

Framework for the Development of Open Educational Practices

2019/20 – 2021/22

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# Contents

[Contents 1](#_Toc25913573)

[1 Introduction 2](#_Toc25913574)

[1.1 The main aims of the framework 3](#_Toc25913575)

[2 Key aspects of open education and open educational practice 4](#_Toc25913576)

[3 Degrees of openness 4](#_Toc25913577)

[3.1 Why practice open 5](#_Toc25913578)

[4 The open education landscape at the University of the Highlands and Islands 6](#_Toc25913579)

[4.1 Existing steps towards an institutional culture of open educational practices 6](#_Toc25913580)

[4.2 Open Educational Resources (OER) in the university 8](#_Toc25913581)

[4.3 Open textbooks in the university 8](#_Toc25913582)

[4.4 Open learning in the university 8](#_Toc25913583)

[4.5 Open access and scholarship in the university 9](#_Toc25913584)

[5 Areas of focus within the university 9](#_Toc25913585)

[6 Roadmap for the development of open educational practices at the university 10](#_Toc25913586)

[6.1 Year 1 10](#_Toc25913587)

[6.2 Year 2 10](#_Toc25913588)

[6.3 Year 3 11](#_Toc25913589)

[7 References 11](#_Toc25913590)

[8 Glossary of terms 13](#_Toc25913591)

*...sharing is probably the most basic characteristic of education: education is sharing knowledge, insights and information with others, upon which new knowledge, skills, ideas and understanding can be built. (*[*Open Education Consortium*](https://www.oeconsortium.org/about-oec/)*, 2019)*

# Introduction

The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) is committed to the further development of open educational practices as a strategic objective. This is exemplified in our work to date as a partner in [OERu](https://oeru.org/) and the Open Education Practices Scotland ([OEPS](http://www.oeps.ac.uk/)), and notably within the development and implementation of the [university’s Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy (LTES) 2017/18 – 2021/22](https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/learning-and-teaching-academy/innovation/ltes/). One of the LTES values within the strategy is 'Harnessing open education approaches', which is defined as:

*Developing online and other open education practices and approaches to support and enhance learning and teaching, to use, create and share open educational resources, and to widen access to education including within our local communities.*

The LTES, includes the following illustrative examples of the ways in which the value of harnessing open education approaches could be implemented within our learning and teaching practices.

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| Make use of openly licensed digital resources in the design and delivery of modules and programmes, and consider where digital resources you have created can be shared for re-use by colleagues (e.g. through the UHI Toolkit and other resource repositories). | Engage with learners and potential students outwith the university through offering open online access to particular opportunities (e.g. lectures, guest expert webinars) or offering short open online courses that can potentially lead into formal study. | Extending learning opportunities to wider local communities through involving staff and students in outreach activities including public lectures and events, and through open learning opportunities on campus. |

Furthermore, a key objective for the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy, as it relates to the above value, is to develop “a policy or framework to guide institutional developments in the harnessing and creation of open educational resources, and in the use of online and other open educational opportunities for the purposes of widening access and public engagement” (Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy, p. 7).

This document is version one of the university’s Framework for the Development of Open Educational Practices. The objective of this framework is to establish the university’s current position in relation to open educational practices, introduce the key concepts and issues in relation to open educational practice and provide a 3-year roadmap for the further development of open education practices at the University of the Highlands and Islands.

In the broader national and international contexts our framework is also a practical and pragmatic approach for the university to respond to the move towards open educational practices within the tertiary education sector. This includes the [Scottish Open Education Declaration](http://declaration.openscot.net/) which builds on the 2012 Paris OER Declaration by widening the scope to include all aspects of open education. The Scottish Funding Council has committed to the aims of the Scottish Open Education Declaration in and it is being considered for adoption by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in their [College and University Sector ICT Strategy 2019 – 2021](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Quality/Further_and_Higher_Education_ICT_Strategy.pdf). In addition the SFC are clear in their “support for the use of open licenses for all educational resources created with public funding”. Acknowledging the potential impact on SFC funded projects it is prudent that we expand the practice of open education across the university.

