University of
South Australia

To:	Academic Strategy Standards and Quality Committee
From:	Katrina Gillespie, Deputy Director: Library, Client Services
	Associate Professor Sheridan Gentili, Director: Teaching Innovation Unit
Date:	10 February 2023
Subject:	Minimising 'cost to student' course materials project final report (Cover memo)

Purpose

The attached report provides a final update on the Minimising 'cost to student' course materials pilot project and recommendations for ASSQC consideration.

Background and Strategic Context

At the November 2020 meeting of ASSQC, a *Textbook Minimisation* pilot was approved to explore reducing 'cost to student' textbook use while at the same time seeking to enhance the quality of the teaching and learning experience through exploration of other evidence-based resources. The pilot project was subsequently added to the Academic Enterprise Plan (AEP 2.7).

An interim report was considered by ASSQC in January 2022. The two year pilot period for the project concluded in December 2022.

Discussion

Initial reporting for the first year of the pilot indicated a reduction in the number of limited-access textbooks set as texts of 53%. Consideration of some courses nominated for review in 2021 was finalised at the start of the second year of the project. When these final courses are taken into consideration, the outcome for programs and courses nominated in the first year of the pilot was an overall textbook reduction of 66%, an achievement modestly above the target of 50%.

The second year of the pilot has proved more challenging, with a reduction of 28% being achieved. This brings the total reduction of limited licence textbooks to 47% over the two year pilot program, just shy of the 50% target. When the costs saved per course is multiplied by the number of student enrolments in those courses/programs (14,096), a potential total saving to UniSA students of approximately $9 million (print) has been achieved.

Recommendation

That ASSQC note the report and endorse recommendations contained therein.

Memorandum

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From:	Katrina Gillespie, Deputy Director Library Services
	Associate Professor Sheridan Gentili, Director: Teaching Innovation Unit
Date:	10 February 2023
Subject:	Minimising 'cost to student' course materials project final report

1. Purpose

To provide a final update on the Minimising 'cost to student' course materials pilot project.

2. Introduction

At the November 2020 meeting of ASSQC, a Textbook Minimisation pilot was approved to explore reducing 'cost to student' textbook use while also seeking to enhance the quality of the teaching and learning experience through exploration of alternative evidence-based resources. The pilot project was subsequently added to the Academic Enterprise Plan (AEP 2.7) and has key synergies with the Authentic Assessment Project (AEP 2.2). The Library has subsequently been working with course coordinators to replace textbooks either not held by the Library electronically or held under a limited ebook license, with more flexible alternatives. A reduction of 50% of nominated limited license textbooks was set as an ambitious target to indicate a 'highly successful project.'

In January 2022, ASSQC considered the Library's interim report on the project and endorsed the following recommendations:

1. Continue project activities into 2022, with additional programs/courses nominated by Program Deans.

2. Library / TIU in parallel to the pilot to support interested candidates to create alternative OER content under the new Pressbooks program.

3. Library / TIU to align textbook minimisation activities where possible with other AEP actions and the Authentic Assessment Project (AAP).

4. Library to expand promotion of the project by seeking and incorporating student feedback.

3. 2022 Project Progress

a. Project Scope & Approach

In keeping with the approach followed in year one of the pilot, programs and courses included in year two were once again nominated by Program Deans. Courses and programs identified for project inclusion across both 2021 and 2022 are set out in Appendix 1.

The following objectives were the key drivers of the project:

1. Reduce textbook cost to students in identified programs and courses.
2. Raise awareness of textbook cost impacts on students.
3. Determine sustainable practices to embed a textbook 'cost to students' minimisation process in future.

In 2022, once again identified programs/courses were reviewed, and assigned textbooks were analysed to assess potential for removal or replacement with non-restrictive licenced material and/or OER. This approach meant that a textbook requirement would not necessarily be removed from courses in all cases, but in replacing restricted licenced textbook titles, it would remove the pressure for students to buy a set textbook as it would be available in the Library on an unlimited user basis. It also provided the opportunity to consider replacing textbooks with alternatives such as reading lists of research focused resources and to take a programmatic approach to resource setting.

