaps this additional bit of information is deemed useful.
- Try to look for useful criteria to judge a TA on. Possibilities include but are not limited to: level of English, grade for the subject, assertiveness and of course knowledge on the course.
- Explore the possibilities of integrating uniform slides for all TAs. This works in the advantage of the TAs too, as they become more prepared for their workshops.
- Explore the possibilities of having people with a deep knowledge of the subject as TAs. This suggestion is applicable to all subjects.
- Compulsory training for tutors to enhance their teaching skills
- Consider the advertisement of the teaching assistant positions, and with which methods. It is definitely worth it for the sake of the students’ learning experience, and the good reputation of RSM.

Subject 4: Statistische methoden & technieken (SMT) Workshops

If you ask third year BA students which Bachelor course they think that is the hardest to pass, most of them will say: 'the SMT course!' In general, this course is considered to have the most difficult content, and therefore it is highly important that the instructions, content, and assignments of the course are explained clearly and thoroughly. SMT contains an exam and a case assignment, which both counts for fifty percent of the final course grade, and both components should also be passed with a minimum grade of 5.5 each. The case is partly explained in the lectures, but there are also workshops where students should be able to ask questions. These workshops are of significant value for the clarity of the case and should therefore be of high quality. Lastly, only BA students are researched, because the course content for SMT and Applied Business Methods are different.

Feedback from Surveys:

We gathered feedback from second year BA and premaster BA students who undertook the SMT course, and table 5 **Fout! Verwijzingsbron niet gevonden.** shows the results. If we look at the overall satisfaction of the tutor, and also the tutors' knowledge of the subject, the results from

the survey indicate that most students are relatively satisfied (77.4% with an average overall score above 3 points on a 5-point scale). However, if we look at the quality of the workshop slides, the engagement with students and the preparation for the workshops, there is room for improvement.

If we look at the quality of the workshops in general, it seems that a significant proportion of the students are relatively negative about the way they are organized (38.7% with an average overall score equal or lower than 3 points on a 5-point scale).

