



# Revel Sociology educator study

A look at the impact on exam scores and student performance at Clemson University

## Key findings:

- Instructor Coffman implemented Revel™ in her course with the goal of assigning quizzes to increase student reading, engagement, and overall performance in the course. She reports students are arriving to class having read the material and are more engaged with the course content.
- Average exam scores and final grades were significantly higher when Revel was required for 13% of the overall course grade than when Revel was not required.
- Data indicate a strong, positive correlation between average Revel scores and the final course grade.

## Setting

**Locale:** Clemson University is a public, coeducational, land-grant and sea-grant research university in Clemson, South Carolina.

**Enrollment:** approximately 23,400

**Freshman acceptance rate:** 47%

**Undergraduate in-state residency:** 68%

**Full-time retention rate:** 88%

**Ethnicity/race:** 22% minority

**Six-year graduation rate:** 81%



**School name:** Clemson University, Clemson, SC



**Course name:** Introduction to Sociology



**Course format:** Face to face



**Course materials:** Revel for *Sociology: A Down to Earth Approach* by Henslin



**Timeframe:** Fall 2016, Spring 2017, Fall 2017



**Educator:** C.C. Coffman, Instructor



**Results reported by:** Stephanie Fritson, Pearson Customer Outcomes Analytics Manager

## About the course

Introduction to Sociology (SOC 2010) is an introductory survey course exploring the study of contemporary groups, organizations, and societies in terms of human social behavior, social change, social structure, and social institutions.

## Challenges and Goals

Instructor Coffman found that her students were coming to class not having read the material and were therefore unprepared to engage in course discussion. By implementing Revel, she hoped students would read the text before class and be more engaged with the course content. She hypothesized that the online format of Revel with integrated assignments and quizzes within the chapter would encourage students to focus on the material and not just skim or scroll through the content. **Instructor Coffman's goal for Revel implementation was to increase student reading and engagement, leading to improved course exam scores and final grades.**

## Implementation

Coffman taught three sections of Introduction to Sociology in Fall 2016 and Fall 2017 and one section in Spring 2017. All sections were taught in a face-to-face format. During Fall 2016, Coffman gave students the option of using any format (eText, hardcover, loose-leaf, etc.) of *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* by Henslin. In Spring 2017, she recommended using the Revel version but allowed students to use any format of the title, and in Fall 2017 she required students to use the Revel version. Fall 2017 course assignments consisted of the following:

### Exams

Five tests were administered throughout the semester. Tests included multiple-choice, true-false, and short-answer questions and covered readings, lecture, films, and class discussion.

### Revel assignments

Each week students were assigned the Revel chapter readings and corresponding module and chapter quizzes, with a total of 18 chapters assigned throughout the semester. The Revel module and chapter quizzes were required to be completed each

Sunday by 11:59 p.m. Revel points were recorded in the gradebook as the percentage of points earned out of total available Revel points.

### Field study: observation of a social setting

The field study consisted of a three- to four-page paper containing analysis and discussion of observations during a social setting. Students were required to select a setting where at least ten people were present for a minimum of one hour and observe interactions during this time, practicing data collection strategies employed by sociologists. Students were then required to submit a paper discussing and analyzing what they observed. Within the paper, students were required to identify which theoretical orientation was used to guide their observations and what they were trying to pay attention to, including a definition of the theoretical perspective.

### Classwork

Activities included as part of the classwork grade were attendance, group work, in-class writing, and pop quizzes.



#### Assessments

- 67% Exams
- 13% Revel assignments
- 13% Field study
- 7% Classwork

## Results and Data

Average final grades, exam scores, and field study scores were highest in Fall of 2017 when Revel was required.

A higher percentage of students earned a grade of A or B in the course in Fall 2017 than in any other semester.

A correlation measures the strength of a relationship between two variables, where  $r$  is the correlation coefficient. The closer a positive  $r$ -value is to 1.0, the stronger the correlation. The corresponding  $p$ -value measures the statistical significance or strength of the correlation, where a  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$  shows the existence of a positive correlation between these two variables. Note that correlation does not imply causation; it is simply a measure of the strength of the relationship. An analysis of average Revel quiz scores and final course grades shows a strong correlation between the two measures ( $r = 0.62$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). It should be noted that Revel contributes 13% toward the final course score, which may impact this relationship.

A  $t$ -test, which measures whether the means of two groups are statistically different, was used to compare average exam scores of students between Fall 2016 and Fall 2017. A second  $t$ -test was used to compare average final course scores of students between Fall 2016 and Fall 2017.

- Results indicate that students in Fall 2017 earned significantly higher average exam scores — six percentage points higher — than students in Fall 2016, where  $t(221) = 6.26$  and  $p < 0.01$ , indicating that this difference was statistically significant.
- Results indicate that students in Fall 2017 earned significantly higher final course scores — five percentage points higher — than students in Fall 2016, where  $t(221) = 4.95$  and  $p < 0.01$ , indicating that this difference was statistically significant.

## The Student Experience

In Fall 2016, students using Revel in a variety of courses at several U.S. colleges completed a voluntary, end-of-semester survey (612 participants), providing valuable insight on their experience.

96% of respondents were able to log in to Revel the first week of class.

90% of respondents described their experience learning to use Revel as very easy or easy.

88% of respondents agreed completing Revel readings and quizzes better prepared them for class.

79% of respondents agreed that experiencing the text through Revel helped them feel more engaged with the course content than a traditional textbook.

74% of respondents agreed that they preferred using Revel over a traditional text.

Students' survey comments regarding their Revel experience included:

"By answering questions [in Revel] related to the course material, it increased my understanding of the material."

"Being able to learn from your mistakes easily from the quizzes helps you learn better."

“I like how it asks you questions along the way to check your understanding as you go.”

“Revel allows students to work with the material rather than just read it.”

“I love the fact that with Revel, the textbook and course materials are always readily available whenever I find spare time to study.”

— Anonymous Student, Revel National Survey, Fall 2016

## Conclusion

Instructor Coffman implemented Revel in Introduction to Sociology with the goal of improving student reading, engagement, and preparedness for class sessions. She also hoped that by improving student reading and engagement, overall performance in the course would improve. Performance results indicate average student exam scores and course grades improved significantly when Revel assignments were required for 13% of the course grade. Students who scored higher on Revel quizzes also earned higher overall course grades. Coffman reports that requiring Revel in the course has led to increased student preparedness and engagement, along with improved overall performance.