A total of 168 textbooks across 112 courses were nominated for inclusion in the 2022 second year of the pilot. Of these, 125 were either not available for Library ebook purchase or were only available under a limited user licence and were therefore targeted for textbook minimisation. The remaining 43 were either published as open access, or held by the Library as either unlimited access ebooks or multi-user licenses with sufficient access for their cohort, so were excluded from the project because adequate student access was already provided.

Pleasingly, as communication regarding the project has continued, several course coordinators independently contacted the Library seeking assistance to identify alternative unlimited-licenced ebook texts for their courses, outside of the Dean-nominated programs in scope for the project. An additional eight textbooks were removed through this process.

b. 'Cost to Student' Minimisation Results – Year two of Pilot and Overall

2021 targeted program reductions have been revised to incorporate actions for courses requested to be held over to 2022. For the 2021 targets, 84 of the 127 targeted limited access textbooks were delisted, or replaced with more flexible alternatives. This represents a reduction of 66%.

During the 2022 second year of the pilot project, 35 of the 125 targeted limited access textbooks were delisted as set texts through the Program and Course Management System (PCMS) or replaced with more flexibly licenced alternative materials. This represents a reduction of 28%.

A total overall reduction of 47% was therefore achieved across the two pilot years. While this marginally fell below the ambitious target of 50% it nonetheless translates to significant textbook cost savings for students. At a program level, the average per student saving equates to $512.89. The combined per student savings across all courses and programs involved in the two years of the pilot equates to a potential saving to students of approximately $9 million (print).

c. Student Feedback

In 2022 a small student project was conducted by two UniSA postgraduates in Library Studies under the leadership of the Library Textbook project team. The students designed and conducted a survey to identify textbook purchasing behaviours and attitudes amongst the student body. The survey, which was promoted during orientation, through posters on campus and in an all-student announcement, received 44 responses. Students were asked about their purchasing, access and use of required textbooks. Student feedback has been included in Appendix 4. Findings were tabulated in a report to Library executive and through the creation of a promotional video which will be leveraged in future presentations to academics.

It is acknowledged that the sample size of the survey was small. Plans are underway for a larger scale survey of students regarding the Library's offerings, which will include focussed questions designed to further explore textbook use and issues.

4. Barriers and Challenges

The lower success rate in year two of the pilot (28% reduction in 2022 targets versus 66% reduction in 2021 targets) is partly due to texts being scaffolded across several courses. Many texts for which replacements were unable to be identified in 2021 surfaced again in courses under consideration for 2022. Other barriers remained consistent across both years of the pilot as cited by Course Coordinators, including:

1. **Timing/workload**
   - Workload pressures limiting Course Coordinators capacity to review or adopt suggested materials
   - Some courses not taught in 2021/2 so no course coordinator available to review
   - Course coordinator newly or temporarily assigned so not confident in making changes
   - Need to retain text during course accreditation cycles
   - Change fatigue.

2. **Text dependence**
   - Reliance upon publisher-supplied "extras" e.g., quizzes, case studies integrated into course content, which mandate that the associated text remain listed as the official textbook
   - Niche area content for which alternatives are not available for example 'Custom-Editions' specifically compiled for the course or content specific to the Australian context.

3. **Local Academic Culture**
   - Desire for students to build a professional Library; or
   - Attachment to familiar texts historically used in targeted programs.

While the project has worked well to increase awareness among academics of the issues surrounding textbook use, textbook publishers continue to employ aggressive actions to prevent equitable textbook access. This includes an ever-increasing number of textbook publishers moving to subscription models in 2022 as well as further use of publisher-imposed restrictions to protect commercial positions.

