



Pearson

# Revel

London South Bank University, UK

Reaching and engaging students across all  
attainment levels

## About the resource

Revel replaces traditional textbooks with an engaging learning experience that prepares students for class.

It presents a seamless blend of author-created digital text, media, and assessment based on learning science. Students are able to read, practise and study in one continuous experience – anytime, anywhere, on any device.

The assignability and tracking tools in Revel lets lecturers gauge their students' understanding and engagement in and out of the classroom. This visibility, paired with students' renewed energy for the material, empowers lecturers to spend class time on the meaningful instruction.

Title in use: Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill: Research Methods for Business Students, 8th edition (first Revel edition).

## Key Findings

From our research we found that Revel participation and engagement levels were high considering that students did not receive credit for completion of assignments. We found that Revel has the potential to engage students across all levels.

- Dividing students into 3 levels of attainment we found that **more students engaged in the lower two tiers**: 56% of students with module grades below 80, versus 51% of the top tier students with grades above 80.
- Students who might be classed as 'struggling' spent a **longer than average time** on early assignments, which indicates a good level of engagement.
- In the Autumn session, **13% of students accessed Revel weeks after the module ended**: the resource continued to be valuable to them in the follow-on module.
- Average time spent per assignment ranged from **24 – 68 minutes** and students appear to have been motivated by the number of marks available.

## Introduction

This study investigated the use of Revel on an **introductory research methods** module taken by business Master's students at London South Bank University. The module ran in two consecutive semesters for different cohorts of students, depending on their programme start date.

The purpose of the study was to understand the module leader's challenges, motivations and experience of integrating Revel. We conducted an in-depth interview with the module leader, looked at student activity in the digital platform itself and considered relevant student comments on the Module Evaluation Questionnaires.

In this study we are looking at usage only as it pertains to the students on the course who were registered within Revel. This doesn't necessarily match the number of students actually registered for the module.

## Context

Revel has been used on this module for one academic year and was implemented by the module leader Dr Carrie Rutherford as a tool to support student engagement.

The students on the course are full-time, postgraduates with a large proportion of them being international, with English as a second or other language. Dr Rutherford has found that trying to read and digest both the recommended texts and the lecture slides can be a challenge for these students. An additional challenge for many of these international students is that this course is encouraging them to be creative, curious and develop their own interest in a topic; an approach to learning with which they are less familiar.

This is the first module that students take and it's not subject specific, so whether the students are studying for a Master's in Marketing or Human Resources or Accounting they all have to take this module as part of their preparation for the final project.

This was a brand new module introduced in 2019–20 but with years of experience teaching on similar modules within the Business School, Dr Rutherford knew that one of the main challenges would be encouraging students to read the core textbook and to read the research papers, which are vital to success in the module and Master's level study overall. She thought Revel would be good tool to help overcome this challenge:

*"It makes reading the core text very accessible to students; a big textbook can be quite daunting. The interactive elements – the multimedia, videos, quizzes – that test understanding as you go along, motivate the students."*

Revel was strongly encouraged but not required on this course.

Students take a follow-on module in Research Methods run by another lecturer in the following semester, which further guides and prepares them in developing and applying research skills.

## Course structure

The work students did in Revel was formative assessment, so it did not contribute to their final module grade. However, it was designed very specifically to support with writing their assessed written coursework which makes up 100% of the module grade.

- The module runs for 10 weeks for two intakes of students, with the two sessions running in succession.
- Session 1 (Oct – Dec 2019):
  - 239 students registered on Revel
  - 1-hour lecture followed by 1-hour seminar each week
- Session 2 (Jan – Mar 2020):
  - 201 students registered on Revel
  - 2-hour workshop each week
- Students register on Revel in Week 2 and have access for the full academic year.
- The lecturer set up and managed one Revel course per teaching session.
- Five formative assignments are set in Revel (approximately 1 per fortnight), each with a due date of 2 PM on Sunday.

It is worth noting that the Session 2 cohort was comprised of a particularly diverse set of students.

A Pearson representative attended lectures in Week 2 to introduce Revel and help students register on the platform. Dr Rutherford said that worked really well, especially for the handful of students who had minor technical issues logging in to the programme for the first time. In the same lecture sessions, she explained the formative assessment structure and the due dates for the assignments in Revel.

Dr Rutherford has reflected that in the next academic year she would first introduce the Revel assessment structure and reinforce how it supports learning and will help students to build up their final written coursework. Following that, she would have the Pearson representative attend to assist with the practical side of getting students access to the platform.

