



***Practising Open Education – Developing the Potential of  
Open Educational Resources in Art, Design and Media***

**Faculty of Art, Design & Architecture, Kingston University  
FOCUS GROUP REPORT**

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## Focus Group Report - Faculty Art, Design & Architecture, Kingston University

### 1. Introduction

The *Practising Open Education Project* is part of the Academy-JISC funded UK Open Educational Resources (UK-OER) Programme (<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/oer>) which seeks to investigate and embed the most effective pathways for the sustainable release, and use, of open educational resources (OERs) across a range of subject disciplines.

There are challenges to the development of open educational practice in the 'creative' disciplines of art, design and media. The pilot *Art Design Media-Open Educational Resources (ADM-OER) Project 2009-10* (<http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/sector-projects/contentfolder.2010-04-22.7419312795>) identified a number of salient themes: for example, individual, as well as institutional, identity plays a significant role in progressing OER policies and practices; the sector employs a considerable number of fractional staff, many of whom will teach across institutions and maintain another professional practice; as art, design and media production comprises the object of study, many resources contain essential third party-content. The project highlighted how dialogue with staff across the participating institutions offered opportunities to address these aspects.

Managed by the Art Design Media Higher Education Academy Subject Centre (ADM-HEA), and with six art, design and media departments as partners, the *Practising Open Education Project* (<http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/sector-projects/practicing-open-education-2013-developing-the-potential-of-open-educational-resources-in-art-design-and-media>) aims to build on the pilot phase by enabling departmental exploration of perceptions of OERs, motivations for, and barriers to, their development and use prior to the development of departmental strategies for each participating department.

The project seeks to negotiate change by engaging directly with staff and cascading the experiences, understandings and outputs of the *ADM-OER Project* to a wider range of art, design and media departments. By encouraging dialogue across the institutions – between students, information services, departmental managers and teaching staff – the project aims to identify key areas to be targeted in order to instigate processes that promote the creation and use of OERs.

### 2. Project Partners

- Leeds Trinity University College – Department of Media Film and Culture
- Bucks New University – School of Design, Craft and Visual Arts
- De Montfort University – Faculty of Art and Design
- Kingston University – Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture
- University of Southampton – Winchester School of Art
- University of Hertfordshire – School of Creative Arts

### 3. Project Aims and Objectives

- To generate department-specific understandings of art, design and media OERs; motivations for, and barriers to, their creation and use.
- To further develop discipline-specific understandings of art, design and media OERs; motivations for, and barriers to, their creation and use.
- To provide targeted support that addresses the specific needs, motivations and barriers at the participating departments.
- To embed effective OER practices and policies within the participating departments.
- To release a significant number of art, design and media resources for access, use and repurpose.

### 4. Focus Groups Aims

The Focus Group's objective was to bring together key stakeholders at each of the partner institutions in order to collect information about:

- Perceptions of art, design and media OERs; motivations for, and barriers to, their creation and use
- Repository facilities in place
- Technical support
- Institutional support
- Resources with OER potential

The Project Management team's role is to report back findings from the Focus Group and offer recommendations as appropriate. This report will be sent to the project contact at each partner institution to inform the development of an OER **Action Plan**.

In addition, the Focus Groups offer an opportunity for ADM-HEA to inform the participants what experiences, outcomes and resources were collated from the pilot project and the types of support that are available to the project partners.

### 5. Focus Group Report Structure

The focus groups followed a series of set questions (see Appendix A: *Focus Group Questions*), which were designed to address the key aims. The summaries of the responses to the questions are available on a spreadsheet (Appendix B), which details the comments from all the six project focus groups.

However, the participants were encouraged to engage in open discussions and, as a result, the responses did contain a wide range of opinions and comments that address multiple OER-related topics.



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The participants' responses were then collated under key themes:

- **Technology:** staff engagement with digital materials and platforms
- **Intellectual Property and Copyright**
- **Pedagogic Cultures and Practices**
- **Institutional Contexts:** Profile, marketing and strategic support

Note: The themes are broad and not mutually exclusive but designed to draw together comments into appropriate contexts to facilitate analysis.

## 6. Focus Group Final Composition – Faculty of Art, Design & architecture, Kingston University

**Participants:** 25 members of staff – teaching, support, Information Services staff and Economic Developer. Course directors, undergraduate and post-graduate plus cross-faculty course director. Teaching and Learning Coordinator, Short-Course coordinator.