Quality of the tutor

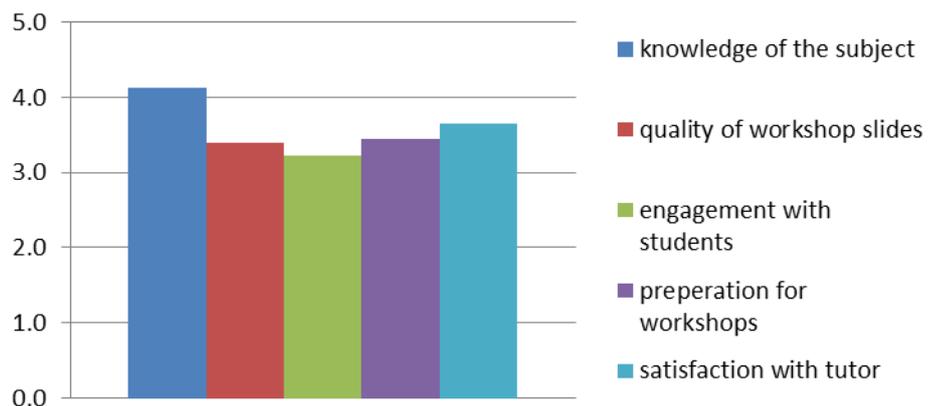


Figure 5: quality of SMT workshop tutors

The quality of the workshops

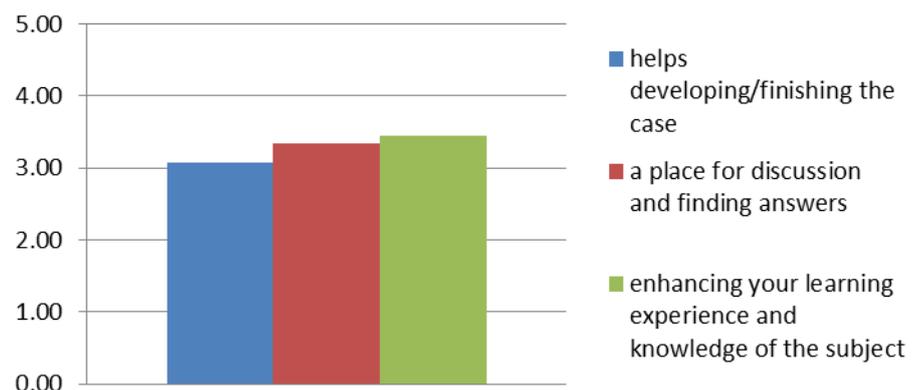


Figure 6: quality of SMT workshops

The goal of the workshops is to 1) help students with the problems that they face when they are grasping the case assignment and conceptualizing their ideas. However, this is precisely one of the weak points of the workshops, which means that the workshop does not fulfill its purpose well. Furthermore, we also asked students if 2) workshop is a place to discuss and find answers, and it also scored relatively poorly. This is further supported by the comments from students, such as "The tutor is way too busy" and "It takes a while before I can ask a question". Students indicated that they feel relatively helpless in these workshops because the tutors do not have time for them, and these quotes indicate that the availability of the tutor is a very important aspect of the workshop. Lastly, we asked students if 3) the workshops enhance their learning experience, and it also scored poorly. Looking at Figure 6 **Fout! Verwijzingsbron niet gevonden.**, it shows that there is room for improvement on all three aspects. A probable cause for the poor quality of the workshops is its sheer size, where more than 51% of the students think that the workshops are too big!

Feedback from Focus Group:

The students were all very positive about the workshop tutors, but the problem they came up with was that there are too few of them. This is consistent with the findings from the surveys, where most of the students said that the workshops are too big. Because there are too few tutors students have to wait a long time for questions to be answered. For example the answering of a question sometimes takes 10 minutes so when there are two people waiting for the tutor to help them they sometimes have to wait for 20 minutes or more to have their question answered.

Solution According to PA:

The quality of the SMT workshops is reasonable, but there is an urgency to improve the size of the workshops. Students feel helpless in the workshops because the tutors do not have time for them, and having more tutors would solve this problem (and also solve the issue with the workshop size). This would increase the amount of time that the tutors have to help the students and give them a better answer. Furthermore, the quality of the workshop would be enhanced, because students have more opportunity to ask the critical questions in the workshops. Furthermore, it would allow them to fully utilize their time in the workshops to work on their assignment, because they do not have to waste a lot of time to wait for their tutor to respond.

Checklist to Improve the Problem:

In order to improve the quality of the SMT workshops, we recommend the following steps:

- Ensure that the SMT tutor positions are properly advertised to ensure a larger pool of good candidates
- Check how many tutors are assigned for the SMT workshops this year, and how many more tutors are needed to be assigned to make that the tutor to student ratio is not too big. E.g. a good size would be 25:1
- Select new tutors on the basis of their knowledge of the subject (e.g. Master's and PhD students), and their ability to explain the subject well

Conclusion

This trimester, we gained a lot of insight on the spread of content in examinations, the time needed for examinations, and the workshop quality of two of the toughest subjects: Microeconomics and Markets for IBA students, and Statistische methoden & technieken (SMT) for BA students.

For the spread of content in examinations, students generally have the perception that the course content is somewhat evenly distributed, but there is still room for improvement. Almost half of the students thought that there is sufficient time given between the last lecture and the exam, but that a greater emphasis should be put on the examinable content in their lectures and workshops. There needs to be a better information flow from the professors, and they need to explicitly indicate and spend enough time explaining the important content. Most importantly, they need to provide practice examinations that are indicative of the level of the exam and the content spread.

As for the time needed for examinations, vast majority of the students believe that there is sufficient time given for examinations. However, the examination length is more of a problem to students. Professors need to carefully check the time needed for each question, and to indicate clearly on the exam the score that can be obtained for each question. Furthermore, it is important for the professor to provide practice examinations that are representative of the level and spread of the exam.

Moving on to the quality of workshops, for IBA Microeconomics and Markets course, the quality of the workshop slides that tutors produce vary. This means that there should be uniform slides for all workshops. Furthermore, there is a clear discrepancy in the quality of different tutors. The essence here is that there should not be a big difference in the quality of the tutors, and they should have a deep and comprehensive knowledge of the subject that they are teaching. Thus, only people with a deep knowledge of the course that can explain the subject clearly should become a tutor. Moreover, the job opening for tutors should be properly advertised, so that they have a pool of good candidates to choose from. Lastly, the professors or course coordinators should have a proper selection procedure to choose the right candidates – including CV selection and interview rounds, and tutors should go through training to improve their teaching skills.

