

Pearson eBooks solution

INTO University of East Anglia (London Campus)

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CASE SUMMARY

At INTO University of East Anglia, the International Business Diploma equips every student with an iPad containing their core texts as eBooks to enable and encourage students to regularly access these learning resources. In feedback **81% of their students said that they were using their textbooks regularly in class**, and also in cafés, break areas and elsewhere. **Lecturers integrated the eBooks into their teaching using a variety of methods.** This developed their confidence and ability to quickly switch between VLE, textbooks, worksheets and dictionaries on the same device, making it particularly effective.

Course

1st year of Business Degree

Textbooks in use

Various

eBook Platform

Vital Source

Type of data collected

Lecturer feedback; student feedback

Data collection period

2012-13

Course design

The aim of the International Business Diploma is to replicate as far as possible the content, structure and standards of a first year Business degree at the University of East Anglia, with an added emphasis on language and academic skills support. Our students are all overseas students whose first language is not English and/or who may be slightly short of qualifications for entry to undergraduate study.

In 2012 we made the decision to equip every student with a tablet device. Two intakes of 58 students in September 2012 and 33 in January 2013, were provided with (or brought their own) devices and we adapted both the programme and the teaching approach to take advantage of this. As part of this scheme we decided to deliver textbooks for Business, Accounting, Organisational Behaviour and Economics digitally, and to stop using a textbook for English language support altogether. We chose a selection of texts from Pearson's higher education title range and these were all accessed through Vital Source for iOS or Android.

In previous years students had been given a physical book pack consisting of six core textbooks which they rarely brought to school, and so we felt they were not being

fully exploited as a resource. Students were over-reliant on lecture notes and anecdotal evidence suggested that some of the weaker students had not opened their textbooks at all! We also felt that the recommended English textbook was not suitable, as it focused on 'Business English' but we were unable to find an 'English for Academic Purposes' text that met our needs.

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We wanted to enable access to the textbooks in a variety of contexts, whether in a lecture, an English class, or wherever students happened to be studying. One of the key intended outcomes was an increased use of textbooks in class and better integration of textbook content into classroom teaching and activities on Moodle, our Virtual Learning Environment. Freed from having to follow a set course book, our English team were eager to pursue a programme of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) to ensure their support was tailored to student needs, and for this to be effective we

needed to ensure access to textbooks at all times in English and academic support classes.

THE SOLUTION

The adoption of eBooks was an important aspect of making the case for the 1:1 iPad programme, as it was easy to show the tangible value of having all materials in one place. Our centre director at the time was very willing to look at use of tablet devices, but we all agreed on the importance of having reliable content on them that students could access, in addition to the study tools that the devices provided. There was also the practical cost saving to be considered. Electronic textbooks are slightly cheaper than their paper equivalents, but the real savings come from not having to over-order, as we are now able to request extra codes according to our numbers; useful when many students arrive at the last minute. When the decision was made to go ahead with the project, Pearson provided us with our selected textbooks in digital format.

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Implementation

All students were required to use the eBooks through the Vital Source eReader on their tablet device. We found that the most straight forward way of giving students access to all the required textbooks was to provide each student with a single access code that enabled them to download everything they needed onto their device. On arrival students had an induction session in which they were set up on the Wi-Fi network and university emails / passwords were provided. We extended this session to include installing the relevant software and redeeming book codes. Although this is a relatively simple process there were still some snags the first time we did it (especially with latecomers) but we provided support in the form of online documentation and screencasts to help.

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Within the first week all students were using the eBooks fluently, and we were already able to see a positive impact in the way they were used in comparison to the

paper textbooks of previous years. About half the students were regularly using the highlighting and note-taking functionality within the technology while others were using the text in conjunction with written notes or other note-taking solutions. All students brought their tablets to class every day, and so all students had their textbooks.

One of our lecturers in particular used the shared highlighting function extensively to help guide students through the text and to show how different sections related to their lectures. The students could see not only what he had highlighted, but also where they might find more information on the topic or how they could then go and test their understanding. We also took summary and critical thinking questions from within the textbooks, along with recommended reading, to form the basis of discussion forums on Moodle. Students contributed very productively to these activities and over 90% of them in end of year surveys said they found this approach useful. In general, we found the ability to quickly switch between

textbooks, worksheets and dictionaries and the VLE on the same device was particularly effective and allowed us to effectively use the technology available in a way the students saw as beneficial.

TRAINING

It was fairly easy to access support and deliver training for the eBooks and reader e.g., there were short videos available online to take users through the key features. In addition to creating some discovery style activities in training sessions, I also made links to online resources available on Moodle. We tried to make training as hands-on as possible, e.g., we practised sharing notes with each other to explore how this might work. The greater challenge related to Continuing Professional Development and how to provide support for the way in which eBooks might change teaching practice. For English teachers we produced documents providing extensive guidance and lesson ideas on how best to exploit the textbooks for language and discussion points. For

lecturers we focused on how best to take advantage of the note sharing function and integrate content from the books with the VLE. We used a similar approach to familiarise students with the eBooks.

An unexpected issue arose however in that students often relied on a keyword search, instead of using the index or contents pages. As this is not an intelligent search within the text, it

often led to students neglecting the index or contents page and getting lost on irrelevant pages. To counter this one of our English team developed a 'treasure hunt' style activity in which students had to discover and use the various functions of the software, in tandem with the traditional features of a textbook.

Results

It is difficult to measure the impact of eBooks as a discreet item, as they were introduced in tandem with wide ranging changes in the course structure and teaching methods. However, it was the content that the eBooks provided that gave structure to the use of other learning technologies.

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Data was collected through Survey Monkey, polling the entire intake with structured questions asking students to rate and comment on various aspects of the course. Small group interviews with student representatives were conducted, which were recorded and transcribed. One to one interviews were conducted with lecturers as part of our end of term review process.

We recorded significant improvements in grades across the board (of between 5-10% average per module) and in the English classes where the textbooks were being used only a small minority failed to meet the progression mark.

The level and complexity of work that students were able to produce by the end of the course, and their engagement with the content of their classes showed clear improvement, and this can be seen in the 90% overall pass rate for September intake students compared to just over half the year before. The main complaints from teachers and students were that the interface was not slick enough for truly effective note-taking. [However, as eBooks are only gradually becoming more widely used throughout higher education I would expect this to cease to be an issue as user data gets back to the companies who are providing the software.] Students commented that carrying them,

finding topics and keeping them clean and undamaged were the main advantages of eBooks over paper textbooks.

Conclusions

TEACHING & LEARNING

The most important thing that eBooks provide is greater accessibility, but it should not be underestimated the effect that this has on learning and what becomes possible for you to do in class. The traditional textbook is often confined to a shelf in the bedroom or study, but this is no longer the only place where students do work. 81% of our students said that they were using their textbooks regularly in class, but in feedback they also spoke about using them

in cafés, break areas and elsewhere, with one student commenting, "In the tube I can make [sic] some essay with my textbook and with my note. It was really useful." Some students

expressed an aesthetic preference for paper books, one that I share when reading for pleasure, but these same students were still using the eBooks more regularly than was evident with previous years' intakes using the paper version. As reference material and as a classroom resource, we found the digital textbooks to be an excellent choice, and one more in keeping with the reading and study habits of modern international students.

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In brief

- Excellent way of providing content on iPad
- Shared notes allow for lecturer guidance
- Students can easily switch between textbook and discussion questions set on VLE
- Facilitate CLIL approach in English language classes
- Increased accessibility means learning can take place in a variety of contexts.