
Creative Commons, OER, and Open Practices

Féile Blackboard, [CELT](#), NUI Galway

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This guide accompanies a professional development workshop on Open Education offered by the Centre for Excellence in Learning & Teaching ([CELT](#)), NUI Galway. The guide has five sections:

1. [Open Educational Resources \(OER\)](#)
2. [Open licensing and Creative Commons](#)
3. [Why use open practices?](#)
4. [How to open up my practice?](#)
5. [Summary](#)

*“Open education encompasses resources, tools and practices that employ a framework of open sharing to improve educational access and effectiveness worldwide... Open Education combines the traditions of knowledge sharing and creation with 21st century technology to create a vast pool of openly shared educational **resources**, while harnessing today’s collaborative spirit to develop educational **approaches** that are more responsive to learners’ needs.” - [Open Education Consortium](#)*

1. Open Educational Resources (OER)

Open Educational Resources (OER) are resources made available for others to use to support learning. OER vary enormously in granularity and form. Individual OER might include specific learning activities, assessments, full courses, textbooks, journal articles, software, datasets, images, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support learning.

The 'open' in OER means that the resources are not only free of cost but also come with *reuse rights*, typically granted through an open copyright license such as *Creative Commons*.

Assigning an open license to a resource allows others to engage with that resource in ways that are not otherwise allowed (due to copyright restrictions). From simply correcting typos or grammatical errors to more involved activities such as updating the content for local contexts (disciplinary, institutional or geographic) or adding up-to-date research, OER allow educators to adapt and tailor educational materials as they wish.

As an example, the two images used in this guide are open educational resources, repurposed for use in the guide. In addition, the guide itself is an OER, which you can use and repurpose as you wish, in your teaching or otherwise.

References & Resources

- General OER resources: [OER \(Wikipedia\)](#) | [OER \(Hewlett Foundation\)](#) | [Open Education Research Hub](#) | [OER infoKit](#) (Jisc)
- University OER resources: [University of Edinburgh](#) | [University of Texas](#) | [University of Tasmania](#) | [University of Hawaii](#) (William Meinke)
- Open textbooks: [OpenStax](#) | [Open Textbook Library](#) (Univ. of Minnesota) | [A guide to making open textbooks with students](#) (Ed. Elizabeth Mays) | [My open textbook: Pedagogy & practice](#) (Robin DeRosa)

2. Open licensing and Creative Commons

“Open licenses help grease the gears of collaboration by making it clear what you can and cannot do with the creative work of others.” - [William Meinke](#)

A common misconception about OER is that they are simply *free* resources. While free is one aspect, how the resource is licensed is equally important. For resources to be considered OER, they must be *openly licensed*. This means that the permissions traditionally protected by copyright are proactively communicated to users, frequently though not exclusively through the use of [Creative Commons](#) licenses.

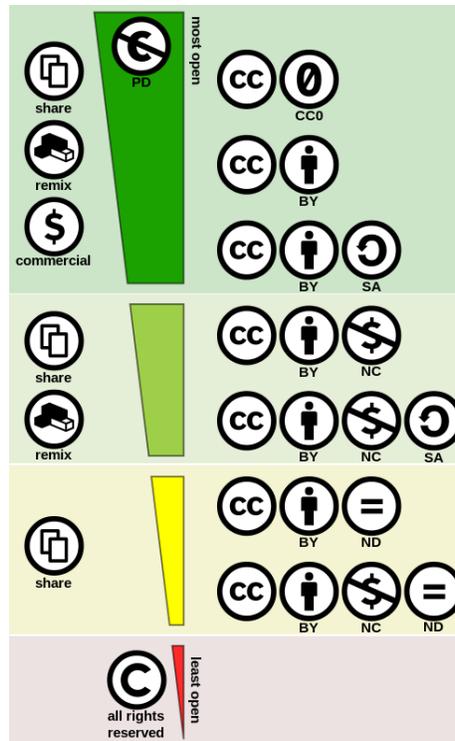
Put simply, open licenses such as Creative Commons (CC) permit creators to *retain copyright* but tell others *how they can use and adapt their work*. Advocates of OER frequently discuss open licensing in the context of the ["5 R" activities](#), i.e. an open license is one that gives users permissions to *Retain, Reuse, Revise, Remix* and/or *Redistribute* the content.

At the core of nearly all CC licenses is the Attribution (BY) component, requiring all who reuse your work to provide full attribution to you. Additional terms can be combined into [Creative Commons licenses](#) so that you can share your work with different conditions for reuse.

