

# Needs Assessment: Blackboard Help Course 24/7

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*MIT 530 UNC Wilmington*

Sheri Anderson

Tom Dorgan

Lacey Somech

Bethanne Winzeler

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## **Executive Summary**

The primary goal of the Office of E-Learning at The University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW) is to offer instructional support and assistance to faculty who are using technology tools to enhance/or expand course content and delivery. A majority of e-learning support focuses on the Learning Management System (LMS), Blackboard Vista. Recently, E-Learning created a knowledge base within Blackboard to assist faculty with troubleshooting and problems that occur as they use Blackboard Vista for instruction. The Needs Assessment team was procured to determine if the faculty using the “Blackboard Help Course 24/7” are satisfied with the support and help it provides. The Needs Assessment Team also identified any possible problems with the current course and offered recommendations for a solution.

The Needs Assessment Team developed a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) stage planner to identify the needs and satisfaction levels of the faculty who use Blackboard Vista at UNCW. The stages for TNA were; conduct a preliminary interview with the E-Learning staff, identify the course functionality, review the objectives of the course, survey the faculty with a UNCW online survey tool, consult with E-learning staff, and analyze existing data. The objectives for each stage were to determine how the faculty would use a help course and where the faculty feel they require additional support. Information regarding the support faculty would like to see during non-office hours and a preferred method of support was also surveyed.

Analysis of the data collected provided the Needs Assessment Team with the attitudes of the faculty and existing and desired skills for successful implementation of a support system for the use of Blackboard Vista. The faculty with more teaching experience are more apt to self troubleshoot and reference the help course while the faculty with less experience prefer immediate methods of support such as calling the help desk. From the data collected it is evident that when it comes to the experience of using online instructional tools, faculty members require different types of support tools. Data findings strongly suggest that the less experienced staff/faculty require more training and support for Blackboard Vista.

Based on the results and interpretations of the data collected the Needs Assessment Team recommends:

- Faculty/staff that prefer immediate and personal support for problems within Blackboard Vista should be provided with their preferences
- Live Chat and Live Online Conferencing tools should be incorporated into the help course to accommodate the “immediate” support needs.
- Faculty and staff awareness strategies for the “Blackboard Help Course 24/7” should be implemented for promotions of the course.
- Additional data and analysis needs to be collected to examine the relationship between experience levels of faculty and type of desired support.
- New users to Blackboard Vista should be provided with training and increased technical support prior to their live online instruction.

## **Introduction**

The University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) is a public comprehensive university, one of the sixteen constituent campuses of the University of North Carolina. UNCW consists of approximately 12,000 students and 800 faculty members. Information Technology Systems Division (ITSD) is a division within UNCW that supports technology operations and provides service maintenance for network applications at the university. Within ITSD are various departments that direct and advise program development, research, consulting, and communications involved with technology integration.

Technology Enhanced Learning, department within ITSD is responsible for training faculty and staff from approximately 4 colleges with current and emerging technology. Within the department of Technology Enhanced Learning, is the Office of E-Learning, which oversees all online and web-enhanced instruction. The hours of operation for E-Learning are 8 to 5 and there are two full time employees and two graduate assistants in the office.

The E-Learning office also provides instructional support and assistance to faculty who are using technology tools to enhance and/or expand course content and delivery. They also assist students with online course difficulties. The majority of their support goes towards the Learning Management System (LMS), Blackboard Vista. This LMS can be used for the delivery of instruction, course management, discussion boards, Wimba (a live online conference room), email, and chat.

