Revel™ and Swansea University

Exploring the impact of Revel on engagement, feedback, experience & attainment

Gail Capper | Pearson

Summary

The School of Management at Swansea University is one of the UK's leading providers of management, finance and economic research and education, awarded Gold teaching status in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2018. Senior Lecturer and Programme Director for Management, Ms. Sarah Owens and Senior Lecturer Dr. Samantha Burvill piloted Revel in 2017-8 on both the Marketing and the Strategy modules of their Masters-level Management course, the largest MSc programme in the University. Alongside Dr Kate Organ they have conducted and analysed the impact of Revel on their students.

Revel replaces traditional texts with a seamless blend of digital text, media and assessment all of which is informed by learning science. It allows students to read, practice and study on any device, in one continuous experience. A key finding of the teaching team's research was that students who used Revel achieved **significantly higher marks** in comparison to those who did not use Revel (p=0.001). They achieved average overall module marks which were **6.3% higher** than their peers. Those using a revision session created on Revel performed even better gaining overall module marks **11.8% higher.**

There were 219 students and 232 students on the modules respectively, with 97% of the cohort made up of international students. Revel for 'Essentials of Marketing' by Brassington et al was used during Semester 1 for the Marketing module and Revel for 'Exploring Strategy' by Johnson et al was used during Semester 2 for the Strategy module. The results discussed here relate to Semester 1 and were taken from instructor interviews, surveys and student focus groups.

Course challenges & pilot aims:
- explore whether integrating an interactive resource could improve student engagement, assessments, exam results and module feedback scores
- find a resource to help reinvent how the course was delivered in an increasingly competitive environment for lecturers who are often time poor
- find a resource which would help to raise standards and lay a foundation for management students
- provide regular, individual feedback to a large number of students
- help support international students who make up 97% of the cohort

Why is Revel a good fit?
- content is reimagined - it seamlessly blends trusted content with instant formative feedback and interactive features
- informed by learning principles, it encourages students to read, study and practice all in one continuous experience
- enabling students to re-read and test their knowledge in a safe environment is especially beneficial for international students

Implementation

Swansea ensured they implemented Revel in a way which engaged and motivated their students. They used some of the following practices to encourage continued participation:

Structured assignments and assessment on both modules:
- regular reading assignments for students to do before and after lectures designed to encourage better participation
- used Revel for formative assessment and feedback
- created a second revision course for exam preparation

Linking course and resource content:
- quizzes were reviewed in lectures to support the link between Revel and the course content
- students' written responses to short questions on Revel were discussed in class

Incentivised learning:
- Owens used the student dashboard and showed the students their results during lectures to motivate them, awarding small prizes to top-performing students for further motivation

Teaching team engagement:
- Burvill and Owens constantly reinforced the use of Revel to students
- Lecturers used 'message' functionality to encourage usage

Findings*

Student achievement:
- Students who used Revel in Semester 1 achieved **significantly higher marks** for the module in comparison to those who did not use Revel (p=0.001)
- Average overall module marks were 53.13%, compared to the average mark of 46.82% for those that did not use Revel - **6.31% higher.**
- For those using the revision course, they performed even better with an average module mark of 58.63% - **11.81% higher**.

Student experience:
- 88% of respondents[1] stated they found Revel to be 'very helpful' or 'somewhat helpful'
- "*I would highly recommend it, especially for those (where) English is not their first language*" - Swansea Student.

Student satisfaction:
- 88% of respondents stated they would be 'extremely likely' or somewhat likely' to recommend Revel to other students
- The overall score for the module was 4.3/5

Student engagement:
- 57% of respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that Revel was more engaging than other resources.

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[1] 123 students completed the survey

* Semester 1 analysis uses research conducted by Ms Sarah Owens, Dr Sam Burvill and Dr Kate Organ

Instructor Experience and Perception

If you would like to listen to the team sharing their findings at the Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS) conference in April 2018, please go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBLQwBjRtxY

Engagement:
Revel provided an easier way to engage with students. The Performance Dashboard allowed the teaching team to see where students spent time and, for Owens, this allowed them to have an *"immediate impact"* on students. *"If they are using it, then it gives you the confidence as a lecturer that they are actually engaging"*. Both Burvill and Owens found that insights into student engagement and performance levels were very helpful in assisting with formative assessment. Burvill noted *"the biggest benefit is that I can go into the dashboard, and…see actually what the students have been doing".* It allowed them to see how well students were mastering a subject and tailor the appropriate course of action or support. If students collectively understood a topic the instructors could move on, but if some students were still struggling, they were able to go back and revise lectures.