**Sub-disciplines represented** – Illustration, Digital Media, History of Art & Design, Design, Sculpture, Fine Art.

## 7. Valuable Resources

- Studio, Lynda.com (<http://www.lynda.com/>)
- Studio
- YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/>)
- Tutors
- Spotify (<http://www.spotify.com/uk/>)
- University library
- Google
- UBU Web (<http://ubu.com/>)
- TED (<http://www.ted.com/>)
- Students (web awareness)
- Email
- Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS: <http://www.dacs.org.uk/>)
- Staff (fractional, permanent and guest lecturers)
- Distance access to digital resources (VLEs)
- Blogs and blog communities
- MIT website (<http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm>)
- Own It (<http://www.own-it.org/>)
- Creative Choices (<http://www.creative-choices.co.uk/>)
- Twitter

## 8. Technology

*“Kingston uses YouTube to help inform prospective applicants what they need to focus upon.”*

*“Course directors and students themselves have used YouTube clips to help give course information.”*

*“Kingston Futures shows clips of alumni discussing issues.”* [<http://www.kingstonfutures.com/>]

Focus group participants indicated that they integrate a range of online resources into their teaching and research; they referred to communication tools such as blogs and blog communities, Twitter and email; named services providing access to online video tutorials (Lynda.com, TED) and other online content (YouTube, Spotify, UbuWeb, MIT website, Creative Choices website); and the search engine, Google. One participant referred to the not-for-profit organization, the Design and Artists Copyright Society – DACS). One participant mentioned the website *Own it* which provides advice on intellectual property issues.

It was clear from the discussions that staff perceive online interaction, particularly through blogs and wikis, as an important mechanism for encouraging student participation. Participants presented considerable evidence Kingston University’s attention to online learning.

There was some discussion regarding technical aspects that some participants feel restrict aspects of staff engagement with the VLE and website:

*“There are too many firewalls.”*

Generally, participants suggested that these technical issues can be overcome through further dialogue between staff stakeholders (academic, Information services, etc).

Several participants referred to the closed institutional virtual learning environment (VLE) that is used to house a range of teaching and learning resources. Others referred to their own websites that they use to house teaching and learning materials and which serve a dual purpose of providing students with access to resources and contributing to the individual tutors’ professional profile.

## 9. Intellectual Property and Copyright

The focus group did not raise copyright and IP issues as a serious deterrent to developing open educational practice. Participants did, however, raise concerns about intellectual property issues - were the resources currently housed by the VLE to become openly available? In this context one participant reflected that it would be better to develop repurposable resources from scratch.

Participants highlighted concerns design students have about disclosing creative work in the early stages of development:

“There seems to be some anxiety about putting ideas out there too early.”

However, another participant deemed the online presentation of work to afford some protection from copyright infringements:

“I don’t see why, it’s digital so is a clear record of the work ... copyright covered.”

Participants also referred to the issue of guest and visiting lecturers who they felt would be much more protective of their materials and not enthusiastic about the department making the materials they produced freely available online.

However, in both of these cases, these were participants’ perceptions rather than clear directives from students and visiting lecturers.

## 10. Pedagogic Cultures & Practices

*“Is there is a danger [or fear] of losing the studio culture?”*

*“Motivations in studio and online for Art & Design students is the same”*

*“A lot of the skills, instructional and training-based materials ... for editing or processing ... can already be accessed by students through YouTube but not the critical thinking materials.”*

*“In interdisciplinary programmes it’s important to acknowledge different approaches and protocols, this impacts on how OERs might be used...we need to understand the students’ other experiences and behaviors.”*

*“We should look less to instructional videos but to ‘resources as prompts’ – we need to understand this in art and design. Resources need a purpose.”*

### 10.1 Definitions and the role of OERs

Participants’ understandings of OERs are related to the growth in availability of teaching materials - conference presentations and lectures for example - as searchable online materials.

Participants associated OERs with certain themes: specific teaching modes (online); particular organizations and services (the Open University, OpenLearn); characteristics of resources (free, online), practices (sharing, co-production) and licensing issues (Creative Commons).

## 10.2 Using and creating open educational resources

Participants highlighted examples of online resources designed for use by both prospective and existing students. For example, participants referred to institutional efforts to provide openly accessible advice and guidance to prospective students via YouTube.

Several staff referred to websites and putting materials online for use by existing students. For example, the Kingston Futures website had been designed to support current students in thinking about their futures after graduation.

“We made a film, created a website, the students use it and it is linked to the Kingston site.”