Internationally the UNESCO [2017 Ljubljana OER action plan](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ljubljana_oer_action_plan_2017.pdf) aims to mainstream open-licensed resources and contribute to  [Sustainable Development Goal 4](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4) (SDG4) of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable **quality education** and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Building on the UNESCO 2017 Ljubljana OER action Plan UNESCO have further proposed the adoption of an OER recommendation containing 5 objectives:

1. Building capacity of stakeholders to create access, use, adapt and redistribute OER
2. Developing supportive policy
3. Encouraging inclusive and equitable quality OER
4. Nurturing the creation of sustainability models for OER
5. Facilitating international cooperation.

## The main aims of the framework

The following aims will be sought during the implementation of this framework for open educational practices:

* Build a picture of current practice through a data gathering exercise / survey
* Use the findings from the data and other communications to initiate a special interest group made up of professional services, academic colleagues and students from across the university.
* Encourage and support open educational practice across the institution (with a focus on 6 initially identified areas).
* Highlight the benefits of open education to the institution, wider academy and public.
* Highlight the activity the university is undertaking with regard to open educational practice.
* Provide direction and guidance to those wishing to undertake open educational practice.
* Create online and other resources to support the development of digital skills.
* Establish an ongoing programme of events and workshops to the development of digital skills and capabilities.
* Provide working guidelines in which staff can be comfortable operating.
* Direct staff to appropriate tools, technologies and literature to support open educational practice.

# Key aspects of open education and open educational practice

The notion of ‘open’ holds a multitude of meanings, however for many the terms 'open education' and 'open educational practice' are synonymous with a single image, that of open educational resources (OER). However, open education encompasses a far wider range of aspects, of which OER is central to any understanding of the domain.

Despite numerous proposals there is, as yet, no single universally accepted definition of *open* in relation to education, however it is generally associated with terms such as ‘freely available’, ‘free to use’, ‘free to share’ and ‘free to edit’ usually but not always with the caveat of attribution and/or share-alike (shared under the same license as the original). [Creative Commons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_Commons_license) (CC) in the most popular licensing scheme for open content, providing a spectrum of options to cover almost all scenarios. It has been suggested that any attempt to create a single definition would be an ongoing task and instead it should be viewed as an umbrella term (Muñoz et al., 2016).

***Open education*** is a philosophical view that education should be available beyond the formal learning and teaching of academic institutions. Proponents of open education believe that education should be widely available (geographically), free to all (no cost) and without barriers (academic entry requirements).

***Open educational practice*** is the engagement with open education and its ethos. Many of the outputs that emerge from the activity associated with open educational practice are, no doubt, familiar, for example, open access (to research outputs), open textbooks and open educational resources.

An initial glossary containing key terminology and expressions used in open education has been compiled as a reference and is available in Section 8 of this document.

# Degrees of openness

The above terms tend to focus on physical resources, however open relates as much to practice, policy and pedagogy. At the university we would like to consider open in the broader terms of place, space and time (Temple, P. 2018). When we talk about space we are not limiting ourselves to the 'our' spaces, the campus, we also include community spaces, public spaces, organisational, other institutional spaces and of course virtual spaces where we can meet, share and collaborate regardless of distance or timezone.

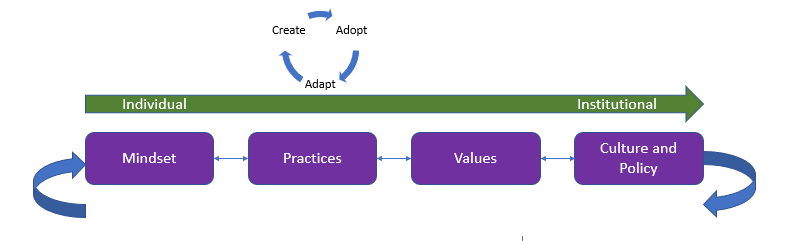
Figure 1 (below) illustrates the personal and institutional journey highlighting the changes in practice, mindset and culture required to move the whole institution to more openness.

**Mindset** – individuals wish to share and they need to enact this in their practice.

**Practice** - Individuals need to enact openness and sharing in their practice through collaboration and co-creation. This can be achieved at various levels.

**Values** – By the act of sharing the values of openness start to weave themselves into the fabric of the institution.

Culture and Policy – over time we will see openness as core to university activity.

*Figure 1 - Towards openness*

## Why practice open

Open education is not about institutions sharing resource between each other or getting 'stuff' for free, it's about collaboration and co-creation and opening up education to everyone, sharing with everyone, including everyone and recognising that everyone should be able to participate in learning. Metanalysis research into the efficacy and perceptions of open educational resources by students tend to favour open educational resources and show, in the main, higher levels of achievement. (<https://openedgroup.org/review>).