Owens found *"it was particularly helpful in providing formative feedback to students, which is very challenging in HE, particularly with large coh*orts". Further, they thought it motivated students to see how they were performing, while also showing their level of engagement.

Revel vs Traditional Textbook:
Revel meets the needs of the modern student. Burvill noted that *"it meets the students' needs far better than a traditional textbook would...we were finding...that the students weren't engaging with the traditional textbook"* and that being able to work on laptops and phones was more motivating for the students. The team felt that this, in combination with the interactivity of Revel made for a more enjoyable student experience.

International Students:
Revel provided students with the opportunity to review content in a safe environment and this was especially helpful where English was not a first language. Burvill particularly appreciated the way in which the Revel design allowed students to read chunks of information and then test their knowledge on it. It gave them the opportunity to review their topic mastery at beneficial intervals.

Student Experience and Perception[2]

You can listen to the students discussing Revel at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3_2dSV5RlI

Revel Use:
Using Revel before lectures provided students with an understanding of the week's topic. This preparedness gave them the confidence to participate in their learning and answer the lecturer's questions. Further, they used it for revision right before exams because *"it was very helpful"* (Swansea student). They appreciated being able to read and practice at the same time saying that *"it's really great that after each section of the chapter book, you have multiple questions or flashcards that you can practice at the same time...you cannot find that in another eBook"* and *"it really makes you feel like you've accomplished something when you get to the end of the chapter and keep up with your results"* (Swansea students).

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[2] 10 students provided their feedback on using Revel during a face-to-face filmed session.

Revel vs Traditional Textbook:
Students found Revel to be continuously engaging, appreciating the provision to apply knowledge through practice and reading. Most students carry their laptop and phone everywhere and one student said, *"one of the main benefits is that you don't have to carry textbooks anymore"* and *"you might just be out having a coffee, think you've got a spare hour...open it up and continue working where you left off"*.

Further, students thought Revel real-time feedback was essential for their generation as they are surrounded by technology and have similar experiences of interaction and stimulation. Revel *"kind of gives you the incentive to keep going"* when you know immediately if you are right or wrong. The instant feedback is *"great because it prods you to revise"* too.

International Students:
Revel particularly supports the acquisition of knowledge in international students and in first time marketing students. One student said *"as an international student, my English is not really good. I can use the Revel during the lecture and then I can follow my lecturer well"*. Another student said that they would *"highly recommend it, especially for those [where] English is not their first language"*.

Confidence:
Students appreciated the ease of use and structure of Revel, with one student noting that *"the content was good - it was easy to understand and it linked to the lectures...which was very useful in the exam"*. Another student felt that *"reading something that was so easy to understand - so easy to read - definitely developed confidence by the end of the semester"*.

Students found that Revel increases motivation and *"gives you that incentive to keep going"*. Students said that reading Revel before lectures gave them the confidence to speak up during lectures, saying *"we know more about the theories and some examples"* and *"you're not as worried if your answer might be wrong...you've already seen it's within the text"*. One student said that *"it definitely developed confidence by the end of the semester because I was able to remember a lot of what I read [to use as examples] in my exams"*.

Conclusion

Over the course of the pilot, Revel was shown to improve exam scores when compared to students who did not use it. Revel impacted positively on student engagement with reading and lectures, increasing student confidence with their knowledge acquisition, demonstrated by their participation in lectures.

When asked how likely they were to recommend Revel to fellow colleagues, Burvill said she was *"highly likely to recommend Revel to colleagues both in Swansea and other universities"*. Owens gave Revel an 8 out of 10, with 10 being extremely likely, *because "it's a fabulous way to integrate blended learning, which is now a hot topic in education"* and it is *"a very valuable learning and teaching resource"*.

The team will be using Revel again for the academic year 2018-19 and will be considering ways to use it to further increase student engagement. Should you wish to work with the team on this research or discuss it further, they would be happy to provide more information. Please contact s.j.owens@swansea.ac.uk in the first instance.