“I put my lecture PowerPoints online.”

Participants expressed enthusiasm for these practices but suggested that they may not strictly correspond with the definition of Open Educational Resources provided (see Definition Appendix A: *Focus Group Questions*):

“We tend to create, and make available, resources but these are not strictly re-purposable...”

One staff member illustrated how he, like others, in art and design have developed practices that have evolved from professional practice – showcasing work and services – that have now adapted to accommodate academic work. However, at the other end of this spectrum there was the suggestion that some visiting lecturers, reluctant to offer work freely, are sensitive to commercial exploitation of online resources.

“I have my own website with my own design work available ... I’ve had the site for around 12 years – in that time it’s shifted from profiling my design work to presenting my teaching and research [outputs] ”

The group responded to the question about using and repurposing OERs with their thoughts relating to ways of finding resources; judgments about the quality of existing repositories and resources; the role of institutions’ in ‘validating’ resources; and the value of sharing between institutions.

Several participants referred to search engines as the main means by which resources are found:

“Google is always the first step ... to refine the search. There’s too much out there to identify single repositories.”

“We just search through Super Google.”

Generally, participants expressed enthusiasm for the sharing of information and ideas between institutions, particularly in relatively new areas of activity (the example of education for sustainable development was given). Participants suggested that this (sharing) is currently undertaken in an ad hoc fashion.

“There is a level of peer sharing between academics between institutions ... particularly with new subject material ... it is ad hoc and rather informal.”

“Remember we should look at academics in other institutions not as competitors but peers.”

One participant expressed the view that unlike other subject disciplines, which may be required to employ more prescriptive teaching and learning materials, OERs are perhaps not suited to art, design and media disciplines:

“It seems other disciplines [sciences, medicine etc] are somehow more established and have a greater commonality that suit OERs.”

### 10.3 Impacts on teaching and the student experience

Students are perceived as key to driving open educational practice, including the development of resources; however there is some concern that it is too readily accepted all students are ‘digital natives’:

“We shouldn’t stereotype students and technology.”

Participants were keen to emphasise the importance of the disciplinary setting and the broader student experience to OER production and use:

“In interdisciplinary programmes it’s important to acknowledge different approaches and protocols, this impacts on how OERs might be used ... we need to understand the students’ other experiences and behaviors.”

The group referred to an alignment between “studio and online motivations”; in an art, design and media context, students have professional motivations to make their work available to audiences external to the university. Referencing Professor Henry Jenkins (MIT), one participant suggested that online technologies can further the collaborative nature of studio cultures. (ref: <http://web.mit.edu/cms/People/henry3/>)

“Motivations in studio and online for Art & Design students are the same.”

For several participants the production and use of openly accessible teaching and learning resources is an integral aspect of academic practice that is extending into digital online contexts. One participant indicated that technology provides a means of better fulfilling the academic role:

“We are all teachers imparting knowledge, it is part of our role.”

“We use technology to demonstrate the value of the staff – to mediate staff knowledge ... it enables us to mediate the ephemeral.”



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Several tutors articulated benefits or enhancements the development of open educational practice may present to existing teaching and learning processes, enabling further staff and student and cross-institutional collaborations and enhancing the quality of learning and teaching materials. Further, for one tutor, OERs present an opportunity to rethink the teaching and learning process:

“It’s collaboration between staff, students and other institutions.”

“Teaching staff can take the elements from a resource to embellish it.”

“We teach the way we were taught ... we have to rethink this!”

Several participants referred to the teaching and learning potential of blogs in art, design and media, as student-produced learning resources that aid collaborative learning and also emphasise process over outcome. One tutor also emphasized the value of blogs to the assessment process.

“Blogs are becoming increasingly important. In design we want to mark the process rather than the outcome so blogs are becoming an important resource for other students – we mark the blogs effectively. It’s collaborative learning, not static outputs.”

“Blogs are the new ‘sketchbook’ – more collaborative and promote group work.”

Throughout discussions participants drew a very strong distinction between ‘resources’ and ‘education’ and the pedagogic value of OERs was a central concern:

“Do they fly?”

“We should look less to instructional videos but to ‘resources as prompts’ – we need to understand this in art and design. Resources need a purpose.”

“It’s not difficult to find resources ...it is about the delivery.”

“Students can miss lectures and simply look at the power points but it’s about staff delivery and the department philosophy ... this is the added value.”