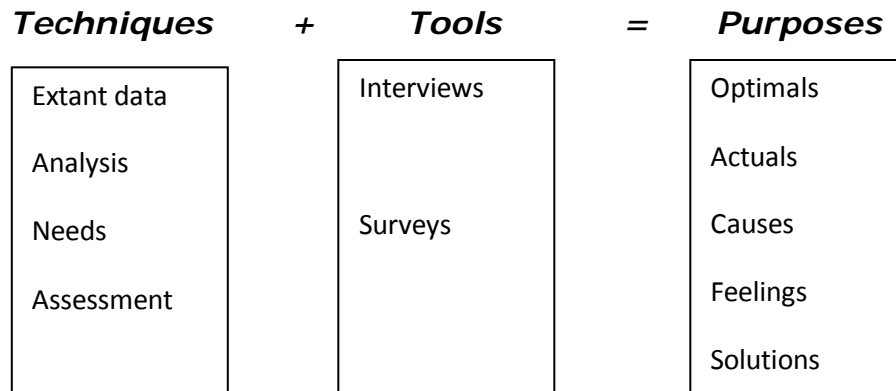
In the Fall of 2007, E-Learning created a knowledge base entitled “Blackboard Help Course – 24/7” with the intention of providing additional support and assistance to faculty members who use the Blackboard LMS. This knowledge base offers instructors quick access to solutions 24/7 without having to call or email the Technology Assistance Center or the office of E-Learning. Features provided for instructors within the “Blackboard Help Course” include discussion boards, job aids, and email.

The training needs assessment was conducted to determine if the faculty using the “Blackboard Help Course 24/7” are satisfied with the support they receive during non-working hours. Information was gathered concerning the delivery and type of support the faculty would like available between 5pm - 8 am Monday through Friday and weekends.

## **Purpose of the Needs Assessment**

A needs assessment was conducted to determine how the faculty would use a “Blackboard Help Course 24/7” and where the overall support needs lie. Information was sought concerning what type of support the faculty would like to see added during non-working hours, as well as, their preferred method of receiving support. The team also probed to gauge the amount of troubleshooting faculty is willing to put forth prior to calling for support. The needs assessment also determined the online instructional experience of the faculty and the amount of online classes the faculty enrolled in the course are teaching in the current semester. Information was gathered concerning the attitude of the faculty and staff toward Blackboard support. Surveys were conducted with faculty enrolled in the course. Members of the e-

learning staff were interviewed to assess the current situation with the "Blackboard Help Course 24/7".



## **Needs Assessment Methodology**

### **Description of Model**

Allison Rossett's "Needs Analysis Procedure" was used as the basis for planning and conducting the needs assessment. This particular approach presented the relationships between techniques, tools and purposes.

#### *Techniques*

- Extant data was collected in order to represent current and actual performance of the "Blackboard Help Course 24/7".
- A Needs Assessment was conducted in order to seek the opinions on the optimals, actuals, feelings, causes and solutions from different sources.
- The subject matter analysis was used to help establish the details of the optimals and what information the E-Learning staff needs to know.

#### *Tools*

- The team utilized various tools in order to gather the necessary information.
- An o One-on-one interview was conducted with the E-Learning staff.
- A survey was deployed to faculty members.

#### *Purposes*

- The team gathered information for the following purposes: optimal performance or knowledge, actual or current performance or knowledge, feelings of faculty members, causes of the problems from various sources, and solutions to the problems from different perspectives.

Stages/Techniques	Tools and Sources
Subject Matter Analysis	Preliminary interview of E-Learning staff Review Course Objectives Identify Course Functionality
Needs Assessment	Survey Faculty with UNCW online survey tool
Analysis Extant Data	Meet with E-Learning group Document Analysis (summary activity, usage, initial planning documents)

### **TNA Stage Planner (Appendix A)**

## **Data Collection**

### **Description of data collection process**

The data was collected using an online survey (Appendix B). This survey was designed and sent out through the UNCW Select Survey tool. This survey was sent out to each faculty member that is enrolled in the "Blackboard Help Course 24/7". The survey was deployed on March 20<sup>th</sup>. The first reminder was sent out on March 26<sup>th</sup>. March 27<sup>th</sup> was the cut off date for the survey leaving the rest of the week for analysis of the results.

### **Description of instruments**

The written survey explored themes such as tools the faculty would like to see added to the "Blackboard Help Course 24/7". It also measured the most preferred method of communication for help, and the methods that faculty used prior to seeking assistance. Questions were also raised regarding what the faculty knows about the "Blackboard Help Course 24/7", and what they would ideally like from the course. The faculty was also asked how they feel the help desk can optimally serve them.

