

# Publisher Resources

The perils of textbook orders



This poster session documents the challenges faced with the textbook order for the pilot run of a required undergraduate course in the School of Business.



Hello everyone, my name is Avinash Mainkar. I am an assistant professor in the School of Business. During spring 2020, I had the opportunity to teach an undergraduate course that was fully online. Ala Showers, Instructional Designer, Stearns Center, and I worked together during 2019 to develop this course together. I have taught this course at Mason in a F2F format for almost 15 years. While transitioning to my first online course, I experienced several difficulties with the required course material purchase. These issues are presented in a chronological order.

## What to include in the course pack and what should be left out?

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When the course was taught in the F2F format, the course pack had two required items:

### **Required Course Materials:**

(a) Strategic Management (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) by [Frank Rothaermel](#). ISBN: 9781-2594-20474. Publisher: McGraw Hill Education

(b) Case packet: You will purchase the cases listed below electronically from Harvard Business School Publishing by clicking this link: <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/565968>

Item (A) above is the textbook and (B) is the set of cases from Harvard Business School Publishing. Students could buy the textbook from the campus bookstore in the Johnson Center, the bookstore website, or any online vendor such as Amazon or Chegg. The textbook could be a physical textbook or an eBook. The set of Harvard cases could only be purchased by using the link mentioned. This is an instantaneous purchase, and students get an electronic copy of the cases. As an aside, the case packet is not available for purchase from Amazon or Chegg.

All my colleagues teaching this course in the F2F format have used the above system: Textbook + the Harvard case packet. One of the first things that changed was the use of McGraw-Hill Connect, a learning platform that McGraw-Hill Publishing provides. I had never used Connect in my F2F classes, but it was an important resource to have in my first online course.

Most major publishers now have platforms of their own (e.g., WileyPLUS). These platforms have reading assignments with adaptive learning features, quizzes, homework questions, interactive activities, videos and even simulations.

What is the overall purpose of strategic management?

Click the answer you think is right.

- Respond to globalization
- Gain competitive advantage
- Perform risk analysis
- Calculate parity performance measures
- Create competitive transparency

Do you know the answer? [Read about this](#)

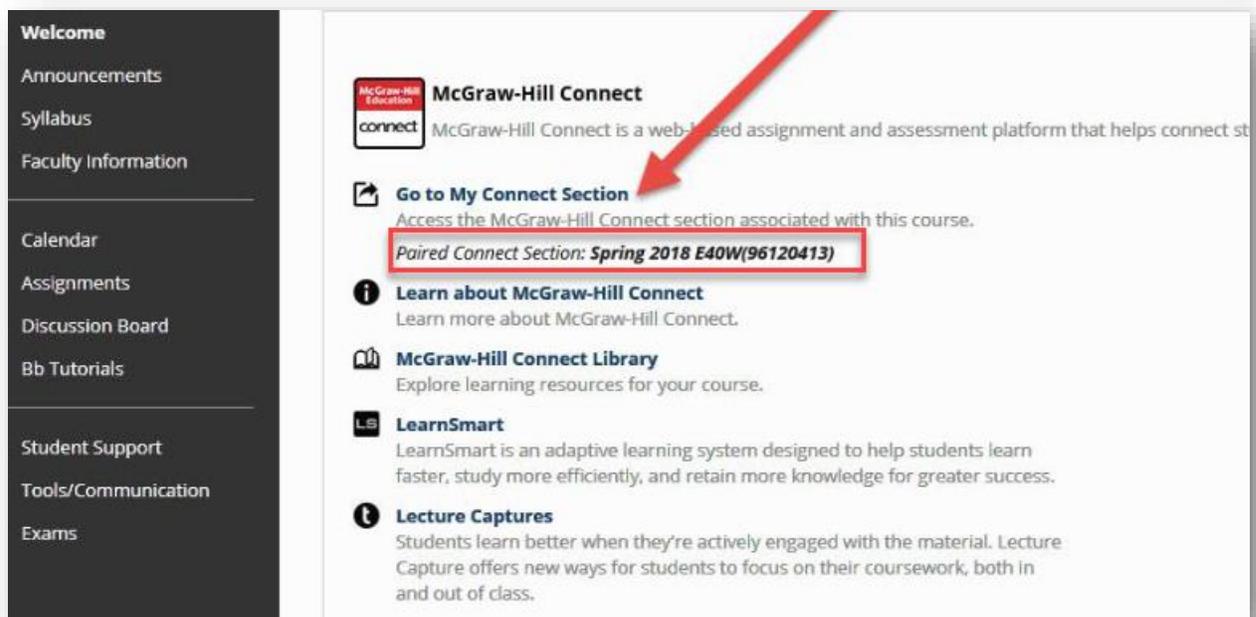
**LS** **Chapter 2. Strategic Leadership: Managing the Strategy Process**  
learnsmart  
Due Date: June 1, 2020 4:59:00 AM EDT

