

## Open Educational Resources: Service setup and Data management

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### 12.1. WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

UCL (University College London) has demonstrated institutional commitment to open education in its Education Strategy 2016–21<sup>1</sup> with a priority to introduce an open education resources service to “provide a showcase for UCL education and for student-generated content”. The proposed service is explicitly aligned to UCL’s educational initiatives, especially the development of research-based education, the UCL Connected Curriculum.

To further the priority an Open Education Special Interest Group (SIG) was established and in 2016 this commissioned a survey and report to determine current practices and possible futures. The aim of this internal report, *Open Education Initial Scoping Study*, was an “investigation scoping the potential, practicalities and possible future actions to support open education initiatives across UCL in response to UCL’s education strategy”. The approach was deliberately wide-ranging and comprised a review of current open education activities and actors across UCL. It included open educational resources and course activities including massive open online courses (MOOCs), open data in teaching and learning, and open textbooks, again emphasising connections to the Connected Curriculum.

The main finding was that there were many perspectives, experiences and small-scale initiatives in this area across the institution. There was a need to enable and invigorate a common clear ethos of “open” across faculties and campuses. The report indicated positive reactions to the philosophy of “open” with strong support in many (but not all) academic areas. There was an appreciation among stakeholders that there is not a single correct way of doing it. It was felt that open education at UCL can best be introduced by focusing on openness via a set of specific dimensions, such as content, technology, and pedagogies.

Through the SIG UCL is assessing how initiatives can be brought together and also how existing policies and projects are used to support a more coordinated and purposeful approach. UCL is already recognised as a European leader in its commitment to open access to research. *UCL Discovery*, UCL’s open access repository for UCL research publications, is well established as a mainstream service. UCL Library Services and UCL Digital Education are in discussions about piloting an Open Education Resources (OER) repository using the same platform as UCL Discovery. Another development is that UCL has recently launched MediaCentral, a media repository that showcases and provides access to media-based teaching and other items.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, UCL Press<sup>3</sup> is the UK’s first fully Open Access university press, launched in 2015. Since then 43 titles have either been published or are in press, including three textbooks. This is seen as a major opportunity in UCL to change the current commercial business model for textbook publishing. Open Access textbooks present the institution with an opportunity to make an offering in the Open space which

will promote access to, and use of, textbooks by the end user. Students support OER, especially open textbooks, because OER in digital format are accessed at no cost and print copies are also available at relatively low cost.

The notion of linking some UCL Press titles to MOOCs is also being explored. UCL has already run three centrally-funded MOOCs on the *Futurelearn*<sup>4</sup> platform with three others in production for launch in 2017. UCL academics are also involved in several other MOOCs as well as open access courses on *UCL eXtend*,<sup>5</sup> UCL’s externally-facing virtual learning environment.

### 12.2. COSTS

In addition to building on and connecting currently-funded open initiatives, UCL Library Services and UCL Digital Education are jointly seeking additional funding to begin piloting the OER service, with a projected implementation in 2017. In terms of OER content production, a major benefit will be cost-effectiveness because of the ability to share and re-use resources. However, while OER bring down total expenditures, they are not cost-free. New OER can be assembled or simply re-used/re-purposed from existing open resources, and RDM storage and hosting facilities can be re-used for OER. This is a primary strength of OER and, as such, can produce major cost savings. OER need not be created from scratch. On the other hand, it should be recognised that there are some costs in the assembly and adaptation process.

### 12.3. SERVICE PROVISION

The pilot OER service will be run by staff from across the UCL Library Services and UCL Digital Education teams. The teams will run the activity of planning and organising people, faculty, infrastructure, communication and the material components of an OER service in order to guarantee its quality and the interaction between the UCL Press as an RDM service provider and UCL faculty and students as users. The pilot will include a requirements analysis for the staff and end-user functionality of the repository (e.g. subject descriptor taxonomies, workflows to support quality assurance, branding). UCL will also identify and develop exemplar OERs to test the technical system and develop/document support processes. As indicated in the opening section a major requirement is to raise the profile of OER and input to the pilot through a programme of training and advocacy, workflows and case studies. From an educational impact perspective, the team will evaluate and make recommendations for turning the demonstrator into an established and sustainable service.