5. Opportunities

a. Creation of Open Education Resources (OER) - Pressbooks

2022 saw the introduction of a new partnership between Australian University Libraries and the open access publishing platform [Pressbooks](#). As part of the partnership, academic staff from UniSA were invited to author educational materials under flexible/open Creative Commons licenses. UniSA was allocated access to create and publish two textbooks in the first year, with small grants made available through the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL). This has provided UniSA with the opportunity to contribute to the building of a repository of sustainable materials suitable for use in coursework that can be written specific to the Australian context. The following UniSA titles will be published under this arrangement in 2023:
   - Building Cost Planning: Best Practices and Insights – Thilini Jayawickrama & Ruchini Jayasinghe (UO)
   - Intravenous Cannulation for Nurses and Midwives – Angela Brown & Monica Diaz
   - Engineering Drawing with SolidWorks to Australian Standard AS1100 – John Fielke

A total of 15 grants were awarded nationwide under this scheme in 2022 with at least a further 15 outputs planned for publication through Pressbooks which did not receive grant funding. The second round of grants will

be made available through CAUL early in 2023, and already several UniSA researchers have expressed interest in publishing through Pressbooks. Taking into account participation in the Pressbooks initiative across the spectrum of Australian Universities, it is anticipated that the program will begin to produce a steady pipeline of open education resources (OERs) featuring Australian content in coming years.

b.   Alignment with other AEP actions and the Authentic Assessment Project (AAP)

Synergies between the Authentic Assessment Project (AAP) and textbook minimisation have yet to be fully explored, due to limited resourcing across the Library and TIU. As the AAP continues to be rolled out between now and 2025, work will be progressed to best align textbook use with the ongoing process of assessment and curriculum review.

c.   Transition to minimising textbook costs for students as Business as Usual

Part of the transition to minimising textbook costs for students to business as usual involved wording changes implemented in the Program and Course Management System (PCMS) in consultation with SAS in 2021. This included amended explanatory notes for academics looking to assign a text as part of their course materials, and also amended wording displayed to students in course outlines.

The Library has complemented these changes with other process improvements as the project transitions to business as usual across Library teams:

- Information regarding textbook licences and publisher barriers has been incorporated into academic induction meetings our Librarians conduct with new staff members.
- A 'How-To' guide has been created for academic staff who prefer to select their own texts. The Guide details how to locate unlimited licensed ebooks from within the Library collection and disambiguates ebook licence information.
- A Curriculum Support page has also been set up to articulate the goals of minimising textbook costs and promoting support available through the Library.
- Our 'Ask the Library' workflows have been amended to better triage feedback received by both students and academics about problems with access to textbooks, to leverage this feedback as an opportunity to explore better alternative learning resources.
- A UniSA Library Textbook Project Community of Practice group has been established to continue considering activities to minimise textbook costs for students.
- Catalogue records have been enhanced for newly-adopted titles (additional metadata and contents tagging) to assist with navigation and discovery.
- The Library will continue to include textbook audits in impact and compliance statements, evaluation and re-accreditation reports, and Program Notification statements. Opportunities for the Library to be involved early in the program development process will be explored, as this affords the best time for unlimited user-licence resources to be identified in support of teaching and learning outcomes.

6. Recommendations

That ASSQC note the report and endorse the following recommendations:
1. Deans of Programs continue to encourage Course Coordinators to contact the Library for assistance with finding unlimited user-license resources for their courses.
2. The Library to engage with TLSG(s) at Academic Unit level to identify when and how the Library could better contribute to the course amendment and development process.
3. TLSG(s) to assume annual review responsibility for monitoring textbook costs in conjunction with the Library.

4. Library to continue communication/promotion/awareness raising activities, to ensure that issues associated with published textbooks are well understood across the academic community. This to include engaging Program Directors as local area champions.

Appendix 1 – Programs/Courses Identified as Pilot Participants by Deans of Programs – years one and two

Academic Unit	Program/Courses	
	2021	2022
UniSA Clinical & Health Sciences	B Nursing	B Midwifery
	B Lab Medicine	B Pharmacy (Hons)
UniSA Allied Health & Human Performance	B Physiotherapy	B Human Movement
	B Exercise Sport Science	B Podiatry
UniSA Education Futures	B Early Childhood Education	B Primary Education (Hons)
UniSA College	Foundation Studies (6 core courses)	
UniSA STEM	M Info Management	B Construction Management
	B Engineering (4 core courses)	B Environmental Science
UniSA Creative	ARCH1021 (singe course)	Journalism Electives
		B Journalism & Professional Writing
UniSA Business	B Property & Real Estate (3 courses)	B Business Management (X core courses)
	MBA (Tourism & Event)	B Tourism & Event Management (x core)
		M Management (x core + streams)
UniSA Justice & Society	Social Work (+Hons)	B Psychology (+ Hons)