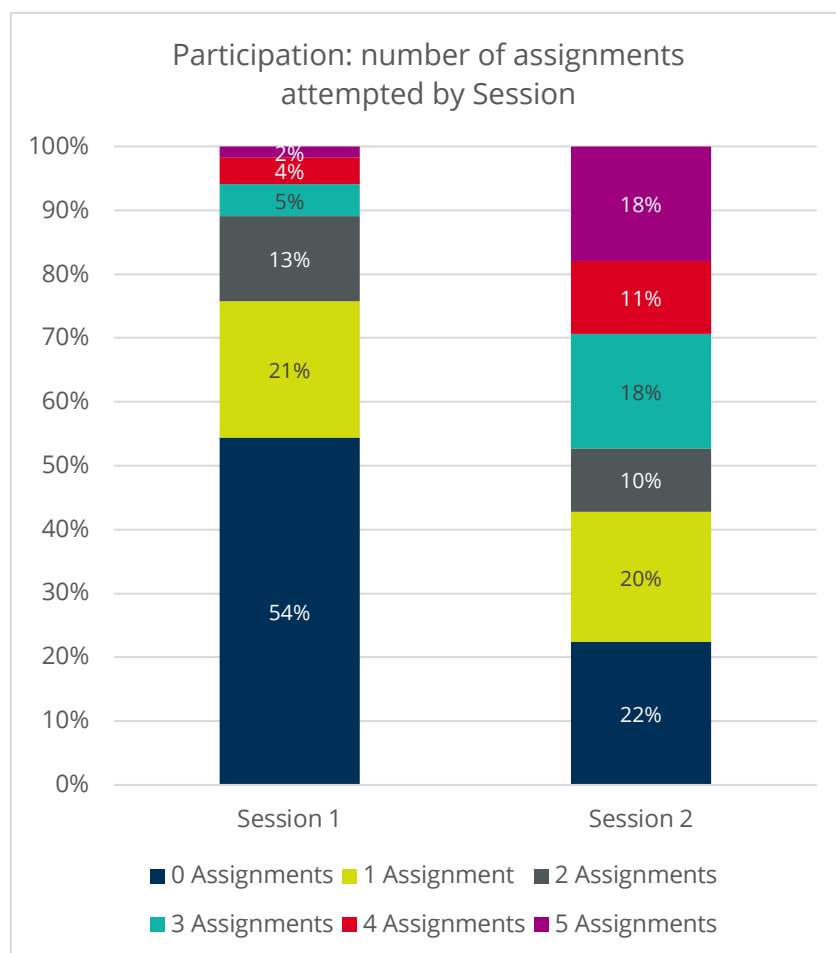
## Student Experience

### Participation in assignments

It has been shown that embedding and requiring online assessment has resulted in particularly high levels of engagement throughout many years of studies with various UK institutions. It is normal in the first year of use to engage with usage data and plan new ways to implement resources in the following years in line with the educator's desired outcomes e.g. engagement.

When combining the participation in assignments across both semesters at London South Bank University we can say that over this first academic year of the module being taught and with Revel integrated but assignments not set for credit, the average submission rate\* was **60%**. However, because of the interactive nature of the resource students may have interacted but not submitted their work; they could have done non-assigned elements such as reading, videos and quizzes. (See the section on *Time spent*.)

The graph below shows the participation levels for each teaching session by the total number of assignments attempted per student.



**Session 1 submission rate\* was 46%.**

**Session 2 submission rate\* was 78%.**

\*Submission rate is counted when a student has submitted at least one assignment in Revel.



The Session 2 cohort demonstrated a **particularly high participation rate** in an online course resource that *isn't* assigned for credit. This is a good foundation from which Dr Rutherford can now develop her integration of assessment in Revel to further motivate student engagement. One option could be to flip the course delivery slightly so that Revel reading and MCQ quizzes are required *before* class and longer written online activities are due *after*. If higher participation in Revel activities could be achieved, that could then allow for the seminar sessions to include more discussions that help students develop higher order skills such as evaluation, creativity and critical thinking.

*"The students were very happy to get started on Revel, downloading the app. I think they liked the idea of Revel: they feel that we've supported them as a business school."*

– Dr Carrie Rutherford, Module Leader, London South Bank University

## Engagement

We have considered time spent as a possible measure of the level of student engagement in both the module leader-set Revel assignments and in using Revel as a resource for self-study. The tables below show that students spent quite a high average time working in the Revel platform. We have included students who have worked in Revel but gained Zero points on the assignment – this covers any reading or interactive activities they may have been doing in Revel even if they didn't eventually submit any of the assigned work. We excluded those who spent less than 1 minute in an assignment.