## **Data Analysis and Findings**

The faculty enrolled in the "Blackboard Help Course 24/7" were surveyed. Of the 190 faculty surveyed, 59 (30.8%) people responded. Several methods were used to analyze the data. Open-ended questions from the survey were cross case analyzed while the remainder of the survey information was analyzed using SPSS (Appendix C).

Before the data could be analyzed using SPSS, each response for questions 1-14 was assigned a number within an excel spreadsheet. After this task was complete then the data was exported into SPSS. Each

column was determined nominal, scale, or ordinal based on the response required from the survey question. Frequency analysis and cross tabs were performed for survey responses that were most relevant to the purpose of the needs assessment.

The following optimal and actual findings were gathered after the survey results were compiled.

*Optimal expectations*

- Faculty members would be aware of the "Blackboard Help Course"
- When faculty members encountered a problem, they would search the "Blackboard Help Course"
- The "Blackboard Help Course" would be frequently used by faculty members
- The job aids provided in the "Blackboard Help Course" would be used often
- The discussion board would be frequently used by faculty members
- Written instructions provided in the "Blackboard Help Course" would be very helpful
- Faculty members would be interested in utilizing the Live Chat or Live Online Conference feature

*Actual Findings*

- Slightly more than half (60%) of faculty members were aware of the "Blackboard Help Course"
- When faculty members encountered a problem, most of them (64%) would call or Email the TAC help desk
- Most of the faculty members (64%) indicated that they rarely use the "Blackboard Help Course"
- Most of the faculty members (71%) have never used the job aids provided in the "Blackboard Help Course"
- Most of the faculty members (72%) have never used the discussion board provided in the "Blackboard Help Course"
- Most of the faculty members (60%) found the written instructions provided in the "Blackboard Help Course" helpful
- Half of the faculty members are not interested in utilizing the Live Chat feature (50%) or the Live Online Conference feature (47%)

The survey revealed (Appendix D) that the majority of faculty members, 37 respondents (62%) have been  
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teaching online for 2 or more years, and 30 respondents (50%) are teaching 3 or more online courses per year. When asked about the course delivery of the online courses they teach, 35 respondents (58%) stated that they were partially online (web enhanced).

#### Length of experience teaching online courses

- 13% 1 year or less
- 17% Between 1-2 years
- 62% 2 or more years
- 8% Will teach in the future

#### Number of online courses per year

- 22% 1 course
- 28% 2 courses
- 50% 3 or more courses

#### Course Delivery

- 42% Fully online
- 58% Partially online (Web Enhanced)

The survey questioned faculty members on how they resolve problems that they encounter on Blackboard during E-Learning business hours, 22 respondents (37%) indicated that they call the TAC help desk and 16 respondents (27%) stated that they E-mail the TAC help desk. When asked about encountering problems with Blackboard during E-Learning office non-business hours, 20 respondents (33%) indicated that they Email TAC help desk and 17 respondents (28%) stated that they self troubleshoot. The survey also revealed that 36 respondents (60%) were aware of the 24-7 Blackboard Help Course and 28 respondents (68%) of the faculty who indicated that they were aware of the help course stated that they had used it. In addition to, those who had used the help course were asked how frequently they used the Blackboard Help Course. The majority of those who answered, 25 respondents (64%) indicated that they rarely used it.