 **Chapter 2: Strategic Leadership: Managing the Strategy Process**  
reading assignment  
Due Date: June 1, 2020 12:59:00 AM EDT

 **Chapter 2 Homework**  
homework  
Due Date: June 1, 2020 12:59:00 AM EDT

 **Chapter 2 Quiz**  
quiz  
Due Date: June 1, 2020 12:59:00 AM EDT

The publisher platform can be “paired” with Blackboard and all assignments can be “deep-linked”, meaning that students can access them directly from Blackboard and the grades appear immediately in the Blackboard grade center.



The screenshot shows the Blackboard course navigation menu on the left and the McGraw-Hill Connect section on the right. The navigation menu includes: Welcome, Announcements, Syllabus, Faculty Information, Calendar, Assignments, Discussion Board, Bb Tutorials, Student Support, Tools/Communication, and Exams. The McGraw-Hill Connect section includes: McGraw-Hill Connect (with logo), Go to My Connect Section (with a red arrow pointing to it), Paired Connect Section: Spring 2018 E40W(96120413) (highlighted with a red box), Learn about McGraw-Hill Connect, McGraw-Hill Connect Library, LearnSmart, and Lecture Captures.

So, instead of just the textbook, I decided to use a bundle: eTextbook + Access to McGraw-Hill Connect. Of course, students pay for this access.

McGraw-Hill representative suggested that they could add my Harvard cases to the bundle for free. An individual case costs \$4.25 and getting six cases for free meant a saving of \$25 to students. When I explored this further, it became clear that I had to check individually if the case of my choice is available in their system for free. It appeared that most Harvard cases were available except for the most recent. I also would have to tell the publisher which cases I would choose so the bundle price would be determined. McGraw-Hill would then print these cases, and a set would be physically mailed to the student. The students would not have electronic access to the cases – only the printed version. Considering the lead time involved in printing and shipping, this meant cases had to be decided far in advance compared to a normal semester.

In short, including Harvard cases within Connect involved a tradeoff between bundling discount from the publisher and flexibility to the teacher. I chose not to include my Harvard cases within Connect.

## Do publishers have leeway with their list prices?

I also decided to use an online Simulation Game for the pilot run of the course. This game requires an access code similar to the Connect access code. Therefore, my final bundle consisted of the eTextbook, Connect access, and Simulation Game access. When bundled together, I was able to get a discount of 25-50% on the combined list price. The discount may have been steeper because we were using Connect and the simulation game in this course for the first time.

## Do you know ISBNs galore?

The publisher gave me a unique ISBN for the custom bundle that I could give to the GMU bookstore.

**Bookstore ISBN:**  
BUS 498: George Mason  
9781307524017

The above ISBN was given to the bookstore. About two weeks before the start of the semester, a student asked if the ISBN in the bookstore system is correct.

I will be taking your BUS 498 DL1 class this spring, and I was wondering if you could verify for me that [BUS 498: CAPTON ADV BUS MODELS](#) ISBN: 9781264203970 is the correct book for your class. I've bought the textbooks that the website has said were required before and it was the wrong book. Also, are there any other required materials for this class? Thank you,

I noticed that the ISBN in the bookstore system was different from the one that was given to me by the publisher and the one I had passed along to the bookstore. I immediately informed the bookstore manager. The bookstore manager tried to enter the original ISBN but noticed that the ISBN would automatically change in their system to a different one.

I feel like every time we try to order this ISBN, it gets switched to what is currently in the system. I'll check again when I'm back in the store on Monday

After some more frantic emails, the issue was resolved. The publisher representative was finally able to fix this in their system.

We were able to fix this issue this morning the ISBN 9781264203970 has been assigned for the bookstore to order from. The Create system will often have an ISBN for the package and then one for faculty. Students can use the ISBN above.