It was believed by participants that students should take an active role in developing faculty initiatives in OER creation and use:

“It should be student-led, we should work with them to build up resources”

#### **10.4 Time and Work**

One participant suggested that OERs have time-saving potential for busy staff, both in terms of reusing other tutors’ resources, and reusing ones that tutors have produced themselves:

“It’s a benefit to me, I reuse myself ... put materials onto the intranet.”

“Links can be shared [between academics and institutions] ... it helps [reduce] the workload.”

## 11. Institutional Context – Profile, marketing and strategic support

*“We need to look at how the department presents itself.”*

*“It gives a greater awareness of the staff and the institution ... can make us bigger than we may actually be in the analogue world.”*

*“We should identify and work with expertise we already have here – work with communications design on projects.”*

*“It should be student-led, we should work with them to build up resources.”*

*“We need ILT training for staff.”*

### 11.1 Institutional profile and marketing

Participants suggested institutional profile and marketing benefits to the development of open educational practice. Participants expressed the view that OERs may impact both positively and negatively on perceptions of the institution.

*“Perceptions of Kingston can be impacted by OERs.”*

*“There are marketing benefits particularly in [consideration of] the new HE economy.”*

*“It’s important to tell people who we [Kingston] are ... personality.”*

*“It gives a greater awareness of the staff and the institution ... can make us bigger than we may be actually be in the analogue world.”*

### 11.2 Quality Assurance and sustainability

Participants suggested that resources ‘validated’ by the institution or ‘the discipline’ were deemed to be preferable for both teaching and learning and departmental / institutional profiling purposes:

*“We can’t totally trust the wiki-approach, it is preferable to have the professional authority of the discipline ... needs the authorship – that’s why MIT is seen as important.”*

“The students like the ‘seal of approval’ that comes with resources through the university/department.”

Participants expressed views on existing repositories for open educational resources and found these to be lacking, either in terms of the types of content available or in the search mechanisms.

“A lot of the skills, instructional and training based materials ... for editing or processing ... can already be accessed by students through YouTube but not the critical thinking materials.”

“I don’t like Jorum – the processes and the materials are disappointing.”

Concerns about the open educational resources themselves; their quality and currency, were also raised and related to the level of resources required to develop and maintain them.

“YouTube and iTunes U can come over as very dull and so be counterproductive.”

“We have to consider the currency of resources, they can become dated quickly ... they need to be maintained.”

“It’s about quality.”

“They can’t [easily] be withdrawn once they’re online – it’s too late.”

### 11.3 Institutional Support

Participants indicated the need for strong departmental and institutional support in order to progress open educational practice. Identified barriers requiring departmental/ institutional support included staff workloads, the cost of developing resources and quality control and maintenance mechanisms. Participants also highlighted a need for ILT training.

In consideration of this, participants were confident that the skills and expertise of existing staff could be utilised to address these challenges. In a specific example participants suggested drawing on expertise in communications design and more generally, in ensuring that course leaders, especially studio-based staff, play a key role.

“Course leaders, especially studio-based should be used as a conduit [to communicate information regarding the creation and use of OERs].”

Many participants expressed a desire to learn more about open educational resources; to define and consider them in the context of the institution and its values:

“How can OERs support the values of Kingston?”

“We need to define OERs for this department – we need to establish our own taxonomy.”



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In consideration of the specificity of the subject discipline participants suggested that a proper classification and taxonomy of resources (OERs) should be attempted as this would help build the culture within the department.

Several participants expressed the view that the benefits articulated are not of equal value:

“We should perhaps address this in terms of a hierarchy of benefits – income and marketing is actually secondary.”

## 12. Ideas to consider

The following ‘ideas to consider’ are based on staff contributions to the focus group discussions. We hope that these suggestions will help to support the development of open educational practice within the department.

The suggestions are presented in the context of existing support agencies, initiatives and documentation that are available from the UK OER Programme, the ADM-OER Pilot Project and relevant websites listed below.