#### During business hours

- 37% Call the TAC help desk
- 27% E-mail the TAC help desk
- 10% Call the Office of E-Learning
- 13% Search Blackboard Online Help (Ask Dr. C)
- 7% E-mail the Office of E-Learning
- 7% Search Blackboard Help Course

#### During non-business hours

- 33% E-mail TAC help desk
- 28% Self troubleshoot
- 15% Search Blackboard Online Help (Ask Dr. C)

- 15% Ask colleague
- 8% Search Blackboard Help Course

#### Awareness of Blackboard Help Course

- 60% Yes
- 40% No

#### Used Blackboard Help Course

- 68% Yes
- 32% No

#### Frequency of Use

- 64% Rarely
- 28% Never
- 8% Once in several days
- 0% Several times a day
- 0% Once a day

Information from the survey revealed that the faculty would like to see the following support features added to the “Blackboard Help Course” 29% of the respondents felt the support they are receiving meet their needs. Another 32.8% were unsure of their support needs at this time. 11% of the respondents would like to incorporate more training regarding tool use within the LMS and set up training for evenings and weekends. Another 11% would like to see more technical support from assistance for Mac users, to increasing the number of staff in E-Learning. 7.3% of the respondents would like to see Blackboard support set up specifically for students. 3.6% feel more comfortable receiving technical support over the phone. 3.6% of the respondents would like to see changes made to the LMS software.

The faculty was surveyed on the current features offered on the “Help Course”

- A discussion board is currently provided on the “Help Course”
  - 52% found not helpful
  - 32% found helpful
  - 16% found very helpful
  - 2% have never used it

27% of those surveyed have used the discussion board. 72% have never used the discussion board, and 33% skipped the question.

- Written Instructions
  - 32% found not helpful
  - 60% found helpful
  - 7% found very helpful
  - 50% did not respond

These numbers are based on 29% of the users that have used the written job aids. 71% of the respondents  
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had not used the written instruction with 31.6% of the respondents skipping the question.

The faculty was also surveyed about the type of support they would like to see added to the “Help Course”.

- Live Chat Feature:
  - 50% not interested in a live chat feature
  - 28% interested in the live chat feature
  - 22% very interested
  - 40% did not answer
- Live On-Line Conference Feature:
  - 47% not interested
  - 29% interested
  - 24% very interested
  - 36.6% did not respond

The final two survey questions allowed for open-ended responses from the faculty members (Appendix E). When reviewing the data, the responses were classified into appropriate categories. The faculty was asked about additional support that they would like to see added to the “Help Course”. Five responses could not be used because they were not answered. Of the remaining 55 responses the following types of responses were established:

- Unsure/Not able – 14 (32.8%) respondents are unsure of their support needs at this time.
- None/Fine – 16 (29%) respondents felt that the support they are currently receiving meet all of their needs.
- More Tech Support – 6 (11%) respondents would like to see more technical support. These responses ranged from; more help for Mac users to increasing the number of staff in E-Learning that are available for support.
- More Training – 6 (11%) respondents would like to see more training set up on how to use the LMS. Requests for training included; tool use and setting up weekend and night face-to-face trainings.
- Help for Students – 4 (7.3%) respondents would like to see a section of the “Blackboard Help Course” set up for students. Therefore, students can find solutions for their own problems.
- New to Blackboard – 4 (7.3%) respondents are new to the Blackboard LMS and are unsure of their support needs at this time.
- Phone with Person – 2 (3.6) respondents would feel more comfortable to contact technical support using the phone.

- Other – 2 (3.6%) respondents would like to see changes made to the LMS software.

On survey question 16, (Appendix F) the faculty members were asked how the Office of E-Learning can help them achieve their online teaching goals, 6 responses could not be used because they were not answered. Of the remaining 54 responses the following types of responses were established:

- None – 12 (22%) respondents felt that no changes were needed at this time.
- Fix LMS Technical Problems – 11 (20.4%) respondents wanted the Office of E-Learning to continue to work on the technical issues with Blackboard.
- Technical Training – 8 (14.8%) respondents would like for various technical training sessions to be conducted in order to assist them with their online courses.
- More Staff/Live Assistance – 6 (11%) respondents wanted more staff members or live assistance to be added in order to better address their online teaching issues and/or needs.
- Instructional Training for Blackboard – 6 (11%) respondents felt that instructional training for Blackboard should be provided to help with the construction and implementation of their online course.
- Other – 3 (5.5%) respondents wanted to provide feedback on the Blackboard system because they were unhappy with the Blackboard system, they wanted more people similar to the current staff because they felt they were quick to respond to questions, and would like to have a separate number to the TAC for faculty members.
- Don't Know/Unsure – 2 (3.7%) respondents did not know or were unsure of what changes could be done in order for the Office of E-Learning to assist with their online teaching goals.
- Student Support – 2 (3.7%) respondents would like to see student support sessions provided in order to address problems students are experiencing with blackboard.
- Tools/Software – 2 (3.7%) respondents felt that more updates on tools and trial software should be provided.
- Quit WebCT – 2 (3.7%) respondents wanted to quit using WebCT's version of Blackboard and use the original Blackboard.