### Session 1

Assignment	Number of Students	Maximum Score Available	Total Time Spent	Average Time Spent per Student
1	118	18 points	54 hours	27 minutes
2	100	109 points	45 hours	27 minutes
3	41	151 points	47 hours	68 minutes
4	30	127 points	21 hours	42 minutes
5	11	139 points	8 hours	47 minutes

### Session 2

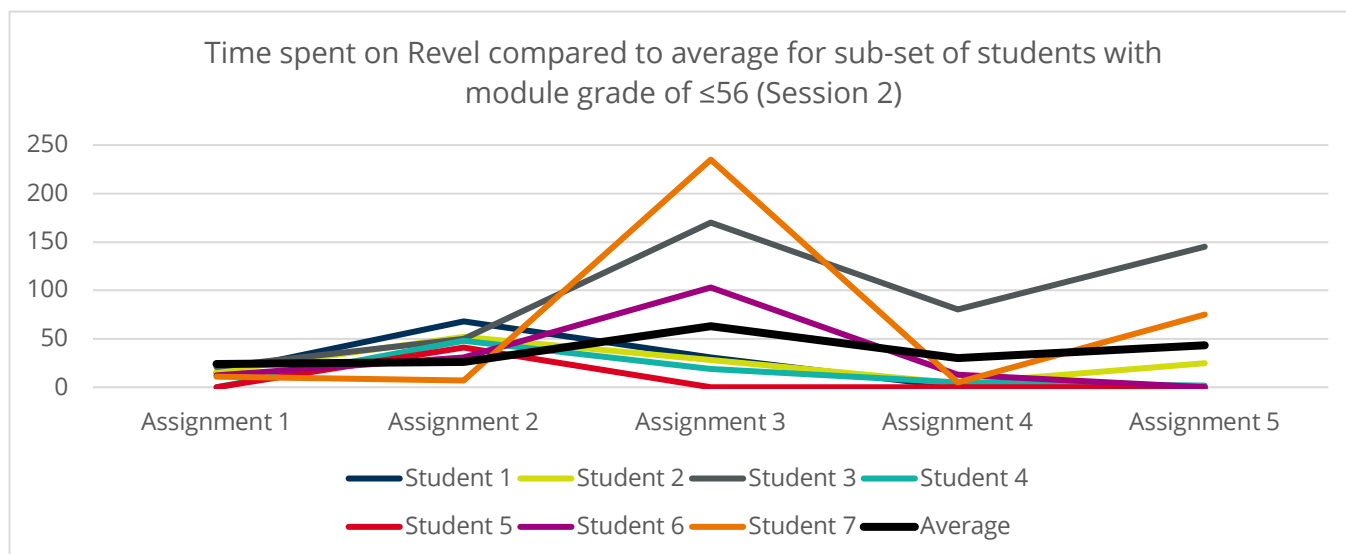
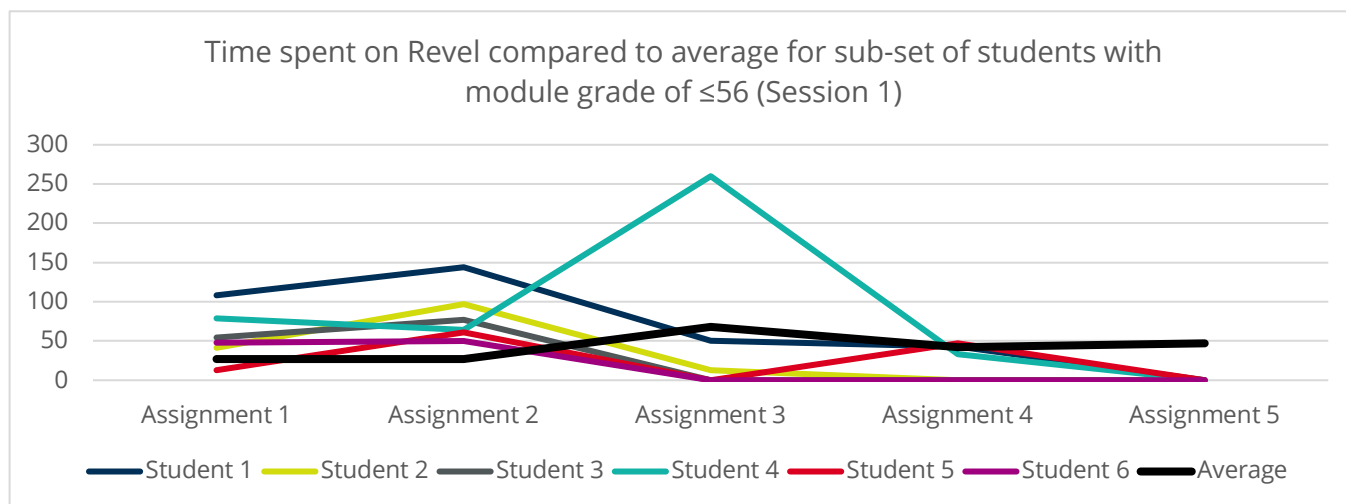
Assignment	Number of Students	Maximum Score Available	Total Time Spent	Average Time Spent per Student
1	145	18 points	58 hours	24 minutes
2	121	109 points	54 hours	26 minutes
3	100	151 points	104 hours	63 minutes
4	74	127 points	37 hours	30 minutes
5	55	139 points	39 hours	43 minutes

We observe that engagement was sustained for those who used Revel throughout the session for both groups of students and we also see they spent a lot more time on Assignment 3. This assignment was worth more points and it may also suggest the content and activities contained within it were particularly relevant for preparing the module's written coursework.

