

SCORE Fellowship Final Report By Tom Browne, University of Exeter

OER as a Scholarly Activity within Staff Development Accredited Courses

Tom's project ran from 1st August 2010 until the 30th June 2011, the aim of the project was to embed OER into early career staff development his original plan is outlined at:

<http://www8.open.ac.uk/score/fellows/tom-browne>

Background

This SCORE project was borne out of a recognition that without academic buy-in, an OER culture will not become embedded within the learning and teaching practice within HEIs.

From May 2009 to April 2010 I was Project Manager and Principal Investigator of the HEFCE-funded and JISC-managed institutional OER project called Open Exeter.

In November 2009, with colleagues from the OU, I ran a one-day workshop on OER at Exeter. It was salutary how little prior understanding was evident. Subsequently I conducted several experimental OER workshops to cohorts of early career staff on our HEA-accredited courses, focusing on the demand side. It proved to be an effective entrée into OER and confirmed my view that such workshops should be more substantially developed. Given that most HEIs have HEA-accredited courses, the potential for take-up and for creating a community of practice could be significant. Further, given the research focus of much of UK HEI, in order to achieve 'buy-in' OER needs to be positioned as fitting in with the scholarly endeavor of a research-inspired approach to learning and teaching. More ambitiously, structured OER awareness can also be related to the Professional Standards Framework (PSF) as part of CPD for all staff. These recommendations and conclusions

were identified in Exeter's Final Report and in associated presentational opportunities in the UK and elsewhere, most notably at the *ascilite* conference in Auckland 2009 and then more maturely at OER10. They are perhaps most accessibly outlined in:

Tom Browne, Richard Holding, Anna Howell, Sue Rodway-Dyer (2010) The challenges of OER to Academic Practice. <http://jime.open.ac.uk/article/2010-3/pdf>.

To quote text I wrote in the Conclusion of the paper:

' Even in a supportive policy environment, in order to translate OER from mere 'stuff' to something much more useful, we need a sensitisation programme for both academic and also professional support staff and a radical view of how our learning and teaching practices need to be modified to embrace OER. At Exeter, we are just beginning to build awareness of OER into our HEA accredited staff development programmes. This approach lies at the heart of our view on sustainability.'

The desire to pursue this agenda underpinned my motivation to seek a SCORE Fellowship. My fellowship ran at 50%FTE from 1/8/2010, for just under one year. Such a period allowed for considered reflection and maximized the opportunities over which resources and ideas could be trialed within the academic calendar.

Seeking a community to work with

Much networking has been required to enable this Fellowship to 'take off'. My proposal was heavily reliant on being able to engage with others and that others were willing to engage with me! Reassuringly, linkages have matured effectively and my Fellowship evolved as a consequence. My underpinning remit of a somewhat ambassadorial role for OER within staff development programmes and particularly within south west England was able to take hold. I hoped to operate at a national, regional and local level but such aspirations needed to be rooted within a coherent community.

The South West Educational Developers Forum (SWEDF) was potentially a suitable vehicle. It is regionally based and is populated by academic developers. Although Exeter was the only SWEDF HEI to have a Phase-1 *institutional* project, several other universities contributed to HEA-managed subject centre consortia and are currently part of Phase-2 JISC and HEA managed projects funded by HEFCE. However, I realised early on that this was a too diffuse and opaque community to offer inspirational connections. I needed a harder-edged relationship that would more assuredly provide me with substantial and sustainable relations for the duration of my Fellowship. Several related opportunities fell into place.