- **Identify and draw upon expertise and resources across the institution – in particular marketing, information technology, library and legal services.**
- **Align the development of open educational practice with the departmental / institutional key strategic goals and underpinning values and philosophy**
- **Embed the project Action Plan in the institution’s technology enhanced learning strategy.**
- **Provide opportunities for dialogue between academic and information technology staff to support of art, design, & media pedagogies through appropriate online technologies.**
- **Build on existing motivations to develop open education practice – for example, individual lecturers’ enthusiasm to enhance online professional profiles, and explore willingness to engage in dialogue across institutions.**
- **Explore opportunities to develop ‘purpose built’ open educational resources to avoid issues inherent in retrospectively re-purposing of materials.**
- **Provide opportunities and encourage staff to further explore pedagogic potential and benefits of open educational practices.**
- **Explore what types of teaching and learning resources are best suited to OER creation and use. The development of a ‘taxonomy of resources’ within the department would help encourage wider staff participation in open educational practice.**



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- **Explore available repositories and the potential for open access.**
- **Identify technological support needs.**
- **Provide staff with appropriate IP and copyright guidance on issues associated with open educational resources through library and legal services and programme support. Explore Creative Commons licenses suited to staff needs and considerations.**
- **Degrees of ‘openness’ - explore ‘tiered’ approaches to releasing resources. Develop staff confidence in the creation of resources by the controlled release and sharing of materials through the institutional platforms.**
- **Student involvement - ensure that students are involved in the development of the OER Action plan. Students can help inform the rationale for developing open educational practice in the department**
- **Explore the potential for the development of resources through curriculum and assessment design.**
- **Visiting and fractional staff – Involve visiting and fractional staff in the development of the OER Action Plan.**
- **Eventually, a clear OER policy statement will help sustain burgeoning open educational practice in the department / institution.**

## General Information

## Technical

CETIS – the JISC Innovation Support Centre for UK further and higher education on standardisation, strategic, technical and pedagogical advice: <http://blogs.cetis.ac.uk/lmc/2010/12/03/oer-2-technical-requirements/>

For advice and support on technical issues contact CETIS OER Programme Support Officer R. John Robertson at [robert.robertson@strath.ac.uk](mailto:robert.robertson@strath.ac.uk)

XERTE – Based at the University of Nottingham and part of the UK OER Programme the Xerte Project allows non-technical staff to quickly and easily build accessible, and interactive resources: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/xerte/>



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### Copyright and Intellectual Property

The guidelines, templates and other documents made available by the ADM-OER Phase 1 Project as PDFs can provide a first step (<http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/sector-projects/contentfolder.2010-04-22.7419312795>)

The range of support available through the JISC UK OER Programme:

Good Practice in Rights Clearance and Licensing: <http://www.web2rights.com/>

Blog: <http://www.web2rights.com/OERIPRSupport/blog/?p=54>

Licenses - Creative Commons: <http://creativecommons.org/>

### General Information

Open Educational Resources Information Kit – For information on the UK OER Programme: <https://openeducationalresources.pbworks.com/w/page/24836480/Home>

Jorum Open –UK OER Programme Repository: <http://www.jorum.ac.uk/>

Visual Arts Data Service (VADS): <http://www.vads.ac.uk/>

### Useful Documents, Information and Guidance – ADM-OER Project 2009-10

A range of outputs from the *Art Design Media-Open Educational Resources (ADM-OER) Project 2009-10* including: Intellectual Property, Copyright and Licensing Guidance; OER Depositor Agreement; OER Release Forms; Seeking Permission from Publishers Letter; OER Creation Flow Chart and a range of additional reports.

These are available to download from the ADM-HEA Subject Centre website:

<http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/sector-projects/contentfolder.2010-04-22.7419312795>

### Links: Kingston University

Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (Links to Schools and Programmes):

<http://fada.kingston.ac.uk/>

Faculty Research Webpage (links to Research Centre Pages):

<http://fada.kingston.ac.uk/research/research.php>

Research Repository (eprints metadata – database/closed portal log-in required, full texts not available across repository): <http://eprints.kingston.ac.uk/>

Repository Policies: <http://eprints.kingston.ac.uk/policies.html>



## Appendix A



### Focus Group Questions

#### Introduction

1. Could you tell us who you are and what you consider your most valuable learning resource?
2. What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think of 'open educational resources'?

#### Key questions

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development defined Open Educational Resources as follows:

*'...digitised materials offered freely and openly for educators, students and self-learners to use and reuse for teaching learning and research.'*

3. Can you tell us about any OERS you have produced?
4. Can you tell us about any OERS you have used or re-used?
5. What are the benefits to getting involved in this?
  - To the institution?
  - To the department?
  - To the teaching staff?
  - To the students?
  - To the discipline?
  - Other?
6. What are the barriers to getting involved in this?
7. If you had control of the available funds to help develop OER practice in your department how would you choose to spend it?
8. Of all the aspects of open educational resources we discussed, which one is the most important to you?

## Appendix B

See separate document: *Practising Open Education – Focus Group Thematic Spreadsheet*