In summary we can say that **those students who used Revel at all, spent longer on assignments based on their worth**, which is encouraging.

In the following two graphs we have identified small groups of students in both sessions who got a low grade, less than or equal to 56 or who failed the module at the first attempt, but had on one or more assignment early in the module, spent an **above average amount of time studying in Revel**. This suggests that they valued the opportunity Revel gave them to work on better understanding the module content.

Dr Rutherford suspects that some of these pass level students may have failed it wasn't for their engagement with the learning resources in Revel.



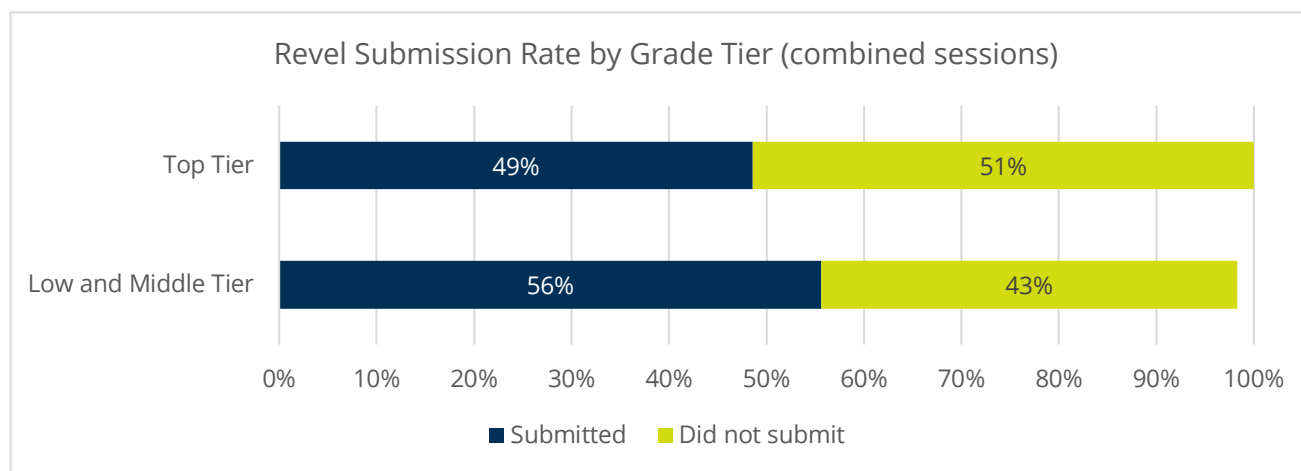
## Assessment and attainment

We reviewed each Session in turn, looking at students' formative assessment activity in Revel as it related to their overall module attainment. The graphs over the subsequent pages divide the cohorts into top, middle and low tiers by module grade as follows:

- Top tier = 81–100
- Middle tier = 61–80
- Low tier = less than 60

The mean module grade for Session 1 was 68.9 and for Session 2 it was 65.9.