Lastly, as for SMT, students perceive the quality of tutors to be relatively high. However, quality of the workshops are relatively low, and the problem resides in the size of the workshops, where the student to tutor ratio is too high. This has a very negative implication, where the workshops do not actually fulfill its educational purposes. There is an urgency to hire more SMT tutors (e.g. 25:1 ratio), so that there are enough tutors to help the students, and there is sufficient time for tutors to explain and queries clearly. This simple solution would drastically enhance the quality of the SMT workshops.

Appendix 1: Survey on exam time and exam content spread

Program Advisory: Examination & Tutoring

The Student Representation is an independent organization that represents students of BA and IBA program. The Program Advisory provides Program Management with advice based on feedback they have gathered from their fellow students during the trimester. By filling in this form you can help the Student Representation to improve the quality of your education!

SPEAK YOUR MIND!

You are giving feedback on **exam time given, and content distribution in exams.**

Which study and year are you in? BA IBA Year: _____

1. In general, how even do you think the course content is distributed across the exam?
Uneven **Even**

2. How often does it happen that the course content is not spread evenly over the exam?
Never **Always**

3. What were the courses where the content was **not evenly distributed** across the exam?
 Courses: _____

4. To what extent do professors spend enough time teaching the examinable content?
Never **Always**

5. Name the courses where the professor spent **insufficient** time teaching the examinable content, or examined content that were **not covered** by the examinable materials?
 Courses: _____

6. In general, to what extent is there sufficient time between the last lecture and the exam?
Insufficient **Sufficient**

7. What were the courses where there was **insufficient** time between the last lecture and the exam?
 Courses: _____

8. In general, what do you feel about the time allowed for an exam?
Not enough **Enough**

9. Which exams did you need **more than** the time allowed for?
 Course: _____ Time allowed for (hrs): _____ Time needed (hrs): _____
 Course: _____ Time allowed for (hrs): _____ Time needed (hrs): _____
 Course: _____ Time allowed for (hrs): _____ Time needed (hrs): _____

10. Which exams did you need **less than** the time allowed for?
 Course: _____ Time allowed for (hrs): _____ Time needed (hrs): _____
 Course: _____ Time allowed for (hrs): _____ Time needed (hrs): _____
 Course: _____ Time allowed for (hrs): _____ Time needed (hrs): _____

11. Which exams did you need **exactly** the time allowed for?
 Courses: _____

Date: ___/___/_____ (dd, mm, yyyy)

Thank you for your feedback! All feedback will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Appendix 2: Survey on Microeconomics and Markets workshops

Program Advisory: Examination and Tutoring

The Student Representation is an independent organization that represents students of BA and IBA program. The Program Advisory provides Program Management with advice based on feedback they have gathered from their fellow students during the trimester. By filling in this form you can help the Student Representation to improve the quality of your education!

SPEAK YOUR MIND!

You are giving feedback on **Microeconomics and Markets WORKSHOPS**

Which year and Micro workshop group are you in? Year _____ Group _____

1. Do you think your teaching assistant possesses the following characteristics:

	Not at all					Very much
- Grasp of language (English)		<input type="checkbox"/>				
- Overall knowledge of the subject	<input type="checkbox"/>					
- Quality of the workshop slides		<input type="checkbox"/>				
- Engagement with students		<input type="checkbox"/>				
- Preparation for the workshops		<input type="checkbox"/>				
- Ability to explain the topics clearly		<input type="checkbox"/>				

2. How satisfied are you with your teaching assistant?

Not at all **Very much**

Because: _____

3. To what extend did you feel prepared for the upcoming exam after the workshops?

Not at all **Very much**

4. To what extent is your workshop a place for discussion and finding answers?

Not at all **Very much**

5. How do you feel about the fact that some workshops have different slides?

I like it Neutral/Indifferent I don't like it, because _____

6. How do you feel about teaching assistant being private tutors in tutoring companies?

I like it Neutral/Indifferent I don't like it, because _____

7. To what extend do the bonus points in the workshops enhance your learning experience and knowledge of the subject?

Not at all **Very much**

8. To what extend are the bonus points earned in the workshops fair and justified?

Not at all **Very much**

Date: ___/___/_____ (dd, mm, yyyy)

Thank you for your feedback! All feedback will be treated with confidentiality.