Exeter had bid for one of the HEA-managed Phase-2 OMAC projects and after my Fellowship had been awarded, we were informed that we had been successful. This project, entitled OpenSTEM aims to embed OER practices within HEA accredited courses for early career Maths and Biosciences participants. Although I had played a significant role in writing the Exeter bid I was uncertain what role I might play should our bid be successful. However, this uncertainty was quickly resolved when I was invited by the HEA to be a critical friend for the Exeter OMAC project, and the OU agreed that such an arrangement fitted perfectly with my Fellowship objectives, which enabled my regional and professional development remit to gain real traction. When I asked one of my Exeter colleagues how I could be most effective / useful, she said I should be 'a facilitator, mentor, reality check and contextualiser to Exeter staff running HEA accreditation courses'. This sounded good to me. Our shared commitment was that OER should be integral to, not a bolt-on to the course. I saw my responsibility on behalf of the HEA in ensuring that the UK PSF was always highly visible. It was inevitable, given that I was often co-located with the project's main players, that latterly I probably went native, though this developed through invitation and encouragement. Such in-depth involvement has enabled me to engage even further with the political context of a stereotypically research-oriented UK HE institution that I became so familiar with during Exeter's Phase-1 project noted earlier. It also provided me with more background from which I have developed a sub theme, namely a potential dichotomy between an institution's perspective on OER and that of academics. I'll expand on this later.

The HEA also invited me to be the critical friend for Falmouth's OMAC project. The project, entitled IPR4EE aims to provide resources that can be used within staff development courses to bring some enlightenment to the mysteries of IPR and copyright. It aims not so much to provide answers but to help determine what questions need to be asked. This relationship with Falmouth helped in reinforcing my south-west regional focus and well as providing me with another coherent community with whom I could closely work with.

Some practical outworkings

Exeter

- OpenSTEM is embedded within one of Exeter's 'PGCERT' programmes (for Associate HEA Fellowship) and the participants primarily come from STEM subjects (we run a parallel course for HASS participants but this was not part of the project). Resources have been developed and 'road-tested' with autumn 2010 and spring 2011 cohorts of participants. I was interested in how the resources we introduced to the participants could be improved so that we could enhance them

prior to release as OER. For the autumn cohort, each week I ran a formal focus group and my reflections are written up in a blog at <http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/openstem/blog/category/focus-group/>. For the 2nd cohort of course participants, we more collectively had regular coffee conversations with them. Two points are worth recording, though they are highly related. When working with the autumn cohort of participants, it was disconcerting for some weeks that they could not identify with the relevance of participating in a variety of scenarios which would ultimately be translated into OER resources. However, by the end of the course they most definitely did. Such difficulties did not surface with the spring cohort of participants. My view is that this is because the participants are much further in their 'journey' of being proto-academics and also that the resources had been much improved as a result of the autumn cohort feedback. In particular the resources were now much more STEM oriented. However much we may wish to think that a generic delivery will transcend all disciplines, this is most definitely not the feedback we have received. Also, our explanation of 'learning by doing', i.e. experiencing an approach to learning through the medium of some activity, was much better articulated so that the participant understood why they were doing it! Obvious really, but easily undersold.

- Most weeks, I have met as part of a small management team to reflect on the effectiveness of the course and to drive forward the creation of resources that are gradually being assembled within the Open University's LabSpace. I have contributed my expertise as a critical friend, which was primarily forged within Exeter's Phase-1 project but have also drawn inspiration from my colleagues who are operating at the sharp end of delivering our staff development courses.
- Exeter also runs a course that leads to full Fellowship of the HEA. This is delivered much more as a series of seminars and for the autumn 2010 and spring 2011 courses I was invited to speak to the participants and discuss the merits of developing an OER culture. I think it is fair to say that I have been listened to politely but with much disinterest! In my more optimistic moments I might argue that at least I am sowing seeds.
- I have co-presented Exeter's experience at several national conferences, as outlined in a subsequent section. On each occasion I have been drawn to presenting the Exeter experience as a journey from our Phase-1 project to our Phase-2 project. The primary recommendation from Phase-1, i.e. that staff development holds the key to sustainability, is bearing fruit in our Phase-2 project, which has this formal remit.

Falmouth

I had a keen interest in following the progress of Falmouth's project because of my own experiences within Open Exeter in Phase-1 (see: http://www.slideshare.net/heather_jisc/tom-browne-oer-copyright-clearance). ['Someone' has extracted these slides from a presentation I gave at an internal

JISC workshop several years ago!]). I was therefore delighted when the HEA asked if I would be the critical friend for Falmouth's IPR4EE OMAC project. More comprehensively, my relationship expanded to encompass the following:

- Critical (supportive) friend capacity – mentored IPR44 OMAC project.
- Contributed to workshop for their PGCHE programme in March 2011.
- Chaired the OER11 symposium (OER1137) on behalf of Falmouth. Excellent turnout for last Fri am (!) and a vibrant and informed discussion.
- Supervised two Masters projects. This was an unanticipated spin-off from having developed an effective relationship with Falmouth. Working titles are:
 - Raising the profile of open educational resources within higher education: developing awareness at a strategic and academic level.
 - The learning ecology of Open Educational Resources. (Sadly, this student has withdrawn because of complex life challenges).