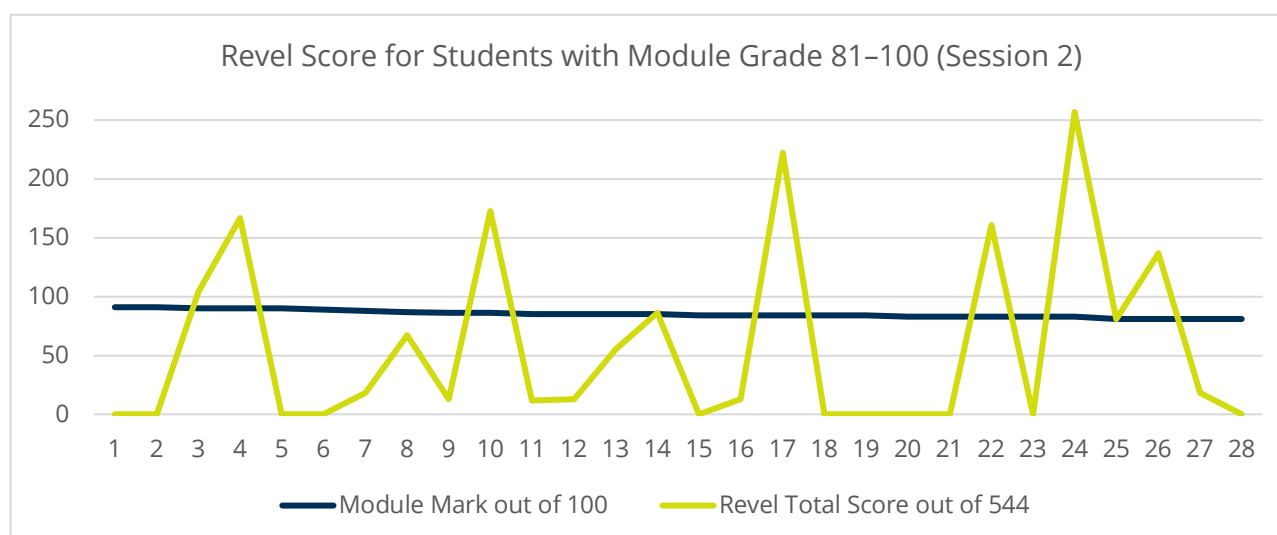
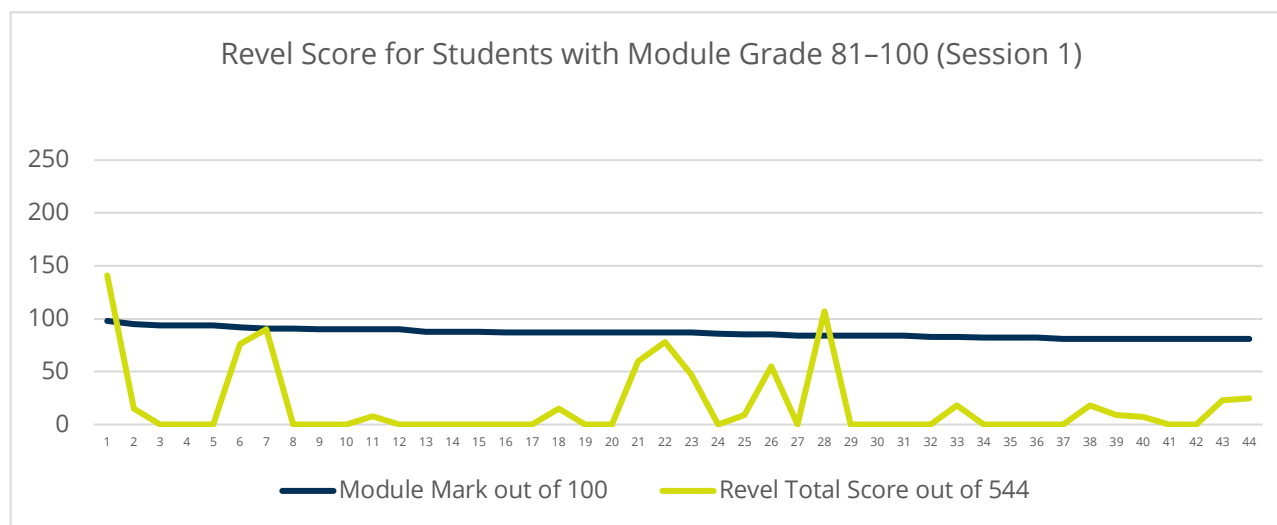
In Session 2 we can see more spikes of engagement overall, which reflects the fact that more students submitted work in Revel, and also higher scores.





