

# Student Preference On Exam Frequency: A Comparative Study Of St. Mary's University And The American University Of Sharjah (UAE)

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## ABSTRACT

*Most professors use examinations as an important assessment tool to aid in determining the level of student subject matter comprehension. We also use the feedback from examinations as an indicator of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the teaching methodologies we are utilizing in the classroom. This paper is a follow-up to a 2006-2007 study on the number and types of exams/quizzes preferred by the students with the addition of both ethnically and culturally diverse students from the American University of Sharjah.*

**Keywords:** exam frequency; how many exams

## INTRODUCTION

As professors, we are comfortable and familiar with designing examinations and examination schedules to meet our needs and we must remain aware that students also use examinations to obtain important decision-making information. Students use the feedback from examinations to help them decide on the use of various available study techniques, time allocations, choice of major, and choice of career interest.

Examinations and examination feedback may be just as important, or even more important, to the student than it is for the professor, and a good overall course assessment program must meet the needs of both.

For example, the use of the law school approach of only one examination for each course may be appropriate at some levels of instruction and may be particularly appealing to professors burdened with heavy teaching loads and large classes. However, while it may meet the professor's needs, the lack of early and frequent feedback may not meet the needs of the students nearly as well. Therefore, this paper begins a series of inquiries into student-based assessment. The inquiry begins with a study of student preferences of type and frequency of examination and quizzes from two very culturally diverse student populations.

## SURVEY DESIGN

Data were collected by surveying students enrolled in both undergraduate and graduate accounting courses during 2008-2009 fall and spring semesters at the American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, and were compared with a survey of similar questions from students at St. Mary's University for the 2006-2007 period. Students were asked to supply information about their preferences on the number of chapters to be included on examinations and quizzes during a semester. The objectives of the survey were to determine if the attitude of students of diverse nationalities toward the frequency and content of the exams are significantly different than the results of the 2006-2007 survey administered to the dominantly American students. The instructor had some of the students in another course in past semesters and is aware of the grading policy that is based on one quiz from every other chapter and three to four multiple-choice exams equally divided over the chapters covered.

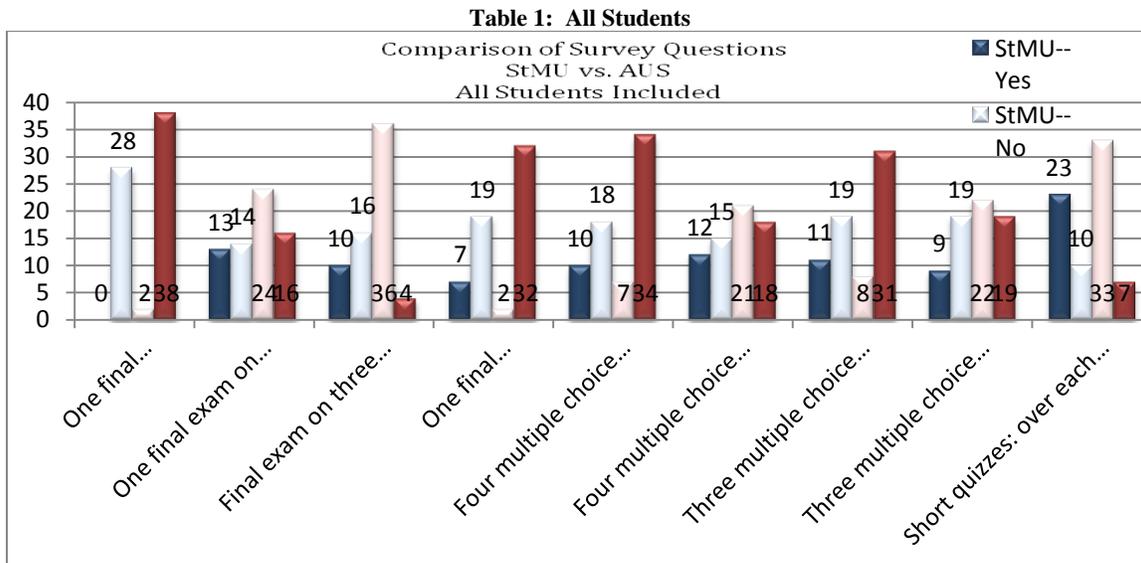
Students surveyed were requested to rank the assessment alternatives in the following order:

1. Final grades to be based totally on one final compressive exam
2. Final grades to be based on one final exam over chapters selected by the instructor
3. Final grades to be based on one final exam over three chapters and quizzes from each chapter
4. Final grades to be based on one final comprehensive exam and quizzes on each chapter
5. Final grades to be based on four objective-type exams with one short essay question
6. Final grades to be based on four objective-type exams only
7. Final grades to be based on three objective-type questions with two short essay-type questions
8. Final grades to be based on three objective-type exams only
9. Final grades to be based on short quizzes on each chapter

**RESULTS**

The results of the information suggest that there are some major differences in the number and types of exams preferred by some of the categories of students from St. Mary's as compared to students from the American University of Sharjah . The results further indicate that there are differences in preference between male and female students. However, all students rejected the suggestion of one final comprehensive exam. When Martinis, Richardson and Tidd administered a comparable instrument, they found that the least preferred option is also one final exam.