Appendix 2 – Summary of Textbook delisting actions

Pie chart legend:
- Removed: 25
- Library negotiated more flexible access: 7
- Relisted as reference: 33
- Replaced with eReadings: 29
- Replaced with flexibly licensed alternative text: 11
- Replaced with flexibly licensed alternative edition: 6
- Retained: 117
- Replaced with OER: 7
- Requested actioning in 2023: 16
- Retained as explicitly optional: 1
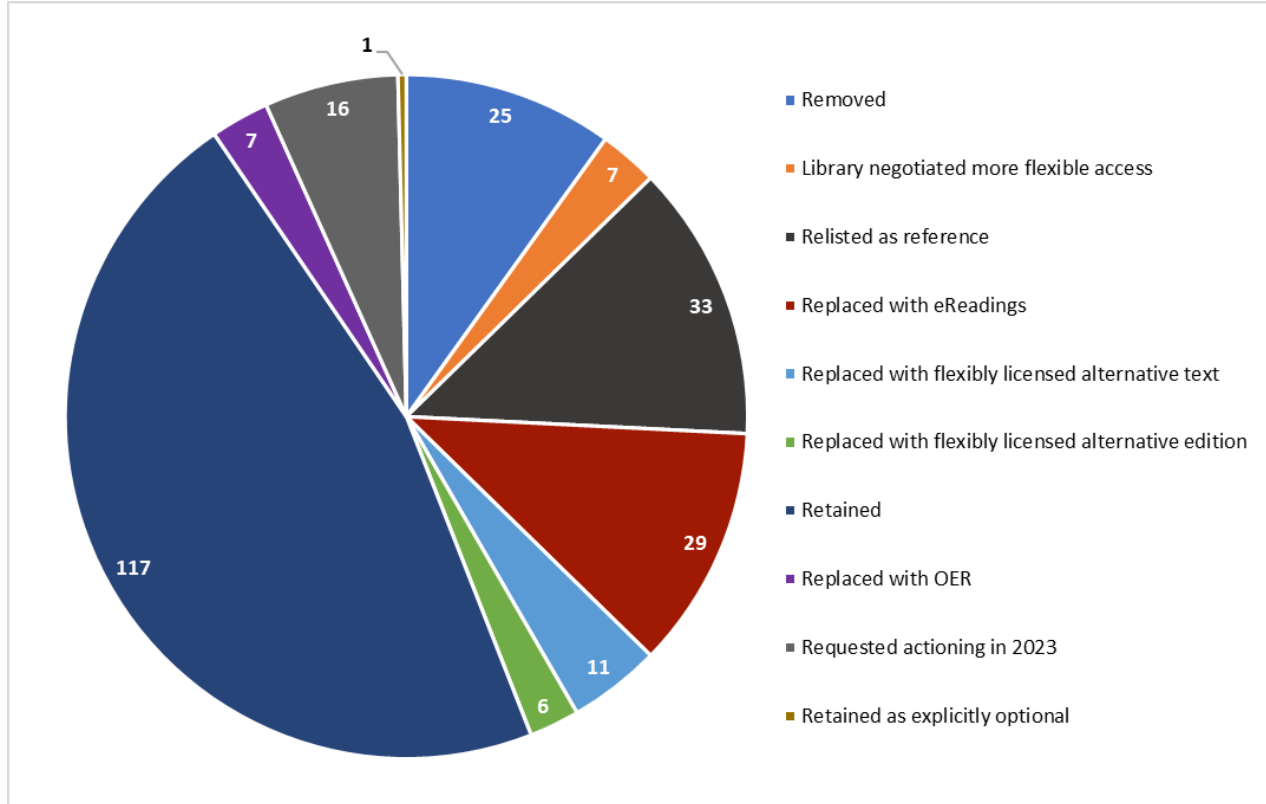
Appendix 3 – Summary of Textbook Minimisation and Savings to Students, 2021/2022