## Recommendations

### Interpretation

Since 40% of the faculty was unaware of the "Blackboard Help Course 24/7", they were unable to compare it with other means of support. Out of the 60% that are aware of the course 32% do not use it because they prefer to receive quick answers through a live person. The team found that the people who had been teaching for 2 or more years, online, were comfortable with self-troubleshooting such as searching the "Blackboard Help Course 24/7". (Appendix E)

The findings revealed that users with more experience within the LMS require a different type of support. The more experienced users are able to troubleshoot their problems by using a variety of methods such as searching the "Blackboard Help Course", Ask Dr. C, and self-troubleshooting. The users who are new to the LMS require a different level of support. From the results, users new to the LMS require more direct and immediate support.

A majority of the faculty are unsure of the support they currently need or will need in the future. When asked about delivery of online support the faculty was divided. 53% were interested in incorporating a live chat feature within the "Blackboard Help Course 24/7", and 50% were interested in incorporating a live online conference. Since some of the faculty were unaware of these features they did not respond to the questions, which left only 60% that actually responded to these questions. This reconfirms our previous interpretation that faculty/staff that are new to online instruction need to be targeted for further training.

### Prioritization of the findings

One of the difficulties of the results of these findings is that a majority of the faculty are unaware of their support needs. Since this number is so large, it can be interpreted that these faculty are unaware of the support options that are available to them. These findings also show that this faculty may not be aware of tools and software that are available to them to enhance their online courses and student learning.

### Recommendations

Another type of support needs to be developed for those faculty/staff members that prefer instant support. Since 50% of the faculty were interested in the Live Chat and Live Online Conference tool, the Office of E-Learning should incorporate those tools into the "Blackboard Help Course 24/7". A change management plan needs to be created to inform the faculty of these new tools and their features. This will also improve awareness among the faculty of the "Help Course."

More analysis needs to be done to find out if there is a correlation between those faculty that are unsure of the type of support they need and their experience teaching online courses. This support could be in the form of training on the LMS tools, technical training, or software used for to enhance online learning.

The office of E-Learning needs to target the new users to the LMS and provide more training and technical support prior to their online classes going live.

## **Appendices**

## Appendix A

### **TNA Stage Planner**

1. **Subject of TNA:** Help Course for Instructors using Blackboard Vista
2. **Stage #:** 1
3. **Summary of information being sought:** To gather the optimal and actual performance of the Blackboard help course.
4. **Source of information:** e-learning staff
5. **Tools required for this stage:** Interview/Course analysis
6. **Questions/Agenda:**
  - Gain a sense of the problem
  - Faculty knowledge
  - e-learning's feelings
  - Promotion of help course
  - Design of help course
  - Course Functionality

### **TNA Stage Planner**

1. **Subject of TNA:** Help Course for Instructors using Blackboard Vista
2. **Stage #:** 2
3. **Summary of information being sought:** Faculty input and data regarding the effectiveness of the help course
4. **Source of information:** UNCW faculty
5. **Tools required for this stage:** Online survey
6. **Questions/Agenda:**
  - Who is accessing it?
  - How helpful was it?