It appears the publisher created a unique ISBN. Building on this original ISBN, GMU Mason bookstore created an ISBN of their own. The bottom line is that for an identical custom bundle, the ISBNs may be different depending on the selling vendor. The ISBNs are also exclusive to a vendor. ISBN for vendor A will not work at the vendor B's website. Students shop for the best price and inadvertently enter one vendor's ISBN at another vendor's website. When the ISBNs did not work, it can only create confusion for the student!

## How does the GMU bookstore ordering work?

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Because it was a 100% online class, priority was given to students who had enrolled at GMU for a 100% online degree. Registration was not open to F2F students until the very end. To keep the class closed to F2F students, the class capacity was limited to eight until we were very close to the beginning of the semester. When the registration opened to F2F students, the class enrollment spiked in a couple of days to 20. But naturally the bookstore system, because of the time lag, still showed enrollment of 8. **Replenishing the stock took 8-10 days after the semester had started.**

**Bottom line: Schedule your class deliverables in the initial weeks with these potential delays in mind.**

## What alternatives are available to purchase the course pack?

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The course pack could also be purchased electronically from the publisher.

### Direct to Student Link:

<http://shop.mheducation.com/mhshop/productDetails?isbn=1264203977>

The course pack essentially contained two access codes. Because there was no physical book involved, I had assumed that students would receive the codes electronically, instantaneously. That did not turn out to be the case because the vendor for the simulation game was a company other than McGraw-Hill. The access codes were physically mailed to students, which took at least eight more days. In our case, the product also shipped from a third-party vendor needing more time. **Pay close attention to the mode of delivery: physical or electronic.**

The link above is to order directly from the publisher. Directing students to a publisher's website in the syllabus is a potential issue considering the agreement between the University and the GMU bookstore.

## What if the link the students clicked is wrong?

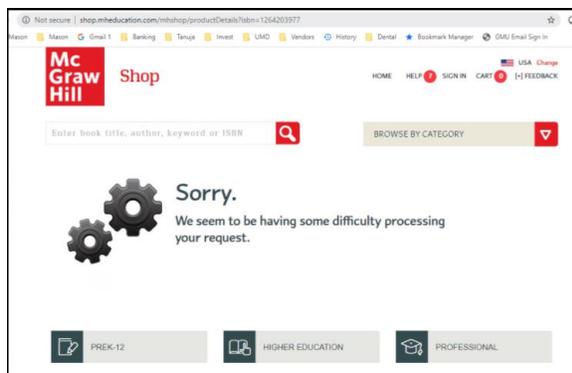
It so happened that one of the links the students used to order from the publisher in Blackboard was incorrect. Students did not receive the two access codes. This meant refund for individual students and having to place new orders. In a F2F class, information that is given to students is in limited places, primarily the syllabus. In an online class, there is so much more available in Blackboard. It is difficult to update and keep track of every weblink that is available in Blackboard. A lot of instructor time was spent in trying to sort these things out! See my email exchange with one student.

Please WAIT to hear back from the McGraw-Hill representative. But if you want immediate access to BSG, you might:

- Initiate a refund from McGraw-Hill for your previous purchase after you hear from the McGraw-Hill representative
- Physically pick up the codes from the bookstore (assuming they have it in stock)

If you purchase from McGraw-Hill, the codes will be mailed to you.

Occasionally, the correct link did not work!



What was done to mitigate these unexpected challenges? One way out is to **ask the publisher to issue temporary access codes (e.g., for a 2-week period or so)**. During my fall 2020 semester, shipments were unusually delayed, partly because of the pandemic. The publisher made available temporary access codes to be issued to students who had ordered from the publisher directly.

## Lessons Learned:

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1. Major publishers nowadays offer **a plethora of additional resources** that can make your online courses more engaging for the students.
2. Publisher platforms and **Blackboard can be paired and synchronized**. Pairing needs to be refreshed at the beginning of every semester.
3. Publishers **can bundle** their textbook with third party tools and materials upon request. Bundling saves students money.
4. Creating custom bundles and packages comes at a cost during the pilot semester: custom ISBN, custom ordering link, and some delays.
5. Third party access codes might be physically mailed and not available instantaneously.
6. Schedule your class deliverables in the initial weeks with these **potential delays** in mind.
7. Use **temporary access codes** if needed.