Target	#Limited License Texts Before Project	Pre-Project Cost (Per Student) Print	#Limited License Texts Post Project	Post-Project Cost (Per Student) Print	Saving (Per Student) Print	% Limited License Texts Removed
DMIL: Master Information Management	4	$369.85	2	$236.90	$132.95	50%
MHEC: Bachelor of Early Childhood Education	19	$1,576.94	10	$888.50	$688.44	47%
MFFS: Foundation Studies (Selected courses)	5	$717.27	3	$421.82	$295.45	40%
LH** Bachelor of Engineering (Selected Courses)	4	$486.28	2	$230.83	$255.45	50%
DBPY/DBRF: Bachelor of Business Property Real Estate Practice (Selected Courses)	3	$290.42	0	$0.00	$290.42	100%
ARCH 1021: Design, Culture and the Environment (Single Course)	1	$37.90	1	$37.90	$0.00	0%
IBXS: Bachelor of Exercise and Sport Science	18	$2,544.04	8	$1,100.99	$1,443.05	56%
IHBL: Bachelor of Laboratory Medicine (Honors)	14	$2,073.93	6	$801.70	$1,272.23	57%
IBNU: Bachelor of Nursing	10	$1,393.95	0	$0.00	$1,393.95	100%
IHPZ: Honours Physiotherapy	9	$1,289.79	2	$208.90	$1,080.89	78%
MBSW Bachelor of Social Work	18	$1,929.99	5	$458.00	$1,471.99	72%
MHSW Honours in Social Work	19	$2,022.94	5	$553.75	$1,469.19	74%
IBOP IHOP Bachelor and Hons of Podiatry	3	$507.40	3	$507.40	$0.00	0%
IBHT: Bachelor of Human Movement (core)	4	$657.60	3	$650.45	$7.15	25%
DBBS: Bachelor of Sport & Recreation Management (core)	3	$316.10	2	$213.10	$103.00	33%
DBBT: Bachelor of Tourism & Event Management (core)	4	$437.05	2	$198.85	$238.20	50%
DBBG: Bachelor of Business Management (core)	6	$929.34	6	$961.70	-$32.36	0%
DMMX: Masters of Management (core plus marketing)	4	$695.10	2	$291.90	$403.20	50%
DMMX: Masters of Management (core plus HRM)	5	$821.55	3	$377.85	$443.70	40%
DMMX: Masters of Management (core plus management)	7	$1,174.85	4	$618.85	$556.00	43%
DMMX: Masters of Management (core plus Tourism)	9	$1,412.44	6	$861.79	$550.65	33%
IHPC: Bachelor of Pharmacy Hons (all)	7	$1,111.51	6	$991.55	$119.96	14%
IBMW: Bachelor of Midwifery (all +TAFE entry)	6	$798.90	3	$333.85	$465.05	50%

Target	#Limited License Texts Before Project	Pre-Project Cost (Per Student) Print	#Limited License Texts Post Project	Post-Project Cost (Per Student) Print	Saving (Per Student) Print	% Limited License Texts Removed
MBJR: Bachelor of Journalism & Professional Writing	5	$427.88	2	$134.94	$292.94	60%
Selected Journalism Electives	3	$334.85	3	$334.85	$0.00	0%
MHPE: Arts Stream (plus core and electives)	16	$1,822.50	11	$1,208.60	$613.90	31%
MHPE: English Stream (plus core and electives)	20	$2,021.39	14	$1,317.54	$703.85	30%
MHPE: HASS Stream (plus core and electives)	16	$1,822.50	11	$1,208.60	$613.90	31%
MHPE: Health and PE Stream (plus core and electives)	18	$2,137.65	12	$1,308.55	$829.10	33%
MHPE: Languages Stream (plus core and electives)	16	$1,822.50	11	$1,208.60	$613.90	31%
MHPE: Mathematics Stream (plus core and electives)	17	$1,892.49	12	$1,278.59	$613.90	29%
MHPE: Catholicism Stream (plus core and electives)	18	$1,892.01	12	$1,238.55	$653.46	33%
MHPE: Science Stream (plus core and electives)	16	$1,822.50	11	$1,208.60	$613.90	31%
MHPE: Technology Stream (plus core and electives)	16	$1,822.50	11	$1,208.60	$613.90	31%
MHPU Bachelor of Psychology Hons	12	$1,882.50	10	$1,612.55	$269.95	17%
MBPU Bachelor of Psychology	10	$1,511.55	8	$1,241.60	$269.95	20%
LBVT: Bachelor of Environmental Science	5	$661.75	5	$673.95	-$12.20	0%
IBBE: Bachelor of Construction Management	3	$327.20	2	$176.25	$150.95	33%
Total		$45,796.91		$26,306.95	$19,489.96	

