



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

**School of Creative Arts, University of Hertfordshire
FOCUS GROUP REPORT**

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Focus Group Report – School of Creative Arts, University of Hertfordshire

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.

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 – School of Creative Arts, University of Hertfordshire

Participants: 12 - School of Creative Arts (Faculty of Science, Technology and Creative Arts), teaching staff, learning support, resource developers, school coordinator, School Disability Coordinator, representative from Learning and Teaching Institute (LTI)

Sub-disciplines represented: Interactive Media and Screen Cultures, Textiles, 3D Art, Photography, Modeling and Effects, Fine Art, Film and Television, Interior Design.

7. Valuable Resources

- BBC website
- Box of Broadcasts (BOB: <http://www.boxofbroadcasts.com/>)
- StudyNet – the University's virtual learning environment)
- Wikipedia
- Google Images
- The studio
- YouTube
- Conferences
- VIMEO (<http://vimeo.com/>) free video sharing website

8. Technology

Participants made a wide range of suggestions for actions that would facilitate the development of open educational practice in the department. These included the provision of technical support including institutional IT infrastructure and time:

“We need to look at the bandwidth, the servers ... there are technical issues we need to address.”

“We really need IT department support ... or we need to look at third-party hosting [of OERs].”

Participants suggested that there are different technological concerns for different types of OER and there were suggestions about particular ‘hosts’ for the department’s learning and teaching resources:

“Different content needs different strategies for modes of delivery.”

“iTunes U can be brought into this.”

Standardisation of approaches to open educational practice was deemed off-putting to some participants:

“The university has an iTunes U account and this has set a standard, this can discourage staff engagement with open resources.”

9. Intellectual Property and Copyright

Participants raised concerns over copyright and intellectual property issues and the provision of institutional support including incentives for individual lecturers to develop open educational practice.

In particular, participants raised concerns about the impacts of “giving (resources) away for free”:

“It’s a bit idealistic to think that we’re naturally that generous, there’s a danger we feel a bit exploited so you have to be careful what [you’re prepared to] give away.”

10. Pedagogic Cultures & Practices

“There are competing philosophies [with OERs].”

“... Why do I make public and share? Why not?”

“I use resources I’ve previously created – with other institutions.”

“With skill- based teaching it can be superior ...”

“You get as much as you give ...”

“It can be good for students when they have graduated it is developing good practice.”

“Its good to look at how other deliver their programmes.”

“They enrich the student experience.”

10.1 Definitions and the role of OERs

Participants expressed interest in the underpinning philosophy of open educational practice and the differing motivations of institution, department, lecturer and student.

One participant in the focus group, perceived open educational practice to be underpinned by competing ideas:

“There are competing philosophies – one of sharing, it is our instinct [as teachers] to share and one of the market and competing – it seems to be offering a confused notion of knowledge ... or is it communication?”

These competing philosophies are reflected in the perceptions of the role of OERs. Participants highlighted a number of ‘roles’ for open educational practice; facilitating learning and enhancing the student experience, enhancing teaching through the cross-departmental and institutional sharing of ideas and practices, maintaining contact with alumni and promotion and marketing of programmes

The shift to a more ‘public’ approach to teaching, however, raises other issues such as:

“Having confidence in your materials ... it’s a competitive market.”

10.2 Using and creating open educational resources

Participants provided several examples of burgeoning open educational practice in the department.

One participant presented examples of video tutorials developed by tutors to demonstrate technical processes. In this example, the video tutorial was deemed the most appropriate pedagogic choice that enabled students to learn in their own time and at their own pace:

“I’ve produced a number of video tutorials for Apple’s Final Cut software, I share them openly through VIMEO. I do this because it’s easier for students to follow. It’s much easier to pause and rewind so the students can pace their learning and they enjoy the process.”

Another example highlighted the role of students in generating interactive learning resources that can have educational value to students themselves and their peers:

“A lot of the modules have their own blogs. It’s better for the students than using StudyNet, it’s more interactive.”

For one participant, the open release of learning materials provides the means of helping students engage with external contacts and the barriers to this kind of activity are deemed minimal:

“I link them through Twitter to other academics. Why do I make public and share? Why not?”

Some participants also articulated the benefits of partially open educational practice:

“We’ve been working with franchise partners (Interactive Design Institute example) where we are in control of how the resources are used.”

These examples were discussed alongside a number of concerns relating to institutional processes either hindering the development of open educational practice, or deemed necessary to ensure the quality, validity and copyright-readiness of resources produced.

Participants responded to the question about the use and repurpose of digitised materials for teaching and learning purposes with reference to free services such as Google Books and subscription services such as Safari Books:

“Safari Books ... searchable, instructional.”

“Google books ... online reading can determine reading lists, what is open can determine what students are directed to.”

One participant referred to the use of his own open educational resources in other institutional contexts.

“I use resources I’ve previously created – with other institutions.”

10.3 Impacts on teaching and the student experience

Participants expressed the view that, in some respects, students are leading staff, departments and institutions, to the wealth of online resources:

“We are driven by the students, they lead and we follow ... to Google and YouTube for example – digital resources are superseding staff’s lecture structure.”