### 12.4. INDICATIVE COSTS

For indicative capital setup costs, the OER service will be connected to the UCL Research Data Service which required in the region of £1 million to be established, with presumably little additional cost for the introduction of OER RDM. The pilot will clarify actual staff support requirements, but potential staff costs can be estimated as a two year half-time grade 8 post – less than £60,000 including full economic costing. The existing Library, Digital Education and academic development teams will co-ordinate activity to encourage a culture of ‘open’ amongst existing professional and academic staff and students, including top-down strategic direction, energy and encouragement.

<sup>1</sup> UCL: [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/migrated-files/UCL\\_Education\\_Strategy\\_Final\\_Web.pdf](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/migrated-files/UCL_Education_Strategy_Final_Web.pdf); last accessed 5 February 2017.

<sup>2</sup> UCL: <http://mediacentral-stream.ucl.ac.uk/Home/>; last accessed 5 February 2017.

<sup>3</sup> UCL: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-press/>; last accessed 5 February 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Future Learn: <https://www.futurelearn.com/>; last accessed 5 February 2017.

<sup>5</sup> UCL: <https://extend.ucl.ac.uk/>; last accessed 5 February 2017.

## 12.5. SCOPE OF THE SERVICE

The Digital Education Team will support academic colleagues, colleges, units and individual researchers to publish educational media (podcasts, video, files, etc.) under an appropriate Creative Commons Licence. The team will also promote and support the use of OER in teaching at UCL via its user communities, websites, news publications, workshops and events. In partnership with Library Services, it will offer staff and students training in copyright licensing and how to prepare materials for open publication and platforms for dissemination. Furthermore UCL encourages members of the university to use, create and publish OERs to enhance the quality of the student experience, provided that resources used have undergone quality assurance, are fit-for purpose and relevant.

## 12.6. WHERE DO UCL OER SERVICES SIT?

The OER service will be a partnership between the UCL Digital Education Team, UCL Library Services and UCL Press. UCL Digital Education is based within the Information Services Division (ISD) and provides support, advice and training for all aspects of Learning Technology, e-learning and open and distance learning across the whole of UCL. The Division of UCL Library Services runs UCL Discovery,<sup>6</sup> UCL's open access research repository, and UCL Press is a department of UCL Library Services.

## 12.7. POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Currently there is no existing national OER policy in the UK to support institutions in OER adoption and no current OER institutional repository in UCL. There is a UCL Research Data policy<sup>7</sup> and a LERU Working Group produced the LERU Roadmap for Research Data<sup>8</sup> which contains a range of guidance and information on Open Data and which could be extended or adopted for OER. UCL's current policy and advocacy for RDM are fully in line with the LERU Roadmap. In terms of a potential future UCL policy in OER, it should articulate and expand upon UCL's position on OERs and provide guidelines for practice in learning and teaching and RDM procedures. The University could encourage staff and students to use, create, and publish OERs via institutional and other repositories and help them track usage and impact.

## 12.8. CONCLUSIONS

OER as a service with its RDM setup is not so difficult to setup if other data management systems are already in place in a University setting. We contend that is why an OER service should be embedded into UCL's Library services and main Content Management System tools.



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<sup>6</sup> UCL: <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk>; last accessed 5 February 2017.

<sup>7</sup> UCL <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/isd/services/research-it/documents/uclresearchdatapolicy.pdf>; last accessed 5 February 2017.

<sup>8</sup> LERU: [http://www.leru.org/files/publications/AP14\\_LERU\\_Roadmap\\_for\\_Research\\_data\\_final.pdf](http://www.leru.org/files/publications/AP14_LERU_Roadmap_for_Research_data_final.pdf), last accessed 5 February 2017.