Open practice benefits individuals, academic institutions, society, business and the wider learning community. The final report of the European OpenEdu Project, Opening up Education: A Support Framework for Higher Education Institutions (Inamorato dos Santos et al., 2016) states clearly the reasons why opening up education is so important:

* To allow barriers to education to be reduced or removed
* To allow people to upskill or reskill cheaply and flexibly
* To modernise education
* To bridge formal and informal education

In addition, the report highlights how opening up education can act as a catalyst for learning and teaching innovation and collaboration between institutions. Due to its inclusive ethos open education shines a mirror on current practice, identifying areas that may otherwise be neglected, for example, accessibility.

In his 2014 publication 'The Battle for Open' Martin Weller of the Open University points to more benefits of open practice:

* To increase audience, citing Davis (2011) “articles published under open access received significantly more downloads and reached a broader audience”.
* To increase reuse, by releasing with minimal restriction to enable adaptation, republication.
* To increase access and reach disadvantaged groups by removing/reducing entry criteria.
* To increase experimentation – many MOOCs have been used in A/B testing.
* To increase individual and institutional reputation by accessing a larger audience.
* To increase revenues – although debated the part open model can be a leader to additional services. This is achieved by creating a demand.
* To increase participation such as crowdsourcing feedback on a book.
* Through open journals, unlock the academic silos and paywalls and create access to publications that will, in addition to enhancing academic reputation, also help further knowledge in the discipline by opening to a wider audience.
* Easier to conform to core standards by developing a shared resource and understanding.

# The open education landscape at the University of the Highlands and Islands

The University of the Highlands and Islands is not new to open educational practice, and in many areas and Academic Partners there are strong and well-established practices relating to public pedagogy and informal learning opportunities for the communities within which the university is based. Whilst there are also several high profile examples of open education practices as this is currently conceptualised within the sector, and as defined in this document, there are without doubt many staff and students within the university who undertake open educational practices, often without realizing that they are. One of the early aims in relation to activities outlined in this framework is to understand these practices through benchmarking survey and awareness raising.

## Existing steps towards an institutional culture of open educational practices

### Meeting current obligations

In meeting current obligations under the various declarations and action plans highlighted in section 1.0 the Educational Development Unit of the university continue to lead the way in developing compliant resources. The design and implementation of Forge, a rapid HTML5 compliant content creation tool has and will continue to transform the quality and quantity of learning content. These factors in conjunction with their ongoing work supporting ESIF funded projects provides them with the opportunity to work with staff to encourage best open educational practices, particularly in the areas of creation and use of open educational resources.

### Past professional development

The commitment to further developing our open educational practices, as outlined in both the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy and in this framework document, follows and builds upon previous consultation and staff development activities over the last three years. This includes the ‘Thinking about Open’ workshop held in September 2016, facilitated by Beck Pitt and Bea de los Arcos of the Open University and at which a number of senior colleagues were supported in exploring what open education practice could offer and look like at the university. This was followed in May 2017 by the two day symposium, ‘[The Porous University – a Critical Exploration of Openness, Space and Place in Higher Education](https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/learning-and-teaching-academy/events/past-events/the-porous-university-a-critical-exploration-of-openness-space-and-place-in-higher-education-may-2017.html)’ jointly run between the university’s Learning and Teaching Academy (LTA) and the Open Educational Practices Scotland (OEPS) project, and which involved educators and practitioners from across the UK. A subsequent 2017 article by Beck Pitt (Open University) and the university’s Keith Smyth titled ‘Creative Open Everyday Practice: Thinking Differently at UHI’, highlights how our open education practices had begun to further develop.

### Contribution to OEPS

Beyond the above, the university was a key contributor to the strategic aims and work of OEPS to develop open educational practices across community, further and higher education in the Scottish sector, with two senior colleagues representing the university on the Steering Group for OEPS and contributing to the final report of OEPS which highlighted the benefits of open practice and recommended that the Scottish Funding Council encourage sharing and collaborative initiatives between institutions (OEPS Final report, 2017).

