

Textbook Availability

Do your students have the resources to succeed?



Introduction

How many of your students are using their textbooks? Is it common for them to skip buying their textbooks altogether? And what effect does this have on their chances of success?

Reading lists and core textbooks define a course, but the availability of those materials to students defines their course experience. In this Snapshot, we will discuss the main factors affecting textbook availability, the effects of this on student results and wellbeing, and possible solutions for any institution. We will focus on the following themes:

1. Student Inclusivity & Textbook Affordability
2. Pedagogical and Learning Outcomes
3. Student Retention
4. Student Recruitment
5. Solution: Institutional Support

By providing institutional support, Taylor & Francis offers you the flexibility you need. Around the world we are increasingly seeing more institutions provide textbooks for their students, referred to as **Inclusive Coursebook Provision** in this Snapshot, and in the US many universities offering **Inclusive Access** as an affordable solution for textbook purchase. This has proven to be very effective, and you will learn more about this throughout this Snapshot.

Student Inclusivity & Textbook Affordability

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Before considering the other themes related to the availability of textbooks, we must start at the beginning with the landscape of higher education and how it is changing. There has been an increase in focus on diversity and inclusion in higher education, and beyond, which has been driven by multiple factors such as pluralism; internationalization of higher education; transnational immigration flows; and calls to remedy past discrimination and oppression of minorities.

This means rethinking the way course materials are currently made available to students. To adopt an inclusive mindset means looking at how and if students can access course materials, for instance some may be unable to leave their house/get to university/get to the library etc. This could be due to the pandemic, financial cost of travel or perhaps even safety concerns for vulnerable groups. It can also mean considering the affordability of course materials and the financial pressures which students face.

Textbooks and other course materials need to be engaging and up to date, but they also need to be affordable for students. What is 'affordable' can vary greatly between countries, institutions and student backgrounds. Insights from a previous National Survey of Student Engagement in the US showed that concerns over finances affect many students' academic performance. Roughly 1 in 4 first-year students and 1 in 3 seniors regularly did not purchase their required academic materials due to their cost; one third of students believed that financial concerns interfered with their academic performance. In our **UK 2019 Starting University Survey**, over

70% of students about to start at university revealed that managing finances was their biggest concern. Institutions can help to alleviate this stress by ensuring all students have access to their course's core text, allowing lecturers to set course reading knowing no one is at a disadvantage.

Considering how students access your course materials and whether they're affordable may seem daunting. But there will already be work that your institution is currently undertaking to assist students, so reach out to those appropriate colleagues/departments. Sometimes the solution can be as simple as making sure students have access to core textbooks through your library, either a print copy or as an eBook they can access off campus. **Inclusive Coursebook Provision** can provide students with 1-to-1 access to their textbooks, either through institutional purchase of print copies or through access to eBooks. Inclusive Access can drive down costs and ensure that students have access to eBooks from day 1 of their course. This institutional support can play an important role in helping to level the playing field for students. It helps remove some previously existing limitations on students which then leads to greater inclusion. In doing so, more students at a disadvantage can experience the course in the same way as their peers.

Pedagogical and Learning Outcomes

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Textbooks often include additional resources to enrich student learning and encourage independent research. Many Taylor & Francis textbooks come with supplementary content, from audio and video files to interactive timelines and maps, as well as test banks, practice exercises, sample lesson plans, and more. This complements your lectures and seminars and enables students to achieve better learning outcomes. If you're looking for a textbook with a companion website or eResources, visit our **Online Resources Collection**. The textbooks are broken down by subject area and there is a helpful video so you can get the most out of these resources!

“Ensuring that students have a course companion text to hand encourages them to engage in reading before lectures, which results in a more dynamic and stimulating learning environment in the classroom.”

– Stuart Taylor, Criminal Justice Department, Liverpool John Moores University

It can take time to find the right textbook and supporting materials suitable for your course and your teaching. That effort, and that appropriate textbook, can go to waste when students don't have access to it. They may look for cheaper or easier to obtain alternatives, which don't offer the knowledge and format that you picked out and know will work.

Therefore, course creation doesn't end at choosing the right materials, it's vital that students also have access to them and for institutions to consider what factors could hinder that access. Providing students with the right books for their studies can help them achieve better learning outcomes, as they're using the right pedagogy to enhance their studies. Without this, students may struggle to meet the expectations of the course.

Student Retention

Higher Education Statistics Agency tells us that 6.3% of full-time students in the UK did not continue in Higher Education after their first year of study in 2016/7, placing pressure on universities due to the loss of fees. In an increasingly competitive and results-oriented higher education market, student retention is of key importance to institutions and faculty. Universities are looking to improve graduation rates and decrease the loss of tuition revenue that results from students either dropping out or moving to a different institution. The reasons for student drop outs are well known and despite drop out rates varying between countries, the cause remains a mix of unrealistic expectations from students, and inadequate support for them when they arrive at university.

We've established that providing students with the right books or materials increases their engagement with the course. Universities can use this to offer support, as it ensures there are no added or hidden financial pressures placed on them and helps to boost satisfaction with their studies. If Faculty communicate to students what is available/included in their degree before they start, this will help students create realistic expectations of the course. If students are aware of what is included in their course tuition, and what isn't, then they have a better understanding of what studying your degree will be like. If they know what is available and how to access it (hopefully before the semester begins) this can encourage them to engage with the content sooner. Similarly, if they know what won't be available - for instance the core textbook is included but 2 recommended readings aren't - they can budget accordingly for the semester or academic year.