What are the faculty needs?  
Troubleshooting

### **TNA Stage Planner**

1. **Subject of TNA:** Help Course for Instructors using Blackboard Vista

2. **Stage #:** 3

3. **Summary of information being sought:** Input from E-Learning group and identify the course functionality

4. **Source of information:** E-Learning Group

5. **Tools required for this stage:**

6. **Questions/Agenda:**

non-working hours needs  
tools that would help (e.g. live chat, application sharing)

Context		
Resources	Constraints	
LMS Horizon Wimba LMS System Administrator	Staffing Lack of quantitative data Glitches within Blackboard Maintenance of LMS Time	
Purposes		
Description	Status	Sources
Optimal: Provide an effective 24/7 troubleshooting resource for the faculty at UNCW who utilize Blackboard learning management system for instructional purposes.	Done	E-learning faculty

Actual: All job aids and handouts were compiled and organized in a Blackboard course as a knowledge base for instructors	Done	E-Learning
Feelings: Half of the population were either satisfied with the support they receive or they are unsure of the support they will need	Done	Faculty
Causes: The faculty are not utilizing the "Blackboard Help Course 24/7".	Done	Faculty Survey
Solutions: Provide a "demo" of what the Blackboard Help Course will offer the faculty Outsource to another company		TNA Team

## **Appendix B**

### **Blackboard Support Survey**

1. How long have you taught online courses? \*

- ☐ 1 year or less
  - ☐ Between 1-2 years
  - ☐ 2 or more years
  - ☐ I will be in the future
2. How many online courses are you teaching per year?\*
- ☐ 1
  - ☐ 2
  - ☐ 3 or more
3. The majority of the online courses you teach are: \*
- ☐ Fully online (100%)
  - ☐ Partial online (Web enhanced)
4. When you encounter a problem with Blackboard during E-Learning business hours, how do you resolve this problem?\*
- ☐ Call the TAC help desk
  - ☐ Call the Office of E-Learning
  - ☐ E-mail the TAC help desk
  - ☐ E-mail the Office of E-Learning
  - ☐ Search Blackboard Online Help (Ask Dr. C)
  - ☐ Search Blackboard Help Course
5. When you encounter a problem with Blackboard during E-Learning office non-business hours (5pm-8am, M-F and weekends), how do you resolve the problem?\*
- ☐ Search Blackboard Online Help (Ask Dr. C)
  - ☐ Search Blackboard Help Course
  - ☐ Self troubleshoot
  - ☐ Ask colleague

☐ E-mail TAC help desk

6. Are you aware that the Office of E-Learning provides a 24-7 Blackboard Help Course in Blackboard?\*

☐ Yes - (Continue to next question)

☐ No - (Continue to question #15)

7. Have you ever used the Blackboard Help Course?

☐ Yes (Continue to next question)

☐ No, Explain why

8. How often do you use the Blackboard Help Course?

☐ Several times a day

☐ Once a day

☐ Once in several days

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

9. How often have you used the job aids provided in the Blackboard Help Course?

☐ Often used

☐ Used

☐ Never used

10. How often have you used the discussion board provided in the Blackboard Help Course?

☐ Often used

☐ Used

☐ Never used

11. How helpful do you find the written instructions provided in the Blackboard Help Course?

☐ Very helpful

☐ Helpful

☐ Not helpful

12. How helpful do you find the discussion board provided in the Blackboard Help Course?

☐ Very helpful

☐ Helpful

☐ Not helpful

13. Will you be interested in using the Live Chat feature if provided to the Blackboard Help Course?

☐ Very interested

☐ Interested

☐ Not interested

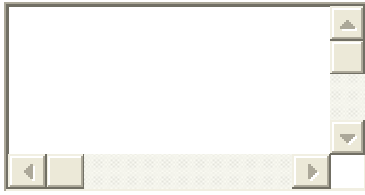
14. Will you be interested in using the Live Online conference feature if provided to the Blackboard Help Course?