One participant suggested that the online ecology fundamentally changes the interface between staff and student and what the tutor can bring to the learning process:

“It’s changing the role of the teacher... We need to put students into the self-learning mode ... we [teaching staff] need to put in the educational context.”

Online multimedia learning resources were deemed to generally “enrich the student experience” but participants also highlighted specific benefits for particular students in particular contexts:

“With skills-based teaching it can be superior. You often have to continually review the process [being delivered] so static information is not always best.”

“In animation there are real benefits for entry level teaching.”

Some participants expressed the view that open educational practice can save time and enrich the experience of teaching:

“You get as much as you give, we need to learn to let go ... not withhold.”

Alongside these perceptions of the positive impacts of OERs on teaching and the student experience, participants expressed concerns about the impact of the online ecology generally and open educational resources specifically in the context of art, design and media higher education.

The ready availability of ‘unregulated’ online material (such as Wikipedia) was perceived as a challenge to teachers and students:

“... but there’s a need to evaluate resources, students need to do this...this is [material] not in the library or in print, so not authorized in the same way. It could be a flyer, or in a gold leaf volume, but online they are both equal.”

For another, the type of learning suggested by ‘open educational resources’ was deemed antithetical to the experiences of studio-based learning.

“Learning is an emotional experience, the classroom [studio] fosters a type of experiential learning.”

For another OERs represent a “loss of fun”. The use of pre-existing resources spoils the:

“Enjoyment from creating resources.”

10.4 Time and Work

Participants suggested that staff require clear policies at a departmental and institutional level to encourage and support the development of open educational resources:

“We need to be given time to create [resources] ... we need editing time.”

Alongside this expressed need for departmental support in relation to the processes for developing open educational practice, participants suggested that there may be a need for institutional incentives or rewards:

“But what about rights and rewards.”

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One participant perceived open educational practice, in respect of time and workload, to be a valuable strategy:

“It’s sensible...time-saving.”

11. Institutional Context – Profile, marketing and strategic support

“They can advertise the course.”

“By sharing we may risk people not coming here to the university.”

“There needs to be an editorial process...”

“We need an OER team to direct all this.”

Note: The University is committed to development of blended learning; using the institution’s VLE StudyNet to offer 25% distance and flexible learning over the next 5 years (15% campus-based flexible learning and 10% off campus distance learning).

11.1 Institutional profile and marketing

Some participants articulated the potential value of OERs for course marketing purposes.

However, concerns were raised about appropriate business models and questions about how the institution would benefit from open educational practice and one participant highlighted the possibility of charging for some resources.

“There is an issue of charging [for more valuable resources] there is often a subscription ... where only the early [basic] materials are free.”

Making learning and teaching resources freely available is deemed problematic in particular subject areas where the skills and knowledge are deemed more important than the ‘validation’ of these through qualifications:

“In animation the qualification is not a requirement [students can take advantage of freely available information that the institution wishes to provide].”

“By sharing we may risk people not coming here to the university.”

11.2 Quality Assurance and sustainability

In the context of quality assurance one participant suggested that students value the role of their tutor in authoring their own teaching and learning materials.

“Authorship, students value this.”

However, some institutional processes were deemed necessary to ensure the resources are suitable for the public domain.

“There needs to be an editorial process, it’s important to ensure the validity of the information.”

“We need to ensure we cover health and safety issues ... there’s institutional responsibility to consider.”

11.3 Institutional Support

In addition to comments regarding rights and rewards to secure staff involvement in open educational practice, several participants suggested the way forward is related to developing staff confidence and in maintaining a balance between their autonomy and institutional policy.

“[We need to encourage] a sense of confidence for staff to do this, we need institutional support.”

“The institution needs to show confidence in the academics.”

“It’s a matter of [balance between] policing versus freedom.”

Finally, and in the context of the points about staff autonomy and confidence, participants suggested a need for a strategic and focused approach to the development of open educational practice in the department:

“There needs to be someone focusing on this.”

“We need an OER team to direct all this.”

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.**
- **Explore available repositories and the potential for open access.**
- **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.**
- **Provide staff opportunities to explore and share motivations to engage in open educational practice. Consider how these motivations could be aligned and supported by institutional policies.**
- **Student involvement - ensure that students are involved in the development of the OER Action plan. Students can help inform the rationale and the processes of developing open educational practice in the department.**
- **Schedule workshops that enable the showcasing of existing open educational practices within the department.**
- **Provide opportunities for staff to discuss the impact of an information rich environment on existing teacher identities and roles.**
- **Support staff research methods with regard to online materials. Encourage staff and students in the critical engagement with online materials.**
- **Explore what types of teaching and learning resources are best suited to OER creation and use. How can art, design and media practice be effectively complimented by OERs and open educational practice?**
- **Address staff concerns regarding attribution - 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.**
- **Explore the potential for the development of resources through curriculum and assessment design.**
- **Franchise partners, visiting and fractional staff – Involve these cohorts in the development of the OER Action Plan.**
- **Eventually a clear OER policy statement that encompasses staff motivations and aspirations will help sustain open educational practice in the department/institution.**



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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/oyer-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

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/>

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>



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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*