In addition to Attribution (BY), the three other CC licensing options are:

- Share-Alike (SA): All derivative work(s) must be shared with the same license
- Non-Commercial (NC): Commercial usage rights are not given
- No-Derivatives (ND): The work can be shared, but only if it remains unchanged

These options can be combined (as shown below) when you create a specific CC license in order to allow/restrict specific forms of reuse of your work by others. Licenses shown at the top of the spectrum are the most open; licenses at the bottom are the most restrictive.



[Creative Commons license spectrum](#) CC BY 4.0 Shaddim via Wikimedia Commons

Creative Commons license information is often displayed in the caption of an image or the footer of a webpage. You can see examples of this in the captions of the two images used in this guide and in the footer at the end of the guide.

References & Resources

- [Creative Commons](#) - including detail about [specific CC licenses](#)
- [Choosing a license](#) for your work
- [Open content licensing: A 3-step guide for academics](#) (Michelle Willmers & Laura Czerniewicz, University of Cape Town)

3. Why use open practices?

Open educational resources are just one part of a global open education movement seeking to promote and support more equitable and sustainable education for all. A broader term, *open educational practices (OEP)*, includes the use of OER as well as open pedagogy and open sharing of teaching practices. Openness, in all these forms, has many benefits for educators, learners, educational institutions and wider communities.

Benefits for educators:

- **Why re-invent the wheel?** Reusing existing open resources frees up time that can be spent on other aspects of the teaching and learning process. Use of OER can help you to expand your range of free, up-to-date learning and teaching materials.
- Creating OER can help to **improve your teaching** by exploring beyond your immediate environment, finding others interested in and teaching similar subjects, and broadening your views. Many who use, create, and share OER find that it reinvigorates their teaching.
- Working with OER can help you to **develop your digital literacies** (and your students' digital literacies), particularly around working with digital content, intellectual property, networks, and a variety of digital and participatory media.
- Using OER and OEP can help **expand your network**, facilitating working across subject disciplines, institutions, and sectors, enabling you to benefit from diverse global networks and knowledge.
- Sharing your materials can help **raise your profile** and allow your resources to be used, adapted, and improved by other users. Overall, you can improve your profile and impact.
- By openly licensing the educational resources you create, you **contribute to society** in a unique way: sharing publicly funded resources *publicly*, enabling people in your local and national communities, as well as globally, to access, adapt, and gain benefit from them.

Benefits for learners:

- Learners have **freedom of access** to course and course-related materials *before* enrolling as a student, *while* a student (at work/home/on placement), and *after* being a student.
- Seeing/applying knowledge in **wider contexts** than their course/module typically allows.
- Using **learner-centred, self-directed, peer-to-peer** and **social/informal learning** approaches.
- **Authentic** or 'real-life' learning experiences through OER can link to employer or professional sector activities.
- Learners can also benefit from opportunities to **contribute toward OER development** and/or evaluation, or by creating their own OER.

Benefits for educational institutions:

- Increased **sharing** of ideas and practice within the institution, among all staff and students.
- Wider **availability** of academic content and focus on the learning experience (linked to [widening access to higher education](#)).
- Increased **capacity** to support remote students.
- **Efficiencies** in content production (e.g. generic content that can be used across subject areas).
- New **relationships** with students as they become collaborators in OER production and use.
- Increasing **digital competencies**, including understanding of intellectual property rights.

- New **partnerships/collaboration** with other institutions and organisations across other sectors.
- **Recognition** and enhanced institutional reputation.

Benefits for other individuals and wider communities:

- **Access** to quality peer-reviewed research and free, open, repurposable educational content.
- New potential **partnerships** with content providers and other sectors.
- Enabling **collaborative approaches** to teaching/learning (communities of practice).
- Enhanced **communication and collaboration** within educational institutions and with peers in other institutions/organisations, other sectors, and globally.
- **Open access** to legacy materials

References & Resources

- [Imagining the “open” university: Sharing scholarship to improve research and education](#) (Erin McKiernan, 2017)
- [How openness impacts on higher education](#) (UNESCO)
- [Learning resources and open access in higher education institutions in Ireland](#) (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education, 2015)
- [OER Research Hub \(OER Hub\)](#)

4. How to open up my practice?

Engaging in open practice is something that can be done in a wide range of ways. You can begin by **finding and using OER** in your teaching (e.g. using CC-licensed images or other learning resources); you can **create your own OER** (e.g. openly license your own images or teaching resources); and/or you can encourage students to create/edit OER and engage in open practices (e.g. editing Wikipedia articles, sharing their own work openly, etc.). In addition, you might consider opening your classroom to wider conversations through the use of social media (e.g. Twitter). Following are some useful resources:

Finding OER

[Creative Commons search](#) - enter search term

[Unsplash](#) (images) - all content licensed CC0; simply enter search term

[Flickr](#) (images) - enter search term & then select 'All Creative Commons' under license option

[Google](#) advanced search:

- *Images* - enter search term, click 'Image', click 'Tools', then select 'Usage rights' option
- *Other content* - enter search term, click 'Settings', click 'Advanced search', then select 'Usage rights option

[OER Repositories](#) - search various OER repositories to find appropriate resources

Open textbooks - e.g. [OpenStax](#), [Open Textbook Library](#), [BC Open Textbooks](#); see also [A guide to making open textbooks with students](#) (Ed. Elizabeth Mays) and [My open textbook: Pedagogy & practice](#) (Robin DeRosa)

Editing Wikipedia

“Don’t cite Wikipedia, write Wikipedia.” - [Ewan McAndrew](#)

Editing and writing Wikipedia articles are powerful ways for educators and students to share scholarly knowledge in an authentic and public way, and to develop information and digital literacy skills.

- [Wikipedia in the classroom: Developing information literacy, online citizenship and digital research skills](#) (Ewan McAndrew, 2017)
- [Writing Wikipedia articles teaches information literacy skills](#) (LiAnna Davis, 2017)

The following resources from the [Wikimedian in Residence project](#) at the University of Edinburgh provide further information and tools:

- [Getting started with Wikipedia](#)
- [Using Wikipedia in the classroom](#) (case studies)
- [Student testimonials](#) (short video)
- [Testimonial from an academic](#) (Michael Seery, 2017)

Here is a link from a previous workshop on [editing Wikipedia at NUI Galway](#); you might also check out [Wikimedia Ireland](#). For more information about editing Wikipedia, please contact [Sharon Flynn](#) in CELT.

Blogging

Blogging is a unique communication and networking tool and open educational practice, enabling educators and students to share their work and ideas and to connect with others within and beyond their discipline and institution. Your research group or School may have a blog; other examples include the blog of the [CELT Learning Technologies team](#) and individual blogs by members of CELT including [Catherine Cronin](#), [Iain MacLaren](#), and [Kate Molloy](#).

There are a number of different platforms and ways to create a blog. A wealth of resources related to the [Domain of One’s Own](#) initiative were shared during a workshop here at NUI Galway in 2017: [Exploring Domain of One’s Own](#). The [IndieWeb wiki](#) (CC0) (and associated [live chat](#)) are also excellent resources for details on creating and hosting your own website and for [using them in educational settings](#).

5. Summary

This guide contains only a short overview of open education. Open education has a long history and is practiced in many ways, within and beyond higher education. The [Open Access](#) movement continues to transform global access to scholarly outputs. At NUI Galway, we have had an [Open Access policy](#) since 2015, [well supported by the library](#). OER and OEP are part of a broader [open education](#) movement, seeking to improve educational access, effectiveness, and equality through the sharing of teaching and learning materials, as well as research publications.

We invite you to delve into the resources in this guide more deeply to learn more. Please contact the workshop facilitator [Catherine Cronin](#) or anyone in [CELT](#) to explore these ideas further or to discuss how you might use open practices in your own teaching. Best of luck!

Additional references

- Bates, A.W. (2015). [Trends in open education](#) (Chapter 10). In: [Teaching in a digital age: Guidelines for designing teaching and learning for a digital age](#). University of British Columbia. [Open Access book]
- Biswas-Diener, R., & Jhangiani, R. (2017). [Open: The philosophy and practices that are revolutionizing education and science](#). London: Ubiquity Press. [Open Access book]
- Cronin, C. (2017). [Openness and praxis: Exploring the use of open educational practices in higher education](#). *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 18(5). [Open Access article]
- Inamorato dos Santos, A., Punie, Y., & Muñoz, J.C. (2016). [Opening up education: A support framework for higher education institutions](#). JRC Science for Policy Report.
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- Phipps, L., & Lanclos, D. (2018). [Leading with digital in an age of supercomplexity](#). *Irish Journal of Technology Enhanced Learning*, 3(1). [Open Access article]

The material in this guide draws on a number of valuable resources in the area of open education. These are referenced throughout the guide. CELT extends our thanks to the creators. As a whole, this guide is available under a CC BY license, as specified below.



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