### Move to Brightspace

Furthermore, in the move to Brightspace as the university’s new learning environment, the associated document ‘[Benchmarks for the use of technology in learning and teaching](https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/learning-and-teaching-academy/supporting-innovation/learning-and-teaching-enhancement-strategy/benchmarks/)’ provide a range of excellent examples highlighting how open educational practice can be used in learning and teaching activities and help achieve the embedding of the LTES values including the value ‘Harnessing open education approaches’. For example, in relation to the value of ‘Integrated and sustainable teaching practice’ the learning repository can potentially be harnessed by both tutors and students to share content, activities, assignments and other resources, to support the reusing, reworking and remixing of digital content that reflects how digital content and open educational resources are increasingly being utilised both within formal education and for wider educational purposes.

### Open Educational Resources university (OERu)

The university is also a partner of the Open Educational Resources university (OERu), which consists of institutions from five continents with a mission to provide top quality tertiary education to students worldwide. Currently a small number of open online courses are being developed by the university for delivery via OERu, and which will offer free online learning with the option for learners to opt to be assessed for potential progression to existing university programmes as fully matriculated students.

### Going forward

In looking beyond developments to date, and seeking to build upon them, the Framework for the Development of Open Educational Practice is intended as an evolving reference point to initiate discussion and to plan the development of open educational practice across the university. One early priority activity will be the development of guidelines around the identification and appropriate use of Creative Commons licensing to support open education practice at the university.

This will be an important starting point for the ‘Roadmap for the development of open educational practices at the university’ that is presented in [Section 6](#_Roadmap_for_the).

## Open Educational Resources (OER) in the university

Since 2012 the University of the Highlands and Islands has had its own repository for sharing educational resources within the university. The UHI Toolkit, developed by the Educational Development Unit, provides a simple and fast way for staff to share, search and browse. The internal nature of the Toolkit example points to ‘degrees of openness’ within education and highlights the difference between open within the spirit of [Wiley’s 5R’s](https://canvas.instructure.com/courses/1123092/files/68675528/download?verifier=aYhmFq2WaUar9S73LnTZZLVxxzEo7bwdvtuvlZwI&wrap=1) (retain, reuse, revise, remix, redistribute) and open in relation to access, whether it be open to the institution or to open to the world.

The UHI Toolkit is also currently a key part of the university’s ALPINE (Accredited Learning, Professional development and Innovation in Education) scheme for awarding Fellowships of the Higher Education Academy. Colleagues seeking recognition through the ‘Portfolio of Practice’ route are required to produce some of their evidence in the form of ‘digital artefacts’ (including learning and teaching materials and resources) that can help inform and/or support the educational practices of colleagues. In moving towards greater engagement in creating, sharing and using OER then, the ALPINE recognition process may provide one important and sustainable channel for OER.

## Open textbooks in the university

Although the university has not, as yet, published any open textbooks major work was undertaken in the Jisc funded ‘[Institution as e-textbook publisher](https://www.jisc.ac.uk/rd/projects/institution-as-e-textbook-publisher)’ programme, through the eTIPS (eTextbook Institutional Publishing Service) project, in collaboration with Edinburgh Napier University. This has led to the development of institutional expertise and processes for the creation, publishing and distribution of low-cost etextbooks (three have been produced to date) which could be applied to the publication of open textbooks going forward. Furthermore, for two of etextbooks produced by the eTIPS project an extensive range of supportive open educational resources were either created or curated.

The final meeting of the eTIPS project suggested that there was a desire to continue publishing academic ebooks with Print on Demand (PoD) as an option. Processes for application, selection and development will need to be created along with related policy. In addition to what is happening in the university, Jisc are now looking at open and affordable textbooks based on the lessons learned from eTIPS and the other projects funded as part of the aforementioned programme.

## Open learning in the university

As previously acknowledged, there are many examples across the university of open, informal learning opportunities being provided in the communities where the university is based, with common practices including public lectures and events, and adult learning opportunities.

In the context of open educational practices that harness digital technologies and spaces to support open online learning, then beyond current developments with OERu there has also been a gradual increase in ‘bite-sized’ open learning opportunities. This has included webinars and videoconference access to public talks and lectures, in addition to access to freely available video and other media resources.

In addition to expanding activities in the above areas to provide open online learning opportunities, and to generate and distribute associated OER, there is also the potential to go further through short online courses (which may act as a ‘taster’ of specific programmes for prospective students) and through harnessing open online learning opportunities to support staff CPD in learning and teaching.