Opt Ins (non-targeted courses wherein textbook removed following library negotiation) *savings based off each course 2022 enrolment*	#Limited License Texts Before Project	Pre-Project Cost (Per Student) Print	#Limited License Texts Post Project	Post-Project Cost (Per Student) Print	Saving (Per Student)PRINT	% Limited License Texts Removed
PHYS 5	1	$159.95	0	$0.00	$159.95	100%
BIOL 2060 UO Lifespan Nutrition	1	$184.95	0	$0.00	$184.95	100%
MATH 1065 Essential Mathemetics 1	1	$0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00	100%
MATH 46 Foundation Mathematics 1	1	$0.00	0	$0.00	$0.00	100%
COML 5017 Financial Advice Regulatory & Legal Obligations	1	$169.95	0	$0.00	$169.95	100%
AERO 1011 Aviation Physics	1	$159.95	0	$0.00	$159.95	100%
EDUC 5186 Early Childhood Professional Experience and Refection (Infant Toddler)	1	$89.95	0	$0.00	$89.95	100%
BEHL 2019 UO Introductory Research methods	1	$149.95	0	$0.00	$149.95	100%
Total		$914.70		$0.00	$914.70	
Grand Total		**$46,711.61**		**$26,306.95**	**$20,404.66**	

Appendix 4 - Student Feedback

Obtained through survey conducted by UniSA postgraduate Library Studies students (N=44).

- Students responded that they had spent anywhere between $110 to $1,000 on textbooks in 2022 alone.
- 59% of students surveyed spent $100 or more on required textbooks each study period.
- 9% of students surveyed made a decision not to enrol in, or to unenroll from, a course or program because the required textbooks were too expensive.
- 41% of students surveyed said textbook purchases had impacted their ability to pay for rent, food, transport and other living costs. 68% had decided not to buy a required textbook at least once.
- 53% of students surveyed rated the usefulness of textbooks as only slightly or moderately useful, with 11% stating textbooks were not useful at all.

"I am a student, I am not working enough hours to support myself…I found that the money I was spending on textbooks was needed for more important things like my medications, doctors appointments, and basic living needs." - Courtney*, Bachelor of Social Work

"I believe that if a text is mandatory then it should be available to the student for free for the duration of the course. Courses themselves cost upwards of $1,000, surely this should include the textbook?"
- Vasi*, Graduate Diploma in Information Management

"I firstly look up if the courses have a required textbook and would consider the options of courses that did not require a textbook or at least had a suggested textbook."
- Carl*, Bachelor of Psychology (Hons)

"The Tutor told students that if we did not have the required textbook we would not be able to pass the course. The textbook was super expensive and at the time I was dealing with significant financial hardship. This put me in a state of extreme academic stress that later flowed into other parts of my life so I unenrolled."
- Name and program withheld

"I find textbooks extremely useful. Textbooks lay out information in an accessible way, breaking down information to its basics. Textbooks are specifically written to cater to learners. Lectures and tutorials are great but textbooks provide an alternative source of comprehension".
- Madeleine*, Bachelor of Creative Industries

"I have found that courses which don't rely on single textbooks to be more engaging. A variety of reading material is much more interesting than reading from the same book every week."
- Andrew*, Bachelor of Social Work

"I don't find textbooks useful at all. I once bought a required textbook…and it was not used or referenced once in the course."
- Nick*, Bachelor of Information Technology

*Names changed to protect identity of survey participants.