SWEDF

- I asked to be invited to their meeting in July 2010 so that I could present the OER 'story' to them. The response was positive and I was invited back to their next meeting in December 2010. By now, I was able to give a detailed presentation on all the OMAC projects and how those present, as staff developers were key people in drawing upon the array of resources into their own staff development programmes. I also invited Falmouth to give an interactive presentation on IPR. It was well received. From a low base of awareness amongst this community I am confident that some progress is being made and connections are being forged.

Nationally

My national interactions have primarily been opportunities to promote my local and regional relationships at various conferences. See elsewhere in this report where I have noted presentations I have given. But I have also been involved in the following:

- Reviewed a suite of JISC OER case studies which were submitted as part of the 'HEFCE Educational Resources Programme Phase 2: Strand B(ii): Call for OER Case Studies'
- On OER11 Programme Committee
- Reviewed a suite of submissions to OER11
- Chaired several sessions at OER11
- Contributed a written submission to the JORUM Review and was subsequently interviewed by telephone in December 2010. I have commented on it at one of our

Fellowship meetings in Milton Keynes. The outcomes have recently been made public and in my view are unsurprising.

The above engagement has been invaluable in enabling me to feel part of a much broader and encompassing OER agenda and has enabled me to reflect on how my particular brief fits into a larger picture.

- In my original Fellowship proposal I indicated that 'A scaffold of questions would be developed, to be populated by each institution, indicating their policies regarding e.g. fair dealing, quality, rewards'. Circumstances overtook this suggestion – many institutions have already recorded the views from their own institutions in reports and publications. Exeter's publication in JIME last December is one such example. Falmouth has picked up this baton re. IPR as part of IPR4EE. Most importantly, note Chris Pegler's ORIOLE project which has conducted a survey that puts all others into the shade.

OER created

I have had considerable influence, as part of a team in determining the character of the resources that have been produced as part of Exeter's OpenSTEM OMAC project. In particular I have championed the creation of what we call 'pedagogic wrappers'. Much OER seems to be 'created for strangers' but in truth a community is invariably a source of inspiration for any modelling. In my view this should be made explicit as part of the description of the resources being offered and clear explanations offered regarding how we have used them and indicators as to how they could be used in other contexts.

I have had much less overt influence on the character of Falmouth's resources but I have regularly been invited to contribute my council, which I have done willingly and I hope helpfully.

Publications

Noted later, because they have also been requested in a section below.

Insights

- It is important to have hard edged engagement. In a busy world, it is only possible to obtain meaningful engagement from others if it relates closely to their current activities.

- ‘Discoverability’ is so often the elephant in the room. This critical agenda does need to be pursued aggressively by the very clever techie people. There has been a parallel stream of consciousness on this agenda which I barely understand but anything that makes resources easier to find and interrogate intelligently has to be a good thing. But such aspirations should not place unreasonably additional demands on those supplying resources.
- There is sometimes a dichotomy between an institution’s motivation’s in promoting OER and those of academics. An institution’s agenda will focus on business opportunities, an academic’s on enhancing learning and teaching. Clearly, these need not be polar opposites but mission-critical institutional strategies are not necessarily harmonising these two perspectives.

SCORE taking forward

- Ensure meaningful engagement for Fellows with other equivalent projects. Build a more explicit and functional CoP. It’s good to notice that latter SCORE calls for Fellows are more theme-based.
- Bring influence to bear on the HEA in not just promoting the OMAC agenda but also in promoting OER within their newish CPD agenda.
- Help develop a more pervasive business case, so that even if HEIs do not actively see OER as a strategic opportunity, then neither should they place impediments in the way of staff in exploiting OER in enhancing their L&T.
- Actively present OER as a mainstream activity so that it is viewed as normal and unremarkable. It may then be possible to dump the acronym!