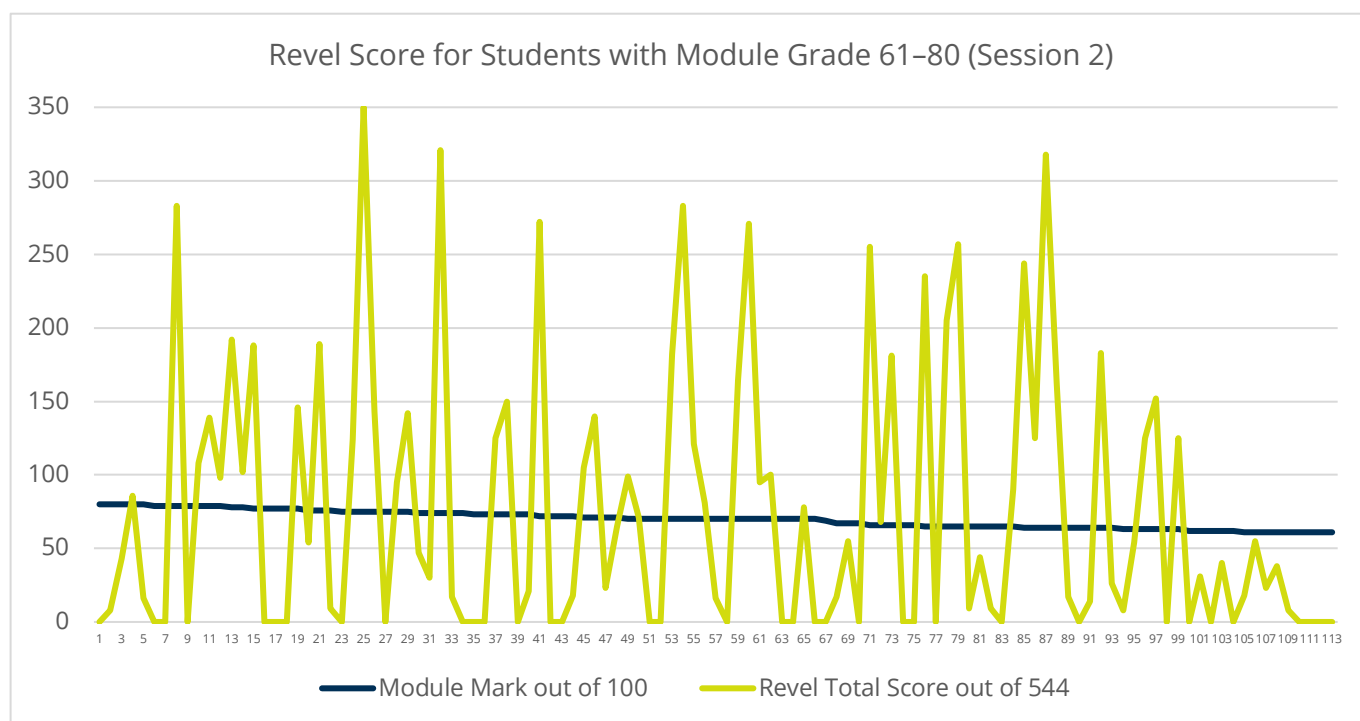
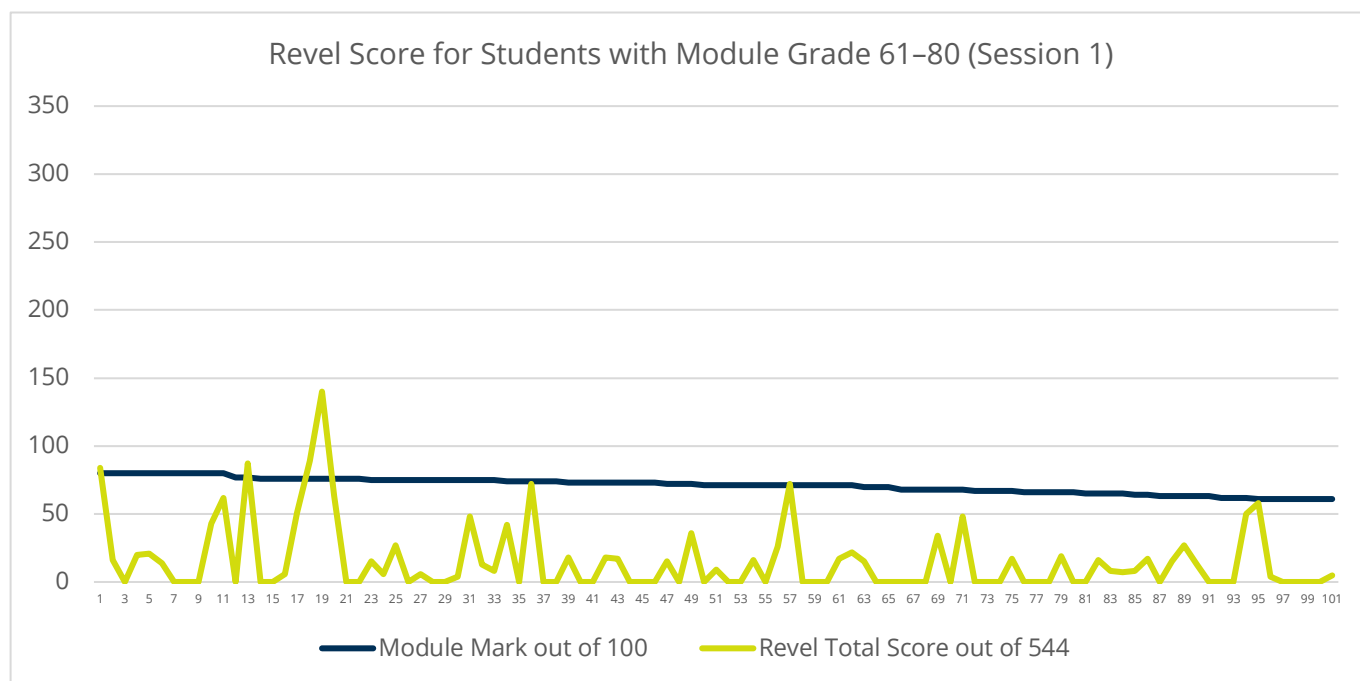
## Top Tier

We can see that the **top tier students** either engage and score highly on Revel – as you might expect – or they simply don't rely on it; they do well in the course and probably would have done so with or without the availability of Revel. In Session 1, **41%** of these students submitted an assignment in Revel. In session 2, the submission rate for the top tier was **61%**.