## Open access and scholarship in the university

The university has an [open access policy](https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/resource/open-access/) and community of practitioners that promotes the open publication of research. Open access publishing tends to fall into [4 options](https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/resource/open-access/): green, gold, hybrid and diamond, each with varying level of access and restriction. The university prefers the green option and uses the open access repository, [PURE](https://pure.uhi.ac.uk/portal/en/) to support the sharing of research outputs.

The university is also engaged in other specific open access scholarship and research activities in relation to learning and teaching. This includes representation on the editorial board of the Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic practice, co-founded by the university’s Professor of Pedagogy, and for which colleagues at the university have edited special issues and authored an increasing number of peer-reviewed papers. The university’s Learning and Teaching Academy also supports staff to engage in a range of education-related open digital scholarship, including authoring critical pieces for the LTA’s blog and offering open webinars related to LTA Scholarship projects.

Currently, at the time of writing, the LTA are in discussions to support further engagement in scholarly activity across the university (including open digital scholarship) through the creation of a new Scholarship Development strand to sit within the University Mentoring Scheme co-ordinated through the LTA.

# Areas of focus within the university

In accord with the findings of the OpenEdu framework on going beyond MOOCs and also beyond open educational resources (REF p16) the university will initially focus on 6 areas of open education activity, however that is not to exclude open educational practice in any other areas of learning and teaching. Policy and guidance will be required to support each area and this will be developed in collaboration with colleagues and students across the university. The six areas of open educational activity are:

**Open textbooks**: use, creation and publication of etextbooks and building on the publishing processes and experience gained through the [eTIPS project](http://www.etextbooks.ac.uk/index/).

**Open educational resources**: use, creation and sharing of materials at all levels of granularity; from an image to an assessment.

**Open pedagogic practices**: aided by the introduction of HTML rapid development tools such as [Forge](http://showcase.uhi.ac.uk/previews/forge/), and the creation and sharing of online courses and content.

**Open learning opportunities**: inward and outward use and identification of open learning opportunities such as open webinars and open conferences.

**Open scholarship**: publication by staff and students in open journals such as the [JPAAP](https://jpaap.napier.ac.uk/index.php/JPAAP) and involvement in the entire open scholarship journey.

**Open educational research**: harnessing open scholarship opportunities to disseminate research that has been undertaken into our own educational practices, including sharing of educational research datasets.

Under the LTES value ‘harnessing open education approaches’ the university has many options within the six areas above.

# Roadmap for the development of open educational practices at the university

This roadmap lays the foundations for developing open practice in the university for the next 3 years. Year 1 will consist mainly around raising awareness of open educational practices across the institution and laying some of the groundwork for Year 2 activity. Year 2 will see more activity geared towards engaging staff in open practices, providing opportunities to increase output through open scholarship, publishing and creation. Year 3 will seek to further improve and increase open platforms and activity with a focus on ensuring the sustainability of open practices across the institution.

## Year 1

Focus during this year will be on setting up the special interest group (SIG), building relationships with other universities and professional bodies, professional development and awareness raising. This will be achieved through a variety of events, webinars, workshops and dissemination event to raise the profile and encourage engagement in the discussions and plan for open education across the university.

In addition the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy will be further developed and the creation and the groundwork required for the creation of a public facing interface for institutional OER content will be undertaken.

**Milestones:**

* Develop open framework and work with colleagues to develop associated policies and guidance.
* Benchmark current practices
* Formation of SIG
* Design and implementation of a digital skills development programme
* Creation or acquisition of institutional repository functionality
* Further development of JPAAP as an open education journal

## Year 2

Year 2 will see the creation or procurement and implementation of an OER content store, and the groundwork to establish an institutional OER collection. This will be achieved by way of pilot projects, initiatives and interventions aimed at engaging staff in open educational practice.

Activities which underpin a commitment to the sustainability of the work undertaken by the eTIPS project will see 2/3 open textbooks being produced in this year.

**Milestones:**

* ALPINE artefacts open by default
* Public access/open front end created for institutional repository
* Increase open scholarship activity
* Move from etextbooks to open etextbooks
* Publication of short course materials on open platform

## Year 3

Building on years 1 and 2, year 3 will involve work to further improve the infrastructure and technology, systems and policies required to make open educational practice ongoing and sustainable across the university.