The respondents' overall attitude toward the number and frequency of testing is presented in Table 1. As indicated, almost 100% of all students surveyed reject one final comprehensive exam. On the other hand, 38% of STMU students said yes to option three, compared to 90% of AUS students; and only 27% of STMU students preferred option 8 compared to 54% of AUS students.



Among male student responses, there was a significant difference relating to option three. Table 2 appears to be of interest:

1. 47% of STMU students preferred one final exam on three chapters and quizzes over each chapter as compared to only .05% of AUS students.
2. 35% of STMU and 65% of AUS students said yes to the question.

**Table 2: All Male Students**

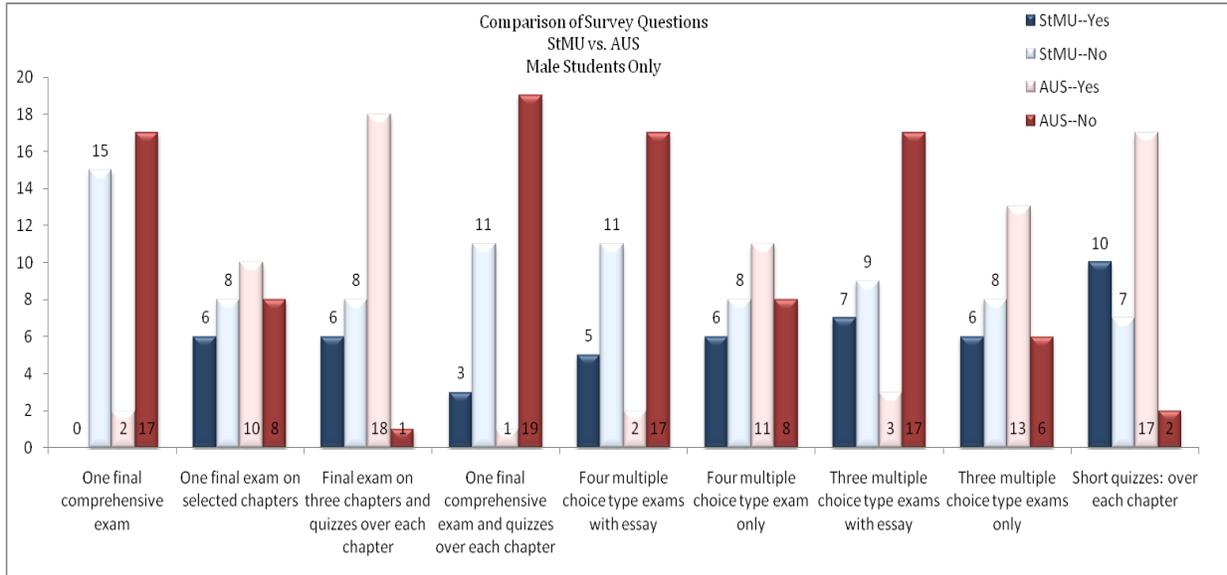
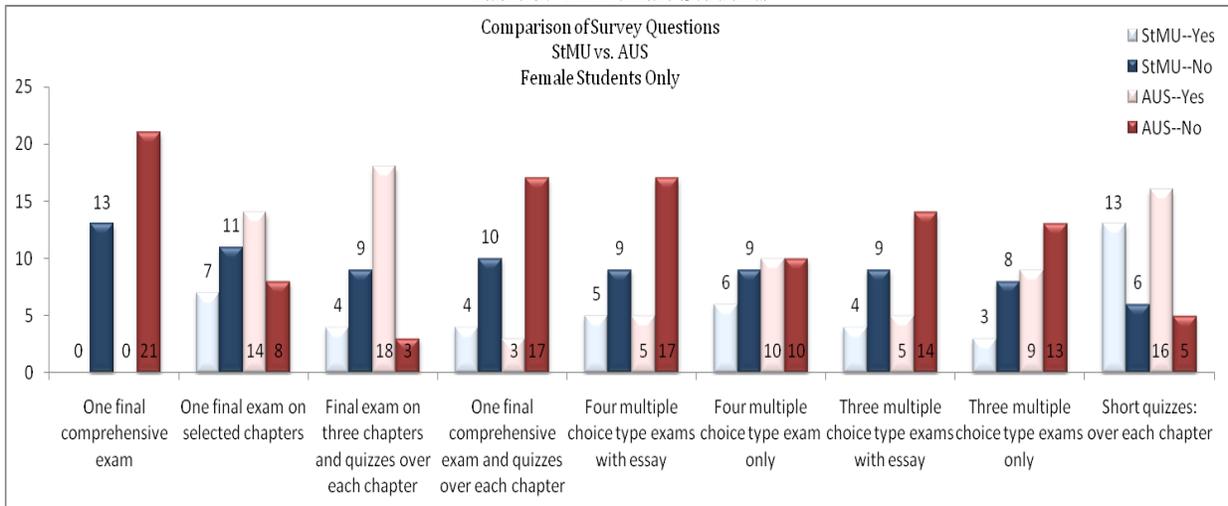


Table 3 presents data relating to the responses of female students which surprisingly reveals no significant differences in all options, except for option three. Twenty-one percent of STMU and 82% of AUS students preferred one final exam on three chapters and quizzes over each chapter covered.

**Table 3: All Female Students**



**CONCLUSION**

Although there were significant variations among the student respondents (options three and eight) and minor variations on others, short quizzes on each chapter seem to be the first choice for all students, followed by one final exam on selected chapters.

**AUTHOR INFORMATION**

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