

The Challenge

The experience of reading and analysing philosophy texts—and the skills involved—were always the elements of a module which I wasn't able to properly teach in situ—something that was done (or not done) by the students privately away from the classroom. Setting reading as “independent study” sometimes felt as if I was admitting defeat, treating analysis as unteachable except for a few general principles and pieces of advice placed on the VLE.



The Solution

Following the new pedagogical opportunities opened up by the pandemic, I kept my lectures online and used the in-person lecture slot to hold large-group, live reading workshops on Elevate - everyone sitting in front of the reading collaboratively working through one or two pages of text.

This meant that basic, prerequisite skills like knowledge and understanding could be taken out of the classroom, in order to have an hour of devoted reading and analysis in the workshop, followed by an hour devoted solely to evaluation, argumentation and debate in the seminar. As a result, there was a smooth transition of skills during the week from the basic ones in the prerecorded lecture through the workshop into the seminar.



The Results

- Students say they feel more confident in analysing texts.
- Students say that the time freed up by the textual-analysis workshops for evaluation activities in the seminars has improved their argumentation skills.
- Students are particularly pleased with having a stable, legible and communal resource of comments on Elevate for revision for end-of-module exams (indeed, having scrawled, illegible seminar notes on texts was another frustration in traditional models of teaching philosophical reading and analysis).
- The average student performance in textual-analysis assessments noticeably improved.
- Students felt that modules now contained “more” – more support, more content, more classroom work that had tangible effects on their skillset.

"Talis Elevate has allowed me to devote time to teaching reading and textual analysis in the classroom in large-group settings."

Prof Daniel Whistler

The Future

Elevate has become an important part of my philosophy teaching and I will certainly be continuing to use it for 2nd and 3rd year undergraduate modules. I also hope to expand its use into really big 1st year modules, which is slightly more complicated as 1st year students tend to appreciate in-person lectures more. I am also thinking how to use Elevate more informally in MA teaching in ways in which the students and I can flit fairly seamlessly between live analysis of the text on screens and talking to each other.

We'd like to thank Prof Daniel Whistler for providing this case study on his use of Talis Elevate.

If you'd like to contribute a case study to this collection, please get in touch with our EdTech Success Consultant - matthew.weldon@talis.com