**Milestones:**

* Evaluation of impact and activities
* Series of webinars

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# Glossary of terms

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| **cMOOC** | Connectivist MOOC where groups of people learn together in contrast to the xMOOC where there tends to be an instructor or teacher. |
| **Copyright** | A legal right that allows the creator of an original piece of work to freely use, distribute and reassign the work, sometimes with time limitations. Copyright prevents unauthorized use of the work without permission and enables the creator to receive remuneration for their work if desired. |
| **Creative Commons License** | A public copyright license scheme that allows the creator of a work to distribute it freely. Creative Commons is the most widely used of the public copyright license schemes and consists of 7 regularly used licenses with varying degrees of ‘openness’. |
| **Digital literacy** | The ability to use digital technology, applications and services in order to participate effectively in an increasingly digital world. |
| **Granularity** | The smaller (more granular) an educational resource is, the smaller the chunk of information within it. |
| **Intellectual property rights (IPR)** | The legally recognized exclusive rights to creations of the mind. Under intellectual property law, owners are granted certain exclusive rights to a variety of intangible assets. Common types of intellectual property rights include copyright. ([Wiki](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copyright)) |
| **Learning object** | A piece of learning, material, digital or otherwise, that can be used to support learning and teaching. |
| **Learning object repository** | An online storage, cataloguing and retrieval system hosting digital artefacts and their metadata. Data is organised in taxonomies and folksonomies and can be searched, browsed, downloaded and often uploaded. |
| **Learning Resources** | Any resource that can be used for the purpose of learning and teaching. This can include worksheets, books, flashcards, posters, webcasts, websites, applications, activities, etc. |
| **Metadata** | Data about data. When discussing digital resources such as OER this would be descriptive data about the resource such as discipline, language, academic level, title, author that would enable users and search engines to more accurately pinpoint relevant resources. |
| **MOOC** | Massive Open Online Course. Delivered online via the Internet these courses are open to anyone, free of charge and designed to cater for very high numbers of learners, tens or even hundreds of thousands. MOOCs are generally recognised as falling into two categories. see cMOOC and xMOOC definitions. |
| **Open** | Free to access, retain, reuse, revise, remix and redistribute. |
| **Open access** | Relating to research publications, open access provides unrestricted access to publications which traditionally were locked behind paywalls in academic journals. This is particularly relevant to research funded by the public purse where in the UK the Research Excellence Framework has stipulated that to be eligible for REF2021 certain outputs must be available as open access. |
| **Open assessment** | The process of making assessment of students work open and driven by community rather than closed and proprietary. |
| **Open content** | Content that is made available under an open licence. |
| **Open courseware** | Courses or course components that are available under an open licence. |
| **Open data** | Open data is data that can be freely used, re-used and redistributed by anyone - subject only, at most, to the requirement to attribute and sharealike. ([Open Data Handbook](https://opendatahandbook.org/guide/en/what-is-open-data/)) |
| **Open education data** | Institutional data such as administrative and performance that is made available under an open licence. It can be used for the purpose of improving the academic and educational experience, such as reducing attrition, enabling better student choices and identifying areas for improvement. |
| **Open Educational Resources (OER)** | **Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.** ([UNESCO](https://en.unesco.org/themes/building-knowledge-societies/oer)) |
| **Open pedagogy** | Learning and teaching practices that engage the students as creators and co-creators of knowledge, enabling them to learn through experience and creation rather than as purely consumers of information. |
| **Open practice** | The use of open techniques, technologies, resources or pedagogies to facilitate collaborative and flexible learning. |
| **Open repository** | A store for digital artefacts that can be searched, downloaded and utilised under the 5Rs of open. See also Learning Object Repository (LOR). |
| **Remix** | The modification or revision of an original piece with other sources to create something new. |
| **Repurpose** | to make use of something by modifying it to fulfil a purpose other than that for which it was originally intended. |
| **Reuse** | to make use of something as it is and for its original purpose. |
| **Stakeholder** | An individual or group with an interest in the success of an organization or project. |
| **Tertiary education** | Post secondary education for those beyond secondary school age. This encompasses colleges, university and vocational education. |
| **UNESCO** | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization. |
| **XMOOC** | eXtended Massive Open Online Course so called because they are eXtensions of existing university courses. They are provided on platforms such as edX and Coursera where universities tend to have a vested/financial interest. |