☐ Very interested

☐ Interested

☐ Not interested

15. What support components would you like to see added to the Blackboard Help Course?\*



16. How can the Office of E-Learning help achieve your online teaching goals? \*

## Appendix C

### Statistics

		Aware of Bb course	Use of Bb course	Frequency of using Bb course
N	Valid	59	40	13
	Missing	0	19	46
Mode		1	1	5

### Aware of Bb course

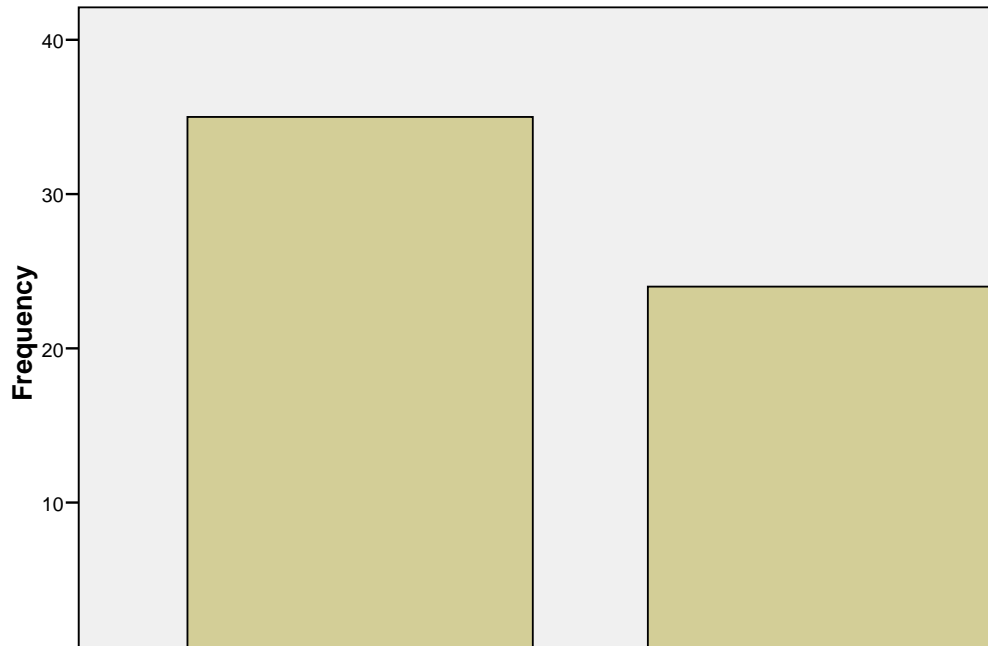
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	35	59.3	59.3	59.3
	No	24	40.7	40.7	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

### Frequency of using Bb course

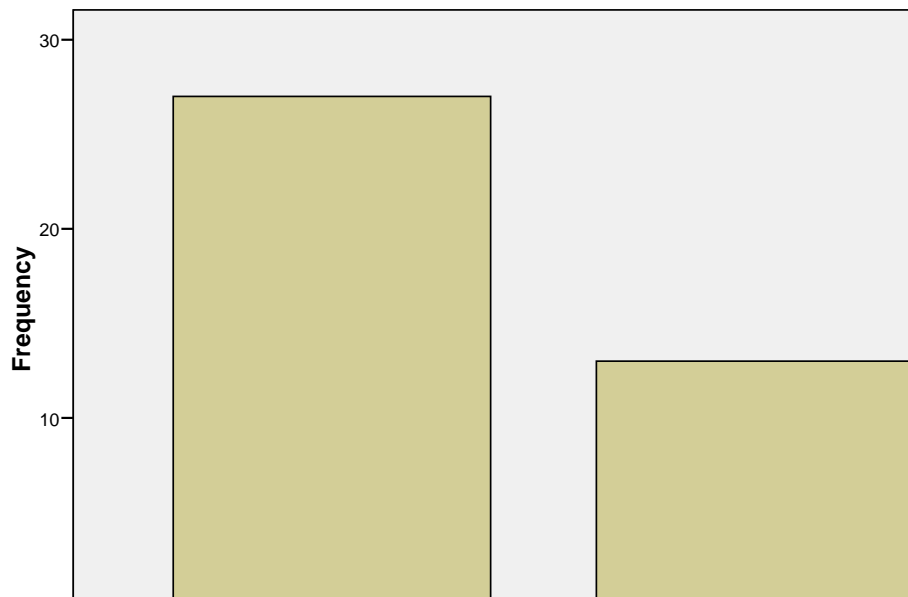
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rarely	3	5.1	23.1	23.1
	Never	10	16.9	76.9	100.0
	Total	13	22.0	100.0	
Missing	System	46	78.0		
Total		59	100.0		