Reflection

Text anticipated in this section has largely been presented elsewhere in context, but a few additional thoughts:

It has been invaluable working (in particular) with four other SCORE Fellows who had a similar remit. My first foray into doing so resulted in going to London where I met Teresa and Gabe in July 2010 (just before my Fellowship contract began). They, together with Jane and Alannah then all came to Exeter on 9/12/2010. This was a very effective day and we made our focus the writing of a proposal for what subsequently became our successful ALT-C submission.

I have also been inspired by sharing perspectives with colleagues engaged with the Exeter and Falmouth OMAC projects. Maybe OER is really about ‘community’ and less about ‘stuff’. Changing culture is ultimately more sustainable as an OUTCOME than are various artefacts as OUTPUTS. The life expectancy of the latter may be very limited.

I remain convinced that building OER into early career staff development programmes will contribute positively to the sustainability of the OER agenda. But it should not stop there. It needs to be built into formal institutional CPD in order to 'keep the pot boiling' and to require that some OER engagement is evidenced in PDRs. If handled with skill, this could be presented as a sort of institutionalised academic autonomy!

Dissemination

I have contributed to presentations, symposia and workshops. Some of these were exclusively in my capacity as a SCORE Fellow and for others I contributed the SCORE 'badging' to activities promoted by the Universities of Exeter and Falmouth. The presentations have their value but are invariably very brief. The workshops and symposia generated much more conversation and feedback.

Pre-SCORE formal contract starting date – catching the moment to promote my Fellowship remit!

- South West Educational Development Forum (SWEDF) – OER presentation at Bath Spa, June 2010
 - *Promoting SCORE fellowship and request to work with SWEDF community*
- Open Educational Resources International Symposium, London, 23/7/2010. Evaluating the benefits of OER – matching individual and institutional objectives.
<http://www.slideshare.net/JISC/tom-browne-4856304> (*Opportunity to promote SCORE Fellowship within context of conclusions from Phase-1 Open Exeter project and also to identify synergies with Phase-2 Open STEM project at Exeter*)

Within SCORE Fellowship

- ALT-C symposium 0258. 8/9/2010 : What future for Open Educational Resources in UK Higher Education? Jonathan Darby, Tom Browne. <http://altc2010.alt.ac.uk/talks/15061> . The presentation I contributed to this symposium is at:
<http://www8.open.ac.uk/score/news/evaluating-benefits-oer-matching-individual-and-institutional-objectives>. (*Promoting academic staff development as vital component of sustainable future.*)
- SCORE conference, University of Nottingham, 11/3/2011 on Institutional Strategies for OER: OER as a scholarly activity within staff development accredited programmes – matching individual and institutional objectives. <http://www.slideshare.net/SCORE/tom-browne-presentation-11th-march-2011> (*Invited speaker at SCORE promotional symposium.*)

- Presentation and workshop at University College Falmouth, 18/3/2011: OER as a scholarly activity within staff development accredited programmes - Matching individual and institutional objectives. *(Invited to contribute to Falmouth's PGCHE programme.)*
- Association for Learning Development in Higher Education (ALDinHE). Conference, Belfast April 2011. Workshop: OpenSTEM: Transforming teaching in Mathematics and Biosciences.
http://www.aldinhe.ac.uk/qub_abstracts/3_7_abstract.pdf *(Workshop, with two Exeter staff development colleagues.)*
- OER11.
 - Presentation 1106: Promoting effective engagement with UK PSF for STEM.
<http://www.ucel.ac.uk/oer11/abstracts/1106.html> *(With Exeter colleague and linking in Fellowship as bridge between Exeter's Phase-1 and Phase-2 projects.)*
 - Chaired Falmouth symposium (OER1137 - The art of sustainable engagement with OERs) and also gave presentation OER1137b: Is there a dichotomy between individual and institutional engagement with OER?
<http://www.ucel.ac.uk/oer11/abstracts/1137b.html> *(This pulled together various strands relating to Falmouth's OMAC project on copyright [IPR4EE].)*

Accepted:

- HEA 2011 : Open STEM: discipline-specific resources for CPD in mathematics and biosciences : *(With 3 other Exeter colleagues, opportunity to showcase Open STEM resources on LabSpace)*
- ALT-C2011: Workshop (0125) Open STEM: open educational discipline-specific resources for professional development in HE. *(With 4 Exeter colleagues, [another] opportunity to showcase Open STEM resources on LabSpace.)*
- ALT-C 2011 Workshop (0194) Enhancing synergies between technologists, learning support specialists and academics utilizing Open Educational Resources. *(With 4 other SCORE Fellows who also worked in arena of academic staff development, showcasing various OER approaches.)*

Conclusions

My ambition was that the outcomes from my Fellowship should address what SCORE identifies as the high level driving question, i.e. *How can we build on the perceived potential of OER to help create new teaching and learning policies and practices within and between HEIs.* Of the various SCORE aims, the one that resonated most with my Fellowship is:

- Deepen sector-wide understanding of the needs and behaviours of users of open content material.

I also wished to contribute to one of the Fellowship outcomes, namely inform and influence policy and practice around OER creation, sharing and use. In so doing, I also wished to contribute to another SCORE outcome, namely to contribute to a range of events to support dissemination.

I have made a contribution to the above, locally, regionally and nationally. Its overall effectiveness can only be judged over time and by others but I hope that my Fellowship has contributed to raising the bar of effective practice within participating institutions just a little. Perhaps the greatest unanticipated outcome, for which also read 'outputs' is the influence I have brought to bear on the creation of resources at Exeter and Falmouth. I should stress that these resources were produced primarily by others, with much creative educational and technical skills. There are now some imaginative toolkits created at Exeter and Falmouth of staff development activities, available for repurposing to fit any HEI's context. The resources can be accessed as follows (both still under development):

- Exeter: Open STEM resources now (almost all) on LabSpace – and already much tested. <http://labspace.open.ac.uk/course/enrol.php?id=6597> (The Enrolment Key is 'OpenSTEM' [without the quotes]). Note especially the pedagogical wrappers. Their role within the whole was very well received at OER11. The concept contests the notion that 'stuff' can function as mere 'stuff' – i.e. it is unrealistic to regard resources as being 'designed for strangers'.
- Falmouth : <http://learningspace.falmouth.ac.uk/course/view?id=739>

Summary

This SCORE project was borne out of a recognition that without academic buy-in, an OER culture will not become embedded within the learning and teaching practice within HEIs. Merely noting the merit of OER within relevant institutional strategies is not sufficient. I formed this opinion whilst I was the Project Manager and Principal Investigator of the HEFCE-funded and JISC-managed institutional OER project called Open Exeter from May 2009-April 2010.

It was essential to develop meaningful networks. I formed an effective grouping with four other Fellows whose work was very complementary to my own. I also became an HEA critical friend for two OMAC projects at Exeter and Falmouth and this not only gave me a hard-edged engagement but it also helped consolidate my ambassadorial focus within south west England. In addition, such engagement also helped root me in the messy real world of institutional politics and culture and gave

me insights into a thread of research in which I posited that there can be a dichotomy between an institutional and an individual academic perspectives in relation to OER.

I have contributed to a stream of presentations, workshops and symposia. I particularly enjoyed those where I worked closely with others. Working with colleagues has been an invaluable element of being part of an OER community. Indeed, maybe OER is really about 'community' and less about 'stuff'. Changing culture is ultimately more sustainable as an outcome than are various artefacts as outputs. Nevertheless, to a greater or lesser extent I have brought some influence to bear in the creation of some resources, particularly from the Exeter and Falmouth OMAC projects. These should prove invaluable in early career staff development programmes, whether they are accredited or not.

Finally, I remain convinced that building OER into early career staff development programmes will contribute positively to the sustainability of the OER agenda. But it should not stop there. It needs to be built into formal institutional CPD and staff could be required to evidence some sort of OER engagement within annual PDRs. Returning to my starting point - for OER to be sustainable, it must attract academic buy-in. Coercion will not be effective because academic autonomy is a cherished characteristic of Higher Education. However, that autonomy should be fertilised by not merely a benign institutional environment but by a proactively supportive suite of acknowledgements that OER can enhance both an academic's profile and career but also an institution's profile, especially internationally.