## Middle Tier

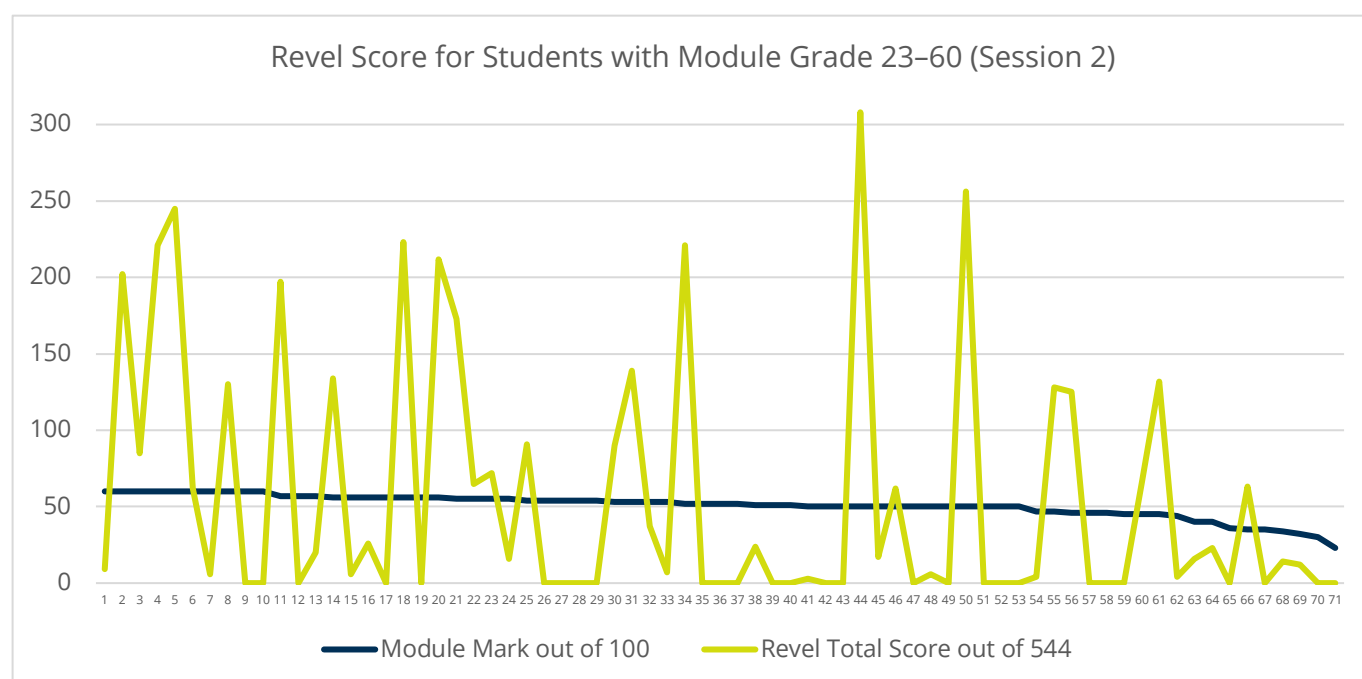
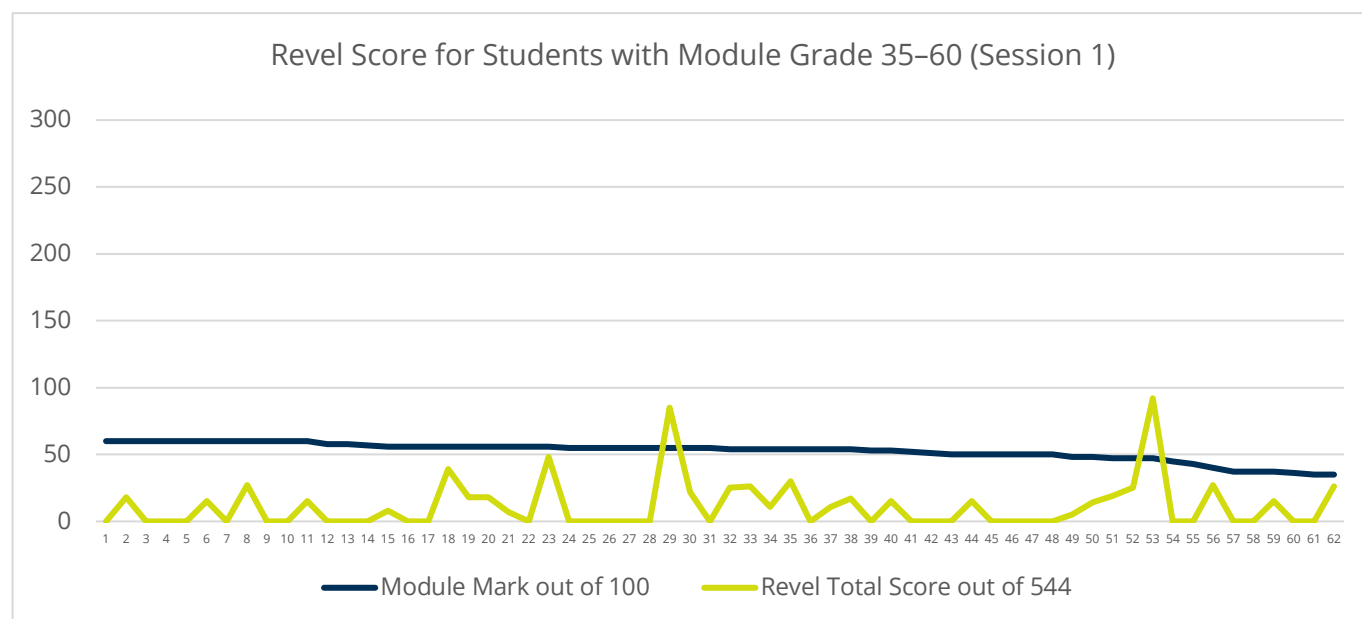
The **middle tier, majority** of students engage more consistently, especially the Session 2 group, although there are still troughs showing no engagement at all. Across the two sessions, **60%** of this group of students gained a score on a Revel assignment, **11% more** than in the top tier.