Institutional purchasing of textbooks for students ensures they have the right textbooks for their course from day one, helping to boost their satisfaction and engagement with their studies. Moreover, institutional eBooks often allow faculty to track class interaction with textbooks allowing faculty to make curriculum and textbook reading adjustments, improving student experience, and potentially lowering drop out rates.

"To date the response from staff and students to our eTextbook service has been extremely positive, with requests for the programme offer to be extended to further year groups, where a greater impact on final results, TEF and NSS outcomes may be achieved."

– Olivia Walsby, Reading Lists Manager, The University of Manchester Library

Student Recruitment

Woodall et al. discusses the debate taking place globally in higher education; whether a student should be treated as a customer. Is this approach helpful within academia, and what effect may this have on a student's academic performance? At the very least, students want to see value

from their university experience, and at any institutions where there is a fee, they will expect to see a return on their investment.

This Snapshot demonstrates the value of providing students with the resources they need for your course, and how this will help them succeed, as well as the disadvantages of not doing so. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that when Taylor & Francis surveyed the UK's top NSS institutions, faculty emphasized that a well-stocked library makes an institution stand out. Having a vast range of titles available in print and digitally ensures students are well supported throughout their learning experience, on and off campus.

This is a major reason why universities are using, or considering, institutional textbook services and seeing positive results. The value is reflected in student feedback and scoring, which in turn impacts student recruitment for the future!

Solution

Institutional Support

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Hopefully you have found this Snapshot useful. Although we've seen that textbook availability has a wide-ranging impact, there is a straightforward solution that you as a faculty member can explore with your institution and Taylor & Francis. We understand the importance of affordable course materials and we aim to offer several ways faculty can make assigned textbooks and resources available to students.

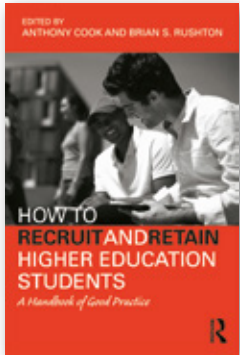
In the United States, we work with several digital partners to make our books available through **Inclusive Access** programs at colleges and universities across the country.

In the United Kingdom and other parts of the world, our **Inclusive Coursebook Provision** program ensures that students have access to their core course texts at no additional charge to them. Inclusive Coursebook Provision enables institutions to provide 1-to-1 access to their class texts, either through eBook platform integration or through simply purchasing books for their students. Taylor & Francis works with a variety of providers to make it easier for your institution to get started and put affordable learning solutions in place for your students.

Whether you're interested in eBook platform integration to provide course texts, or simply purchasing books for your students, we can help make it happen. Most Taylor & Francis content is available as both print and e-books and we work with some of the top eBook platform providers, such as VitalSource, Kortext, BibliU, Blackwells, John Smiths. We offer our e-books as PDF and EPUB.

Visit **Affordable Learning Solutions** on Routledge.com to learn more, or if you would like to discuss textbook provision for your students **get in touch with us!**

References

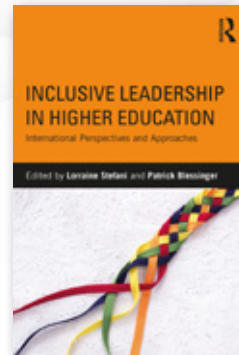


How to Recruit and Retain Higher Education Students

A Handbook of Good Practice

Antony Cook and Brian S. Rushton

www.routledge.com/9780415990899



Inclusive Leadership in Higher Education

International Perspectives and Approaches

Edited by Lorraine Stefani and Patrick Blessinger

www.routledge.com/9781138201446

Tony Woodall, Alex Hiller & Sheilagh Resnick (2014) **Making sense of higher education: students as consumers and the value of the university experience**, *Studies in Higher Education*, 39:1, 48-67, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2011.648373 [<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.648373>]

Louise Bunce, Amy Baird & Siân E. Jones (2017) **The student-as-consumer approach in higher education and its effects on academic performance**, *Studies in Higher Education*, 42:11, 1958-1978, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2015.1127908 [<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1127908>]

Affordable Learning Solutions [<https://www.routledge.com/our-customers/instructors/affordability>]

Flyer: Inclusive Coursebook Provision [<https://tandfbis.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/rt-files/JHMIXF2001+%E2%80%A2+LFT-final.pdf>]

Infographic: What makes an Institution stand out? [[https://tandfbis.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/rt-files/GKEDUCF2001-NSS-score-infographic-r2+\(002\).png](https://tandfbis.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/rt-files/GKEDUCF2001-NSS-score-infographic-r2+(002).png)] Insights from our survey to Faculty at top scoring National Student Survey Institutions in the UK (Includes institutions scoring 92% or higher in the 2018 National Student Survey).

Infographic: What you need to know about your new students [https://tandfbis.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/rt-files/Infographic_What+you+need+to+know+about+your+new+students.pdf] Insights from our survey of 1,000 new students about to start university.

Taylor & Francis Starting University Survey, 2019 [https://tandfbis.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/rt-files/Infographic_What+you+need+to+know+about+your+new+students.pdf]

National Survey of Student Engagement. (2012). Promoting Student Learning and Institutional Improvement: Lessons from NSSE at 13. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Non-continuation rates of full-time entrants after first year at HE provider.