## Bar Chart

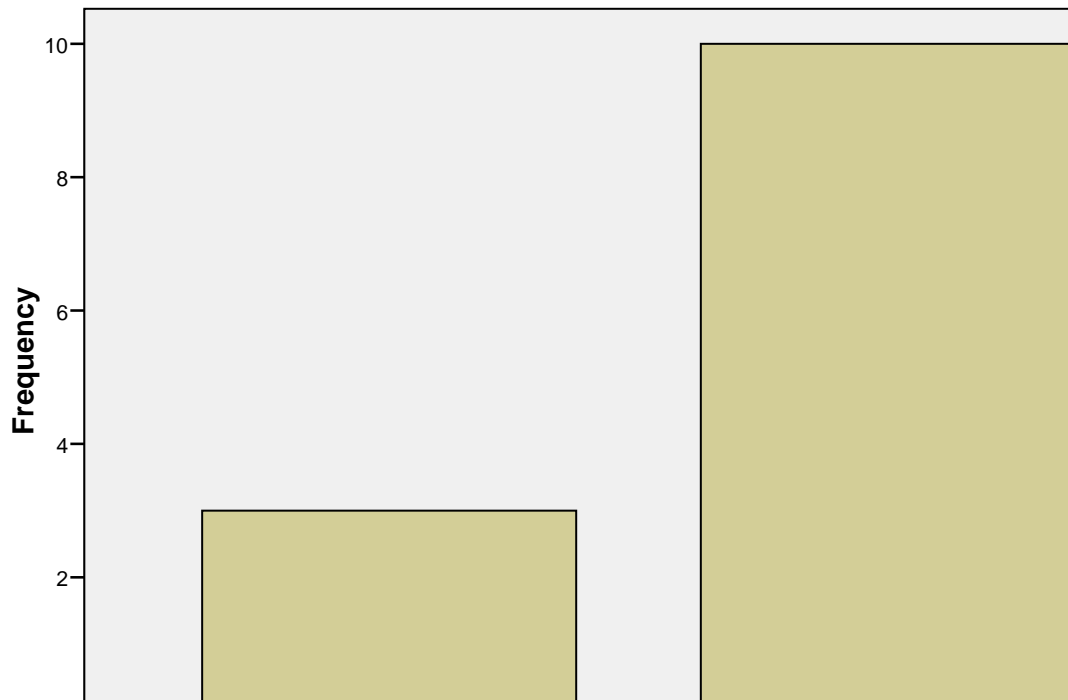
**Aware of Bb course**



**Use of Bb course**



### Frequency of using Bb course



## Crosstabs

### Case Processing Summary

#### After business hours \* Number of courses Crosstabulation

Count

		Number of courses			Total
		1	2	3 or more	1
After business hours	Ask Dr. C	3	1	5	9
	Search Bb Help Course	1	1	3	5
	Self-troubleshoot	2	8	7	17
	Ask colleague	4	0	5	9
	E-mail TAC	3	7	9	19

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Total	13	17	29	59
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## Crosstabs

### Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
After business hours * Length of time	59	100.0%	0	.0%	59	100.0%

### After business hours \* Length of time Crosstabulation

Count

		Length of time				Total
		1 year or less	1-2 years	2 or more years	I will be in the future	
After business hours	Ask Dr. C	0	1	6	2	9
	Search Bb Help Course	0	2	3	0	5
	Self-troubleshoot	3	5	9	0	17
	Ask colleague	4	2	3	0	9
	E-mail TAC	1	0	15	3	19
Total		8	10	36	5	59

[Appendix D](#)- Blackboard Survey Results (PDF)

[Appendix E](#) - Open Ended Questions 15 (PDF)

[Appendix F](#) - Open Ended Questions 16 (PDF)