## Low tier

The students in the **lowest tier of grades**, including those who failed the module at the first attempt, present a more mixed picture with some engaging and scoring quite highly on their Revel work but then performing less well on the module coursework. Across the two sessions, **53%** of these lower performing students showed a score in Revel.

This suggests that Revel is appealing, engaging and accessible to those students who are *not* the top-performing students; Revel is a friendly and easy-to-use resource that can reach this group within a cohort.



## Continued Engagement

Students continued to use Revel after their last online assignment submission which demonstrated the value of Revel in relation to the course more widely, especially in writing their coursework.

Dr Rutherford found that a number of students contacted her towards the end of the course wanting access to Revel, which suggests that it was seen to be of significant value to those individuals, whether as a formative or revision tool. As mentioned, the students go on to take a second Research Methods module with another lecturer. They continued to have access to Revel, so Dr Rutherford had wondered whether students would continue to use it as a self-study resource even though they didn't have anything assigned by the next lecturer.

We found that at the end of Session 1, 31 students (13%) accessed Revel a number of weeks after the module ended, suggesting they found the platform to be valuable in the follow-on module, even though that lecturer did not set any assignments on Revel.

At the time of analysis, students in Session 2 had not yet begun their follow-on module, however 66 of them last accessed Revel over one week **after** their final Revel assignment was due, indicating that they continued to use Revel to support when writing their coursework. This usage coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic which forced the last 3 weeks of this Master's course to move to fully online delivery.

## Student Feedback

The fairly significant participation levels we observed for formative, non-credit bearing work, suggests that students found Revel useful in supporting their studies. Revel automatically marks students' work which is something that Dr Rutherford particularly likes about the system. It gives students instant feedback which helps with motivation and she found that students were asking for their assessment marks in class sessions, eager to find out their scores for the written Revel submissions which were marked manually.

***"It appeals to different types of learners. It's good that there's the accountability because of the points system."***

– Dr Carrie Rutherford, Module Leader, London South Bank

A couple of comments on the Module Evaluation Questionnaires referenced Revel:

*"Enjoyed the lectures and using Revel."*

*"Excellent online resources."*

## Conclusion

Encouragingly high participation and engagement levels were observed. This means there is clearly an opportunity to iterate and further develop the implementation of Revel within the module, to drive engagement even further, especially to provide support to students who would sit at the lower end of the attainment level.

Dr Rutherford has anecdotally observed that those students who engaged with the reading and activities such as quizzes in Revel, even if they didn't do the written submissions, seemed to broadly perform better overall which suggests the inherent value of embedding this kind of digital resource to enhance the learning experience.

*"For me as the module leader there's a feelgood factor: I'm giving the students a resource I think is valuable. However, I've not had to change the content of the course, I'm using the same tried and tested content from the Saunders textbook, with the extra benefit that Revel tests students' understanding and automatically marks their formative assessments which saves time for me."*

## Future Plans

Following this first year of using Revel, Dr Rutherford would like to explore ways of embedding Revel deeper into the tapestry of the module, assigning more of the content that is automatically marked by the platform in order to help motivate students' usage.

In this first year of use she found that for the keen students Revel supports them in an obvious way and they benefit, whereas for those who don't use it at least they know it's there as a safety net. She also observed:

*"Some students who didn't sign up to it panicked at the end of term realising there's a resource they haven't signed up for and they perhaps don't really know enough about."*

In light of this she is considering changing the assessment for the module overall to include:

- some summative assessment in Revel to help drive engagement throughout the module.
- a mid-Semester smaller written assignment such as an academic poster.

Dr Rutherford intends that, breaking up the assessment into smaller parts will support student achievement and ideally reduce the last-minute dash to use a resource that is better used to support a students' learning throughout the module. Any changes in implementation would be designed with the goal of a greater and more significant positive impact on the student experience and module performance.

Dr Rutherford concludes:

*"The key is flexibility. You can use Revel in a way that suits your module. There's functionality I may use and some I may never use, but I can try new things. Constantly iterating this to improve the module is my preferred approach."*